The Many Turns of Transformation Creating New Vocabularies for Transformative Learning

Aliki Nicolaides and Saskia Eschenbacher

METAPHOR AND META-LENS: ENVISIONING THE HANDBOOK OF LEARNING FOR TRANSFORMATION

Passageways is our guiding metaphor in creating this Handbook. As editors, we embrace this metaphor for its twofold advantage: First, a passage points in two directions—backward to the space one is leaving, and forward to the space one is approaching. Second, a passage is passed through. Our intention is to invite the reader to "pass through," that is,

A. Nicolaides (✉)
Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA
e-mail: alikin@uga.edu

S. Eschenbacher
Department of Adult Learning and Counseling, Akkon University of Applied Human Sciences, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: saskia.eschenbacher@akkon-hochschule.de

1

to leave the familiar space that currently defines the territory of transformative learning and turn toward something new. We envision our exploration of the phenomena of transformation as passageways because we believe our turn toward new spaces will foster a more inclusive and in-depth discourse about transformative learning.

The metaphor of passageways has an additional dimension. It allows us to ground our inquiry in a multidisciplinary understanding of adult education and the multifaceted nature of transformation. While scholar-practitioners generally perceive that the roots of adult education are multidisciplinary, drawing strength from the perspectives of indigenous knowledges, climate activism, democratic civilizing approaches, and arts-based inquiry, we envision a multidisciplinary approach that connects these disciplines without the necessity of leaving any one discipline behind in order to foster further theory development. Exploring the phenomenon of transformation as a shared space of possibility among various disciplines is itself a passageway. It allows us to move among, between, and within disciplines and fields of inquiry. In that sense, our metaphor of passageways is more fluid than static, putting the concept of movement at its heart.

Looking at the phenomenon of transformation through the lens of Rorty's (1989) philosophy helps shed some light on the vision of our Handbook. Of particular interest is Rorty's (1989) argument for "changing vocabularies" instead of relying on "final vocabularies." His invitation involves creating new vocabularies instead of extending existing ones—and therefore a new language that can serve as a meta-lens for our Handbook. In our attempt to make space for new discourses about transformative learning through the phenomenon of transformation, we[1] find his ethic of invention particularly helpful. We see his work as one possible example among others to grasp the passageways this Handbook seeks to offer. It is open to infinite possibilities and examples, in working toward a new discourse on transformation.

Even though we choose Rorty's ideas here, we keep the mystery of the unknown alive, as we do not know what passageways authors (and readers) will go down as this Handbook unfolds. As a set of ideas, it

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[1] We, refers to the co-editorial team members. Aliki Nicolaides, Saskia Eschenbacher, Petra T. Buergelt, Yabome Gilpin-Jackson, Mitsu Misawa & Marguerite Welch. This chapter was written by Aliki Nicolaides and Saskia Eschenbacher in consultation with the co-editorial team.

helps us to keep the conversation about transformative learning going, as it is an infinite conversation.

What makes Rorty's philosophy interesting for us? So interesting that we select two of his ideas as a meta-lens for this Handbook? Reflecting on Rorty (1989)'s work allows us not only to find new answers to familiar questions but also to pose new, unfamiliar questions. By asking new questions, we are able to explore unexplored passageways, to establish new discourses, and to create new vocabularies about transformative dimensions of adult learning. In short: It is an example of the sort of passageways to new vocabularies itself that the Handbook is intended to generate. Here is why we think two of his ideas might be helpful to describe the passageways of transition in which we locate ourselves:

- Rorty (1989) embraces an "ethic of invention" (Bernstein, 2016) and invites us to look at the world in new, unfamiliar ways and opens up the possibility of transforming ourselves. This ethic of invention might help in our quest for learning to transform the very structures out of which we live and transform in order to become something new (Eschenbacher, 2018).
- Rorty's (1989) ironist idea of changing vocabularies stresses the freedom we have to create new ways of looking at the world, new ways of being in the world, or as Rorty might say, to create new vocabularies. His ideas are reflected in our intention as editors to create new ways of researching, understanding, and practicing transformative learning. This is not so much a Handbook in the traditional sense of describing the current state of the field or indeed where transformative learning has been (historically). It is instead interested in creating new vocabularies, new possibilities for the future of transformative learning.

