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LEARNING IN FRONT OF THE LENS: A STUDY OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES OF DOCUMENTARY PARTICIPANTS

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Adult Education

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the experiences of 4 adult participants in a long-term documentary film to confirm the transformative potential of this unique pedagogical site. A basic interpretive qualitative methodological process was used for the study. The participants in the documentary and study were adults in a residential treatment centre for substance addictions; they ranged in age from 28-45 years old. The documentary interview filming occurred weekly, at various times and locations, for 3 to 5 months during their residential addictions treatment. The purpose of the study was to understand how documentary participant experiences are informed and influenced by transformative learning, media literacy, and learning through the filming process. The study found the setting of a long-term documentary to be a pedagogical site, and for three of the four participants, their experiences were transformative. The findings are significant for the field of adult education and film production. The study recommends the use of video to promote adult transformative learning in and outside the classroom; the findings confirm extrarational and rational aspects of transformative learning; and the study recommends a more inclusive approach for considering who engages in transformative learning, one that includes marginalized demographics such as those dealing with addictions.

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I am thankful for my parents, siblings, and their wives for fostering an ongoing spirit of ambition and tenacity that I needed to complete this thesis. Most of all, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my wife Chantel, for her support and encouragement, and to my young children Caden and Eliandra for their patience during my hours and hours of study. As my transformative journey is joined by, and influenced most greatly by my family, this thesis is dedicated to them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

How adults learn outside the traditional classroom has been well established in the literature, but very little has been written on how adults learn in front of the lens of a video camera. The common practice of television watching in contemporary Western society has generated a media-literate demographic of adults. The recent popularity of human-interest documentary features and similar network television programs provides constant examples of average people talking about themselves on camera; as in reality, there are occasions when the moments captured by the camera are clearly transformative. There are other times when it appears that the very process of appearing before the camera fosters their transformative learning.

This thesis presents a study of my research observations of the experiences and transformative learning of participants in a documentary film. Based on these findings, I recognize the filming process as a pedagogical site, and I provide suggestions for adult educators and filmmakers to make the most of the transformative potential of this visual medium. This thesis also provides a discussion of my own personal and professional experiences during this study, as I controlled the camera and they learned in front of the lens.

This first chapter provides a background to the research study. I discuss the problem that I want to address by my research, and elaborate on the purpose. I then offer a description of the scope and limitations that guided my study. Following this, I explain the assumptions behind my work. I define the significant terms I use, and provide a

sketch of my research methodology. I conclude with an overview of the rest of the thesis sections.

Background to the Study

I am a teacher at an adult learning centre in a central Canadian city. I teach adults high school courses, mostly focusing on English language arts. This school is operated by a residential addictions treatment program in cooperation with a local technical college. In a typical semester, approximately 10-20% of the students are residents from the treatment facility; the rest are from the surrounding community. I have taught for 8 years in this capacity, and during this time I have become intrigued by the process of growth and development of my students. My interest in the field of transformative learning is rooted in my experiences as a teacher. My curiosity about student progress and change over time contributed to my reasons for choosing graduate studies. My attention has been drawn to the literature of transformative learning to understand how this happens and how I can foster transformative learning in my students.

A second area important for this study is linked to my interest in cinema. For years I have enjoyed watching films that show characters change. Watching the transformation of characters on screen offers a model of how to think and feel, as if it is a rehearsal. In the same way reading a novel about a character can be an emotional guide for me to sort through a similar emotive path when I reach such a place in my life. I have found that when a film is at its best, it mirrors the transformative learning in life and in my classes. Of the many mediums of expression, I have found films are well suited as case studies of participants whose growth and development are portrayed on screen; documentary films are particularly adept at this. As I developed my understanding of

adult learning and transformative learning, I began to connect the experiences of the participants in these films to my experiences in the classroom and to my studies of transformative learning.

The merging of my interests in teaching and film connects naturally to my own work in both. As a filmmaker myself, I am constantly trying to capture transformative moments in my films. In my fiction films, my protagonists are overcoming obstacles to achieve their goals; as the screenwriter, I strive for this narrative process to seem authentic and transformative. In my documentary films, I focus on the actual transformative experiences of the participants in the film; my most recent documentary project follows the experiences of adults overcoming addictions. When I began my more focused studies in adult learning through the graduate program at St. Francis Xavier University, it made sense for me to use the opportunity to examine learning in front of the lens in a more formal way.

The objective of this research study reflected my interest in the experiences of participants in a long-term documentary film of which I am the director and producer. The documentary follows four people with weekly interviews for 3 to 5 months during their residential addictions treatment. The filming took place at various times during typical days in the treatment centre and in a variety of locations. I wanted to examine their reactions to the filming process for signs of transformative learning. Questions I had were: Is their experience in the filming process educational? Does this experience constitute transformational learning? I wanted answers to these questions to improve my practice as a filmmaker, a vocation that I feel is another way of being a teacher.

The Problem

For many years I observed the dramatic learning experiences of individuals in the treatment program that operates my adult learning centre. Every semester I have several students in each course who attend class while residing in the treatment program. Their learning in my English classes was often eclipsed by the significant work they are doing while in treatment. It was clear that some were learning a great deal through the daily process of their addictions treatment, where they discussed their past addictive lifestyle and the poor choices they had made. The treatment process involved a critical assessment of their assumptions; the change to living sober demanded finding a new way of seeing themselves and the world. The significant challenge was always the reintegration back into the community and applying what they had learnt into their day-to-day living. This process has always been incredibly moving for me to observe. I was interested in finding an opportunity to explore this more closely.

In my additional career as a filmmaker, my experience in documentary films has hinted that the occasion of filming lengthy interviews has an influence on those participants. There has been very little research done on how on-camera interviews foster an occasion for learning in documentary participants; I have begun to wonder how to confirm that appearing before the camera is an educational experience. With the considerable number of video interviews I was conducting with my documentary on addictions, I saw the opportunity to try and explore these learning experiences directly. I wanted to classify the learning experiences of documentary participants and to ascertain the influence of the filming process on their learning. Was their media literacy and

previous experience of watching television an influential factor? My hunch was that, at certain times, the camera stimulated the learning experiences of participants.

Purpose of the Study

In essence, the purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of documentary participants to see what influenced their learning and if their experiences were transformative. I meant to explore the various factors that appear to influence the experiences of participants.

In addition, I wanted to understand how important participants' prior knowledge was to their learning. In the study, I asked each individual to comment on the amount of television that they watched and whether they thought about this during our interviews. I was interested to discover if their experience was more significant because of what they had watched previously. Following this, I was interested to show them footage from our documentary interviews to see if watching themselves on the screen might add to their learning in any way.

My prior observations of the 4 participants had indicated that there was some significant learning occurring through their involvement with the regular film interviews; I interpreted this learning as transformative. The question was; Would they? This evolved into the central purpose of my study, represented in this thesis: Do documentary participants identify the film process as educational, and is their learning transformative?

My ultimate goal in completing this thesis is to contribute to scholarship on transformative learning and the practice of adult education and filmmaking. I want to demonstrate that the real life environment of the documentary film set is a potential

pedagogical site. I want to show that this site can be used by adult educators and filmmakers to promote learning and social change.

Scope and Limitations

A few notes on the scope and limitations of this project are important. This report focuses on the learning experiences of the 4 adult participants in my documentary on addictions treatment. I began interviews for this addictions documentary in January 2006. The interviews continued until the end of the calendar year. The research study was conducted in June and July of 2006.

The participants of the study were each in residential treatment to address various types of substance abuse dependency. Each of the participants was an adult, three were male and one was female. While not intentionally part of the criteria for involvement, I had worked previously with 3 of the 4 participants in my classes or through the treatment centre in the past.

The documentary is long-term in scope. The interviews occurred once or twice per week for 3 to 5 months while they were residing in the treatment facility. The interviews continued, with less frequency, after they returned to the community. Each interview lasted on average 45 minutes. The final film is meant to represent an addict's journey through the treatment process. I directed the film and also performed the role of camera operator and sound recordist. The participants had limited control over the interview process; they could decline to answer questions, but I generally set the agenda for questions unless they had something they really wanted to discuss.