Rorty (1989) stresses the contingent nature of our way of being as one vocabulary among others. He helps us become aware of the fact that there are always other possibilities that can be explored and that one is not trapped by one way of looking at the world or being in the world that is forced on us, but that we are free to create new vocabularies and to transform our guiding assumptions (Eschenbacher, 2018). Reflecting on Rorty's ideas gives us the opportunity to explore new passageways. His attempt "to liberate us from the dead weight of past vocabularies

and open up space for the imaginative creation of new vocabularies" (Bernstein, 2016, p. 52) is itself a passageway for us in creating the aforementioned new ways of researching, understanding, and practicing transformative learning.

It is an invitation to leave the (mental) home of the discourse on transformative learning. Working with a theory in progress, we need to leave this home; the continuous movement within and beyond the boundaries of "our" disciplines (and familiar discourses) is integral, if we want to give rise to new insights and explore a part of the unknown.

As editors, we have reflected on the language and the vocabulary that are currently employed about the discourse of transformative learning in attempting to generate new insights. With Rorty, we ask: "Does our use of these words get in the way of our use of those other words?" (p. 12). We decided to study the *phenomenon of transformation,* instead of *transformative learning,* as a passageway that might allow us to explore as yet unfamiliar territories. "This is a question about whether our use of tools is inefficient, not a question about whether our beliefs are contradictory" (p. 12). In our attempt to hold the mystery of the unknown and not limit the diverse passageways authors would explore, we decided to employ a different vocabulary centered on the phenomenon of transformation. We remain curious about what new discourses and passageways will evolve from this Handbook, knowing "(a)ll we can do is work with the final vocabulary we have, while keeping our ears open for hints about how it might be expanded or revised" (Rorty, 1989, p. 197). In our case, the phenomenon of transformation is a final vocabulary that is open to be changed and renew itself.

Provocations and Passageways: Journeying the Handbook

The Handbook is structured along these four entangled provocations: multiple perspectives on transformation; generating conditions for transformation; (un)known discourses on transformation; and challenges and emerging futures for transformation. The invitation is to move between, through, and within the provocations pulling at threads that stay with you—the reader—as you explore the passageways that connect and depart from each provocation. Every reader will take a different journey. A new, transformed starting point for exploring yet unfamiliar passageways will set our final chapter. We see this as an invitation to keep journeying,

to move beyond what is known and unknown about the phenomenon of transformation. It is an invitation to reflect within the boundaries we have drawn while questioning and crossing them at the same time. In that sense, our metaphor of passageways remains fluid, as we see our Handbook as a passageway itself, into new discourses that are not yet imagined.

The phenomenon of transformation is multifaceted, and there are variations in meaning across disciplines. However, common to all disciplines is the understanding that transformation denotes "significant change." For the purposes of this Handbook, we return to classical Greek for a definition. *Metamorphosis* (μεταμόρφωσις) is the connection between two words: meta (after, or going beyond in a definitive way) + morphe (form) (Merriam-Webster., n.d.-a). The meaning of metamorphosis is a change in form or structure, a special change that transcends the form from within the form itself. *Form*, in our view, includes meaning structures and frames of reference that are most commonly related to the process of transformative learning, while we also recognize form as structure, relationship, systems, cosmologies, conflicts, landscapes, and materiality transformation unsettles common sense assumptions and opens new possibilities for forms of action (Gergen, 1994).

Transformative learning portrays the phenomenon of transformation through the lens of adult learning. While the phenomenon of transformation is not limited to the field of adult education, adult learning is not always transformative. Mezirow (1991) developed his theory of transformative learning by conceptualizing the transformative dimensions of adult learning. Exploring the phenomenon of transformation may help us gain deeper insight into various transformational dimensions of adult learning and therefore expand our current understanding of transformative learning. This Handbook is not only an invitation to search for a passageway that allows the theory of transformative learning to renew itself as a theory in progress (Mezirow, 2000); the Handbook is itself a passageway, as we have noted earlier, into new territory spaces of possibility. As editors, we are intentionally making many new turns—toward, away, within, and through familiar and unfamiliar discourses of transformative learning to become curious about the phenomenon of transformation.