The treatment program is located in a suburb of a central Canadian city. The philosophy of the program focuses on life style, behaviour, and choices made by the

individual; the program opposes a disease approach to addictions. I recognize that the learning experiences of the individual in this type of treatment are often transformative in and of themselves; the experiences of the filming process interacted with the profound experiences of their treatment program. The four participants were in residential treatment and not day treatment programs. The research study examined adult learning and transformative learning experiences of the individuals.

Assumptions

The filming of a documentary interview alters the environment by inserting a camera, sound equipment, lighting gear, and an interviewer. For long-term documentaries, this process is repeated over and over again to explore the thoughts and experiences of the participant. I assume that the filming process is a complicated exchange whereby the camera significantly influences the communication of thoughts and feelings.

I also am aware that my presence in the documentary filming and later in the gathering of data for this research study affects the responses of the participants. I established rapport with each participant during the course of the filming. I had conducted 20-30 documentary interviews with each participant by the time the research began. I assume that this rapport assisted in a transaction of authentic and reliable data for this study. Each stated that they felt comfortable with the process and were able to get past the presence of the camera.

I assumed at the outset that the learning of participants is influenced by both affective and cognitive domains. I also assumed the transformative learning experienced

by participants would be complex in nature. I explore this tension in more detail in my definitions that follow and in the accompanying chapters.

Definition of Terms

I use the term *transformative learning* to refer to the complex process of learning whereby individuals reach a point of frustration, examine themselves and their situation, recognize various aspects of the problem, consider solutions, revise their beliefs and attitudes about the situation, and act on the resolution to overcome the difficulty (Mezirow, 1978, 1991, 2002). For me, transformative learning contains not only rational processes, but significant affective and contextual elements as well (Cranton, 2006; Dirkx, 1997, 2006; Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006; Taylor, 1998). The understanding of the term has evolved in recent years to include multiple ways of knowing, including mind, body, and soul (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks & Kasl, 2006; Dirkx, 2006; Yorks & Kasl, 2006) and a holistic perspective on transformative learning (Cranton & Roy, 2003).

The term *media literacy* is defined as skills acquired to critically understand and communicate through various media; these skills help the individual establish a critique or an appreciation of a media text, such a TV show or documentary film. These skills are used to deconstruct a media text for context and to learn how to create their own media texts. The media literate individual can understand the language of a media text, and can in turn speak in that language by using the conventions typical of the medium (Buckingham, 2003; Burton, 2005; Masterman, 1985).

I use the term *documentary* to refer to non-fiction motion picture programming presented in either film or video format; I use the terms movie, film, and video interchangeably for these non-fiction texts. In recent years, documentary films are

generally in the category of human-interest and are released theatrical or presented for televised broadcast in a variety of lengths. Human-interest documentaries are films that often focus on the true-life stories of the participants; I am paying particular attention to those character driven films containing interviews with adult participants (Barnouw, 1993; Rabiger, 2004; Stubbs, 2002). I exclude reality television content in the discussions of this thesis.

This research study examines the experiences of participants involved in lengthy videotaped interviews for the documentary. I differentiate between the *documentary interviews* and the two semi-structured *research interviews* for this study.

Research Methodology

I use a basic interpretive qualitative study methodology for this research study (Merriam, 1998), which was approved by the Research Ethics Board at St. Francis Xavier University (Appendix A). I first contacted participants by letter and received their consent to participate. I chose to use interviews as the primary means of gathering data, as I valued the opportunity of a face-to-face meeting with the participants (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). I also found this paralleled the interviews I had conducted through the documentary. I used two semi-structured interviews to generate data with each participant. I transcribed all the videotaped interviews and then provided each participant with copies to confirm the content; I did this to insure that my data was as accurate as possible. I then sorted the data by similar questions and common responses. I established relevant categories to observe common themes. I analyzed the results for connections to transformative learning, adult education, and the practice of filmmaking. I include thick rich descriptions of the research findings to confirm the credibility of the study.