This opening chapter takes up the idea of passageways. We (1) contextualize it between the familiar discourse on transformative learning and unfamiliar new questions and urgencies that arise from the current global

challenges we are facing. This sets the stage for another passageway (2) as we explore a web of discourses on problems and concerns of the space we are about to leave, the familiar discourses on transformative learning. It allows us (3) to connect through yet other passageways the problems and concerns of current discourses to transformative learning theory's reflexive-understanding as a theory in progress, one that evolves and has evolved continually. We finally leave familiar common ground by exploring possible new passageways, paving ways (4) toward new languages that illuminate the phenomena of transformation disrupting the known territories of transformative learning. As passageways evoke images of pioneers, we inquire about our chosen path: What is unfolding as we turn toward and through new passageways of transformation and what new questions emerge in these new spaces that are beyond familiar common ground? Journeying through these passageways also means a willingness to remain curious about what we do not know lies ahead and beyond our current understandings of transformative learning.

Passageway 1: Making a Turn into a New Passageway and New Spaces for Inquiry About Transformation

In the globalized twenty-first century, many of our old cultural and social norms, traditions, mores, ways of knowing, and being in the world are undergoing profound and unpredictable shifts. To some extent, we have to learn that the world as we presently experience it denies us what we need in order to find a direction for learning and being in the world. This Handbook emerged in the middle of a world in crisis, fighting COVID-19, the upheavals of structural and systemic racism, and the struggle to transform these structures through movements such as Black Lives Matter, and the climate crisis are undeniable and inescapable. Regarding these existential experiences of crisis and the resistance and immunities to constructively re-work these crises into opportunities, we explore the territory between familiar discourses on transformative learning and unfamiliar new questions and urgencies that arise from the current global challenges we are facing.

What motivates our efforts to create this Handbook and to learn is our desire for (self)knowledge and finding new ways to live our way through transformation. In that sense, our Handbook can be an opportunity to quest after a more coherent, deeper knowledge about the struggles we are currently facing while also exploring ways to move into new ways of living

transformation. We put the quest for transformative learning and trans-formation itself at risk: Is transformation possible? How do we humble ourselves to turn toward a new passageway for transformation to take hold in these liquid times?

Zygmunt Bauman (2013; see also Bauman et al., 2016, p. 89) states that we currently "find ourselves in a time of 'interregnum' when the old ways of doing things no longer work, the old learned or inherited modes of life are no longer suitable…but when the new ways of tackling the challenges and new modes of life better suited to the new conditions have not as yet been invented, put in place and set in operation." This "liquid modernity" that Bauman describes fundamentally requires that individuals become flexible and adaptable in order to meet the challenges and opportunities of the modern world which is itself fluid and rapidly changing, offering no enduring truths or conditions for living (Bauman, 2013; Jarvis, 2011; Nicolaides, 2015). Hoggan et al., (2017, p. 12) show how the phenomenon of liquid modernity precipitates the need for perspective transformation "there is considerable evidence of a decisive shift in modern society toward detraditionalization, highly individualized, and fluid societies in which a specific form of reflexive action, the change and transformation of the self, is highly valued" and has become an essen-tial ingredient to operating successfully in the post-modern world. This shift from "solid" to "liquid"

> requires individuals to make sense of their fragmented lives by being flexible, adaptable, and constantly ready and willing to change tactics, to abandon commitments and loyalties without regret; and to act in a moment, as failure to act brings greater insecurity- such demands place adults 'at the threshold of ambiguity, to turn towards the unknown. (Nicolaides, 2015, p. 180)

A global pandemic, climate crisis, civic unrest, political polarization, and luminous inequities across societies have emerged out of the shadows into clear view. The global context is ripe for transformative learning and yet the promise for transformation is not yet evident in the collective actions of people. As we write this chapter, the Chauvin trail is underway in Minneapolis while protests in Brooklyn Center rage on at the contin-uous shooting of Black and brown people (The New York Times, 2021). Inequities are real; turning away from them, sweeping them under the rug, is not as easily done when the pandemic is fast moving and variants

are increasing spread in some places such as India and Brazil, and where severity varies with richer nations doing better than poor nations.

In other words, individuals living in these times of liquid modernity find themselves in a series of crises that are simultaneously personal, societal, and environmental. All of us, members of the global context, are increasingly being asked to address these crises as both personal opportunities for transformative development and growth and societal transformation (Hoggan et al., 2017; Jarvis, 2011; Nicolaides, 2015). Where we once were able to construct relatively stable selves with at least somewhat fixed answers to the most important questions in life, we now engage in a "continual search for meaning, a need to make sense of the changes and the empty spaces we perceive both within ourselves and our world" (Dirkx, 1997, p. 78; Dirkx et al., 2006). It is therefore more important than ever that we, as individuals, groups, organizations, and societies, develop the capacity for new expansions to learning in order for us to navigate this environment of increasing volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Dirkx, 1997; Nicolaides, 2015), and to explore new passageways to transformation as a way forward. This "struggle for meaning, the need to feel and be authentic with ourselves and with one another, and to realize a more just social order is the focus of several strands of research and theory referred to as transformational theories of adult learning" (Dirkx, 1997, p. 79), is the territory we seek to explore and uncover new passageways for transformation.

The Liquid Context in This Moment

The authors of this chapter and the co-editors of this Handbook are undergoing a transformation as we learn and are living our way through a global pandemic, felt and materialized differently across the parts of the world, we each live in. While the pandemic rages around the world and in our lives in discreet and overt ways, the social fabric that felt so real and solid has become liquid beneath us. The structural racism and protests spread globally involving more people of privilege than ever before were an opening towards transformation, yet we wonder if a transformation is taking hold? In the United States, beliefs about racism and support for the racial and social justice, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, were amplified while at the same time diminished once people in the United States began to pay attention to different things such as summer

travel and vaccinations on the horizon. Though our individual consciousness, as members of the editorial team, was heightened with regard to the possibility of death that COVID-19 signaled, and it influenced our collective consciousness related to the illuminated prevalence of structural racism and pervasive poverty, this awareness, enacted in different ways, nudged us further into possible passageways of transformation. We spend hours together on Zoom listening, connecting, and continuing to work to make sense of the pandemic while also making progress on the completion of this Handbook. We paused to notice that we adapted to the disquiet of these times by working harder while at the same time feeling the struggle of our individual needs to remain safe. We collectively grew in our awareness of how bushfires in Australia complexified an already complex pandemic reality; how conservative political views took to the streets of Germany and France; how polarization widened the American political divide; discourses on inclusion remain exclusive; political divides are increasingly visible around the world. We are all living this moment together and not the same. How we live through the liquid of this time into a territory that holds us, individually and collectively, to become aware, conscious of the new spaces for greater justice that includes all of societies diversity, is itself a passageway that we are currently in the middle of. We intentionally ask: Do we transform, or are we transformed by the forces that pull us underneath the familiar territory of our consciousness? How willing are we to be pulled into the unknown? These inquiries turn out attention toward another passageway.

Passageway 2: Problems and Concerns Within the Field of Transformative Learning Theory