Plan of Presentation

The main part of this thesis is organized into the next three chapters, in which I present the data and interpret the results. In chapter 2, I explore the literature applicable to this study. This chapter contains sections on transformative learning theory; media literacy and learning; and documentary filming as learning. In chapter 3, I explain the processes I used in the study. I elaborate on questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how related to the study. I also provide the results of the research. In the final chapter, I discuss and provide critical commentary on the results of the study. Finally, I provide my reactions to the findings.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter I provide a survey of the literature related to my study on the learning participants of a documentary film. I begin with a description of how I pursued my review of the literature. I then offer a review of three areas of the literature which provide useful theory and prior findings for understanding my research study. First, I examine the literature of transformative learning. Second, I explore the literature of media literacy and learning. Finally, I review the literature on documentary filming related to learning. I conclude this chapter with a summary of these readings and observations about gaps in the literature.

Identifying the Relevant Literature

The three key areas that I focused on for this review of the literature were transformative learning, media literacy, and documentary video. One of my general criteria for selecting literature was its relationship to adult learning. I focused primarily on resources written in the last 10 years; exceptions to this rule were older texts that were lone voices on the topic, and those clearly seminal texts on the topic. There are many books and articles on transformative learning and media literacy. I generally limited my search of media literacy to those resources focused on adults. Finding literature on the topic of documentary learning was more of a challenge, so I included in my search participatory video and academic uses of video for research.

I searched on-line databases such as Ebsco Host, ERIC, and Proquest for articles. In some cases I used Google to locate articles and Google Scholar to follow links to those referencing various authors. The print catalogue of two local universities

supplemented my on-line research. I used the following as keywords in my search: "transformative learning," "media literacy," "media education," "documentary," "interviewee," and "participatory video."

Transformative Learning Theory

I begin this first section with a discussion of aspects of adult education foundations that inform the broader literature of adult learning and learning for change. I then examine the literature on transformative learning first presented by Jack Mezirow, and extended by others, such as Patricia Cranton and John Dirkx. I conclude this section by looking at the literature on recognizing transformative learning.

Context of Adult Learning Experiences

The recent history of adult learning was stimulated by Knowles' attention to the term pedagogy (the art and science of helping children learn) and his work on popularizing and elaborating the term andragogy (helping adults learn) (Knowles, 1980). The central contributions of Knowles' work include: the nature of adult learners, what is adult learning, what are the antecedents to adult learning, and how to facilitate adult learning (Pratt, 1993).

Tough (1971) builds the discussion of adult learning with his work on adult learning projects. Tough asserts that adults engage in various learning projects throughout the year; he affirms the self-directed nature of adult learning confirms that adult learning occurs outside the traditional classroom. Adult learning can happen in the workplace, in the private life of an individual, and even in front of a video camera.

Freire (1970) goes beyond these general observations of adult learning to note the struggle of power inherent in everyday life, leading to the emancipatory potential of adult

education. He states that learners "must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (p. 31). Adult learning is rooted in a democratization of the learner as subject, not merely an object; education promotes personal change, a change so significant that it is transformative. An important distinction to be made here is Freire's emphasis on facilitating social change for society as opposed to transformation of the individual. The tension between societal change and individual change is evident in much of the field of transformative learning, introduced by Mezirow and others, which deals mostly with transformation of the individual.

Transformative Learning

Central to the literature of change in adulthood is Mezirow's (1978, 1991, 2002) work on the process of transformative learning. His work is discussed at length in this section because it set the stage for a considerable debate and subsequent development of understanding of the term. Mezirow's ideas have evolved significantly with the contribution of voices such as Cranton (2002, 2006), Taylor (1997, 1998), and Dirkx (1997, 2006). In his early writing Mezirow (1978) proposed that the transformation of perspectives is distinct to adulthood and that "a crucial dimension of adult development involves a structural reorganization in the way a person looks at himself and his relationships" (p. 108). In adulthood we understand our experiences and circumstances in more complex ways. For Mezirow, adult learning and transformative learning must be understood together. Briefly, this transformative process involves thinking critically about disorienting dilemmas and ways of thinking, before realizing a more constructive point of view.

Mezirow (2002) suggests learning in adulthood happens in one of four ways: by elaborating an existing point of view, by learning new points of view, by transforming our point of view, and by transforming our deeper set of beliefs of the world, what he calls *habits of mind.* This is a complex and thoughtful process that contributes towards greater individual autonomy.