We explore a web of discourses on problems and concerns of the space we are about to leave, the familiar discourse on transformative learning. While learning has many aspects and as many theories, adult educator Illeris (2018) argues in his comprehensive history of learning theories that there are four primary types of learning: cumulative, assimilative, accommodative, and transformative. Transformative learning was first described as such by Jack Mezirow in the 1970s and 1980s. In the intervening years, transformative learning has become one of the most popular, influential, and important theories in adult education (Hoggan, 2016; Hoggan et al., 2017; Illeris, 2014a, 2014b; Jarvis, 2011; Newman, 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Cranton, 2013). This work

and its subsequent critiques and elaborations have enriched, broadened, and further developed the theory of transformative learning from its inception well into the twenty-first century and have led to multiple lines of inquiry—passageways—within transformational learning (Taylor, 2008). There are many essential differences among the various threads of transformative learning theory, on everything from the definition of transformative learning, its aims and goals, its desired outcomes, its processes, and its usefulness in pedagogy and in practice (Dirkx, 1997; Dirkx, et al, 2006; Hoggan, 2016; Hoggan et al., 2017; Illeris, 2014a, 2014b; Jarvis, 2011; Mezirow, 2008; Newman, 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Cranton, 2013). There are also major differences relating to "the emphasis on either personal or emancipatory transformation, the emphasis on either individual or social change, the role of culture in transformative learning," among other things (Taylor, 2008, p. 7). While in some ways these differences may be important to the development of theory and to furthering research into creating the conditions for transformative learning to take place, these different approaches have also led to some substantial problems and concerns raised by many theorists in the field.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, theorists were warning that the language around transformative learning had become so diffuse that the theory was in danger of losing its distinct ideas and specific meaning (Brookfield, 2000; Kegan, 2000). We will take up this idea later in our quest for a new language on transformation. This concern was echoed by Michael Newman (2012a, p. 37) when he introduced his "mutinous thought" that because of the lack of clarity in defining what transformative learning is, what the outcomes of transformative learning are or ought to be, and what separates transformative learning from other types of learning that "perhaps there is no such thing as transformative learning; perhaps there is just good learning." In their response to Newman's mutinous thought, Cranton and Kasl (2012, p. 394) agreed that there was a need for a unified "theoretical belief system about what transformative learning is and how we facilitate it" but that unified theory has not yet emerged. In his response to Newman's original article, John Dirkx agreed that Newman was correct in citing "the proliferation of widely disparate and uneven ways in which transformative learning has been interpreted and used" as valid criticism of the field (Dirkx, 2012, p. 399). He went on to argue that:

Gaining new information, learning a new skill, developing a new or different attitude, or even acquiring a new role or occupation may reflect effective learning experiences, but they do not alone indicate the kinds of experiences intended by serious scholars of transformative learning...This lack of theoretical discipline has almost certainly undermined the credibility of the concept itself and further blurred its meaning. (Dirkx, 2012, p. 401)

Newman (2012b, p. 409), somewhat ungenerously, replied in his own response that while he appreciated that Mezirow "injected intellectual rigor into a flagging field and has kept our attention ever since" he felt that Mezirow had been "worrying away at his theory like a terrier at a rug, tugging at it here, adjusting its position there, and making the rest of us not quite sure of our footing." Illeris (2014a, p. 575) writes that if scholars in the field cannot agree on a commonly held definition of what transformative learning is and of what form transforms their disagreement will "undermine the whole idea and issue of transformative learning both theoretically and practically" and that the fracturing of the field will "develop into a source of uncertainty and disagreement that can erode the concept so much that it becomes meaningless." However, despite the warnings, admonitions, and general agreement that the field is in danger of losing its meaning, there remains a lack of consensus into most aspects of transformative learning theory and how it operates.

Passageway 3: Transformative learning—A theory in continuous progress

While most scholars in the field maintain that transformative learning is fundamentally different from other types of learning, there is still no general agreement on the fundamental aspects of transformative learning theory. To connect through yet another passageway the problems and concerns to transformative learning theory's self-understanding as a theory in progress, one that evolves and has evolved continually is a liquid state that we wish to embrace as a flow into new passageways. For example, Illeris (2014b, p. 150) writes that we are now in a "situation in which, although the issue of transformative learning is more in demand and more celebrated than ever, there is basic conceptual uncertainty and even confusion as to what this term actually includes, covers, and implies"

and that there is a "lack of a clear and immediately understandable definition that can separate transformative from non-transformative learning." Though there are differing perspectives about what transforms, there is a continued interest in the phenomenon of transformation through processes of adult learning. Mezirow (1978) first defined transformative learning as a process of

> perspective transformation involving a structural change in the way we see ourselves and our relationships. If the culture permits, we move toward perspectives which are more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of experience. We move away from uncritical, organic relationships toward contractual relationships with others, institutions and society. (p. 100)

Since then, debate continues to bring distinction to facets of transformative learning that have dominated much of the literature in adult education and specifically transformative learning as a theory of adult learning (Taylor, 2008). Patricia Cranton (2006) in her book *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning* grouped transformative learning by scholarship in terms of their multidisciplinary influence that includes, connected knowing (Belenky & Stanton, 2000; Tisdell, 2000); social change (Brookfield, 2000; Collard & Law, 1989; Cunningham, 1992; Hart, 1990; Torres, 2003); group and organizational learning (Kasl & Ellias, 2000; Watkins & Marsick, 1993; Yorks & Marsick, 2000); ecological view (Gunnlaugson, 2003; Hathaway, 2017; O'Sullivan, 2003); and the extrarational approach (Boyd, 1989; Boyd & Myers, 1988; Dirkx, 1997; Herman, 2003). These groupings illustrate the appeal of the concept of transformative learning to describe the kind of significant individual change that each of these lenses fosters through adult learning.

In spite of the appeal of transformative learning across these perspectives, essential features that result in transformative learning have not been evolved to show a theory in progress. In Mezirow's view, critical refection, critical self-reflection, and conscientization (Freire, 2018) are essential to transformative learning. As are development and growth to Daloz (1999) and Kegan (2000), individuation to Boyd (1988), categories of consciousness as described by Gunnlaugson (2007) and edge emotions for Mälkki (2010, 2019). These authors represent variations on subject of reflection and the fluid nature of essential features that may lead to transformation. In his *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*,

Mezirow (1991) described three key distinctions to reflection: content (what is the problem?), process (how did this problem come about?), and premise (why is this problem a problem?). It is only premise reflection—that challenged the very basis of the problem at hand—that has the potential to promote a perspective transformation (for a more detailed and recent analysis of these three distinctions, see Kitchenham, 2008).

Kegan (2000) posed the provocative inquiry "What form transforms?" and brought distinction to "Learning aimed at changes in not only *what* we know but changes in *how* we know...come closer to the etymological meaning of education ('leading out'). Trans-*form*-ative learning put the form itself at risk of change" (pp. 48–49). This articulation of what entails transformative learning aligns with Mezirow's premise reflection and draws from Dirkx (1997) who offers that

> transformative learning also involves very personal and imaginative ways of knowing, grounded in a more intuitive and emotional sense of our experiences...Unlike the analytic, reflective, and rational processes of transformation described by Mezirow, learning through soul fosters self-knowledge through symbolic, imagistic, and contemplative means.

This understanding transcends the rational cognitive emphasis that is central to content, process, and premise reflection. O'Sullivan (2002) integrates all three reflective distinctions and a qualitative depth of experience of human and non-human relatedness as the ground for transformation. Per Sullivan, transformative learning

> involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body awareness; our visions of alternative approaches to living; our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (p. 11)

While Jarvis (2011) very carefully integrates all three forms of reflection and relatedness in his description of transformative learning,

the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person - body (genetic, physical, and biological), and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, meaning, beliefs, and senses)— experiences social situations, the content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively, or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. (p. 22)

In 2008, Mezirow revised his description of transformative learning to "the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) - sets of assumptions and expectations - to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (p. 42). This evolution of Mezirow's thinking illustrates the permeability and influence of multiple disciplinary perspectives on Mezirow's continued articulation of transformative learning as Taylor (2008) describes, "they include the psychocritical and accept the influences of the psychoanalytical, psychodevelopmental, social emancipatory, neurobiological, cultural-spiritual, race-centric, and planetary" (p. 7).

However, though the understanding of transformative learning continued to evolve through the influence of multiple disciplinary perspectives, the epistemology and ontology of the theory itself have not undergone a transformation; that is, it has not evolved. We notice that efforts to unify the theory and to shift the conversation from variations on transformative learning to return to theorize about transformative learning is beginning to shape new ways of conceiving transformative learning theory. Hoggan (2016) asserts that "transformative learning is a metatheory under which individual theories aggregate. Transformative learning refers to the processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world" (p. 71).

Passageway 4: The Need for New a Language that Illuminates the Phenomenon of Transformation

We finally leave familiar common ground by exploring a possible new passageway, paving the way toward a new language that illuminates the phenomenon of transformation by a disruption of the known territory of transformative learning. As the majority of scholarship and practice is still

focused on answering the same questions over and over again, a sense of "stuckness" has become a commonplace concern among scholars of transformative learning (Illeris, 2014a, 2014b; Malkki & Green, 2014). There is a real danger that transformative learning theory will become "reified" because the theory itself rarely undergoes explicit scrutiny of its premises (Malkki & Green, 2014). Taylor and Cranton (2013, p. 34) have argued that much of the research had become redundant not only because researchers keep asking the same questions but also because "transformative learning no longer transforms itself."

Taylor and Cranton (2013) identify two main reasons for this redundancy. First, many scholars rely on reading literature reviews that summarize theoretical developments and research findings instead of consulting the original primary sources, which means they are missing out on opportunities to discover the nuances and subtleties of the foundational thinkers and what the original researchers have learned. This lack of rigor impacts newer researchers' and theorists' ability to frame and integrate their work with the work that has come before them and to critique that work in their own studies. The second factor that accounts for redundancy in empirical work about transformative learning, according to Taylor and Cranton, is the lack of variety in research methodology. Most of the current research on transformative learning uses the similar qualitative interview-based methodology, which has dominated the empirical studies in the literature. Encouraging and exploring different research methodologies, such as "arts-based research, narrative inquiry, action research, and participatory action research" would refresh the dominant inquiry of processes of transformative learning and open up multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research that would renew the theory on its continuous evolving path (p. 43).

Our second reason for calling our readers to a passageway that can lead to a new language of transformative learning is that the current state of our language is too fractured to serve us well. This is problematic if we consider that this fracturing has often stymied forward progress of the development of the theory and that the circular nature of revisiting the same arguments about definitions and outcomes has in some ways led to stagnation that has prevented the debates from moving on to other, as yet unaddressed or understudied, questions (Malkki & Green, 2014; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Our Handbook consciously turns away from both the fracturing and the efforts to cohere a unified theory of transformative learning. Our aim is to open up new passageways that

consciously inquire into the visible and growing insistence across epistemologies and ontologies throughout cultures and living theories, that transformation is both a private and public (Rorty, 1989) response as care for our shared commons.

Our felt disquiet regarding the current discourses on transformative learning is partly reflected in this lack of a clear distinction between the phenomenon of change and the phenomenon of transformation (Brookfield, 2000; Eschenbacher, 2018; Newman, 2012b). Adult education is concerned with both; transformative learning, however, is grounded in the phenomenon of transformation (Brookfield, 2000; Mezirow, 1991). At the same time, discourses on transformative learning often employ a language of change instead of a language of transformation. Why should we employ the latter? How is a change in form or structure different from a change in content? Where are these phenomena touching each other, where are they distinct from each other? Despite the similarities, one may ask if these differences are gradual or if *transformation* is essentially different from *change*? What is the benefit of getting a more nuanced understanding of transformation as a special form of change that transfigures the form itself from within the form? Moving through this passageway of transfiguration, how does this fluid movement lead to changes regarding the pedagogy, research, and practice of transformation?

Mezirow (1991) differentiates four forms of learning on a conceptual level (elaborating existing (1) frames of reference, (2) learning new frames of reference, (3) transforming points of view, and (4) transforming habits of mind, while only two of them are transformative (transforming points of view (3) and habits of mind (4)). His distinction remains somehow blurry. This lack of basic conceptual clarity is not limited to Mezirow's notion of transformative learning (see Illeris, 2014b). Both Kegan (2000) and Brookfield (2000) criticize the body of transformative learning for its conceptual looseness and its lack of a clear understanding of the transformative dimension of adult learning. We believe that both aspects inhibit further development of the theory and practice of transformative learning. Therefore, we see a need to address the aforementioned conceptual uncertainty (Illeris, 2014b). One way of doing so is to explore the very phenomenon of transformation as a passageway that enacts the transformation that is central to transformative learning, but is not limited to the field of inquiry for adult educators. The field of adult education is one of the multiple disciplines concerned with transformation. This field strives to develop comprehensive theory about adult learning,

which includes but is not limited to transformative learning. The particular interest in learning offered by the discipline of adult education leads us to ask: How is our understanding of transformation enhanced when we view it through the lens of learning?

A World in Crisis: A Quest for Transformation?

Translating the phenomenon of transformation into the field of adult education, creating a new vocabulary has "connotations of an epiphanic, or apocalyptic, cognitive event—a shift in the tectonic plates of one's assumptive clusters" (Brookfield, 2000, p. 139). The multiple dilemmas we are currently facing (i.e., pandemic, racism, climate change) announce the tectonic shifts that reveal how we have misunderstood formerly unproblematic notions of how we should live for ourselves and together. The immunity and resistance to transform our way of being and living together in the midst of crisis also reveal our inability to change. We may need to humble ourselves? Is our transformation possible so that new possibilities for societal coherence may emerge? What are passageways that may lead us to a new discourse on transformation? What are ways through this dilemma? The existing vocabulary, what Mezirow (e.g., 1991, 2012) describes as the frame of reference and Kegan refers to as the very form itself, is at risk (Kegan, 2000, p. 49). This applies to our thinking about transformation—the form as well as the premises and the content of our quest for understanding how far from transformation we are, while at the same time how near possibilities for new vocabularies that transform exist. Rorty's concept of a vocabulary is one answer to Kegan's question "What form transforms?" (Kegan, 2000).

Rorty (1989)'s care for transformation helps us shed new light on discourses of transformative learning within the field of adult education; it sharpens our view on the task and goal of adult educators. His ideas are reflected in our intention as editors of this Handbook, aiming at creating new ways of researching, understanding, and practicing transformative learning. Working with Rorty's philosophy is just one example of how we can learn more about transformative dimensions of adult learning by exploring the phenomenon of transformation by turning toward distinct and related fields. Reflecting on his work illustrates how we can use the phenomenon of transformation as a passageway, connecting existing discourses on transformative learning with new, unfamiliar discourses and employing a new vocabulary.

This Handbook emerged in a world in the middle of multiple crises—who are we now is a potent inquiry. The purpose of this Handbook is to catalyze a more complex inquiry into transformation. We did not expect to find ourselves in the middle of a civilization-wide transformation that has forced us to look at transformation from the inside. We all know someone who got sick or died or lost their job as a result of COVID-19. The New York Times published a special issue on transformation and how the pandemic has birthed an awakening for many Americans (https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/04/05/us/coronavirus-pandemic.html?searchResultPosition=1). Are we awake? How have we been transformed from the place we stand? This civilization-wide transformation has been forced upon us and many of us chose it, surrendering to its potency to bring us into new spaces of possibility and ways of becoming. How we have transformed will be an inquiry that remains with us for the coming months and years ahead. For some, the reflection of what, if anything, has transformed is just beginning. In spite of the appeal of transformation, there is more evidence of stagnation and less evidence of generativity (i.e., as we finalize this Handbook, as vaccinations mount in some of the world's wealthiest countries and people cautiously envision life after the pandemic, the crisis in South America and India is taking an alarming turn for the worse). What would new vocabularies include that would trouble how to transform ourselves, our communities, our fields of research, our ways of living together, and our attempt of co-creating a new, more just society. What new, unfamiliar passageways can we see emerging?

> The Handbook's simple inquiry is: Why do we quest for transformation? What draws so many disciplines and their hope for the influence of transformation on people, workplace, communities, environment, and society? How do we move through transformation, with humility, and, transform?

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