Brookfield (1995b) addresses the development of critical reflection in the process of adult learning in a manner reminiscent of Mezirow; he explores the ways in which learners ask questions of themselves, look at other points of view, and recognize hegemonic aspects of the world. Brookfield (1986, 1987) applies these ideas in practical ways; he believes fostering critical thinking is crucial to adult learning. Mezirow (1990) concurs: "By far the most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical self-reflection—reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling and acting" (p. 13).

Also key to understanding adult learning activities, according to Brookfield (1987), is the need for adults to cope with significant life events. Learning is linked to understanding experience and thinking critically of both thoughts and emotions; this is a helpful way to understand the need of an interviewee in a documentary to find personal significance in the moments captured on camera. For Mezirow (2002), the "who, what, when, where, why and how of learning may be only understood as situated in a specific cultural context" (p. 7). Adult learners are not always aware of the complexity of dynamic nature of their context, knowledge and experience. Mezirow (2002) summarizes this:

> It should be understood that there are different degrees of comprehension and mindfulness regarding becoming aware of one's thoughts. In adulthood, knowing

> how you know involves awareness of the context—sources, nature, and consequences—of your interpretations and beliefs and those of others. In adulthood, informed decisions require not only awareness of the sources and context of our knowledge, values, and feelings but also critical reflection on the validity of their assumption or premises. (p. 7)

Mezirow (1978) established the foundations of transformative learning theory by identifying perspective transformation as a means of understanding adult development. There is potential for perspective transformation when an adult faces challenges or dilemmas: "When a meaning perspective can no longer comfortably deal with anomalies in a new situation, a transformation can occur" (p. 104). This demands more than just reacting to one's own thoughts and actions, but responding critically. This critical response reveals assumptions of social roles, behaviours and relationships. For Mezirow, maturity and adult development are linked directly to one's ability to refine perspectives that "are progressively more inclusive, discriminating and more integrative of experience" (p. 106). Adult education, in a diverse spectrum of settings and approaches, can foster this process of perspective transformation.

I continue this section with a broad picture of transformative learning, then more to a discussion of the variables at work within transformative learning theory. Mezirow (1991) based his early writing on a national study of the experiences of women returning to college. From this study he established 10 phases of perspective transformation:

1. A disorientating dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisionally trying out new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

more difficult to change than points of view. But, changing habits of mind is possible in that "transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience (Mezirow, 1997, p.5). Learning happens when individuals "elaborate existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind" (Mezirow, 2002, p.19).

As reflected in the trend towards learner centred approaches to adult education, the autonomy of the individual is integral to the process of transformative learning. Mezirow (2002) notes that transformative learning allows the individual to explore their own purposes, values, feelings and meanings, rather than those that are uncritical assimilated from other people. This process turns a person inward to examine one's self, and as they assess their position, they move to act on their new insight. The focus then is to "gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers" (Mezirow, 2002, p. 8).

Connections can be made between transformative learning and self-directed learning. Self-directed learning focuses on ways in which adults take control of their learning, by setting goals, pursuing resources, deciding how and what to learn and by evaluating their own progress (Brookfield, 1995a). Tough (1971) suggests that learning in adulthood is often *self-planned learning*. Knowles (1980) acknowledges both autonomy and self-direction as important to his understanding of andragogy. Merriam and Caffarella (1998) suggest that fostering transformational learning is a central component of the goals of self directed learning. Understanding the autonomy of the learner and the importance self-directed learning are essential to the task of adult

educators, and to transformative learning. Mezirow (1997) elaborates: "Educators must assume responsibility for setting objectives that explicitly include autonomous thinking and recognize that this requires experiences designed to foster critical reflectivity and experience in discourse" (p. 10).

While transformative learning involves internal motivation and examination, the process also demands looking outwards through participation in discourse. Mezirow (2002) defines discourse as follows:

> Discourse, in the context of Transformation Theory, is that specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief. This involves assessing reasons advanced by weighing the supportive evidence and arguments and by examining alternative perspectives. Reflective discourse involves a critical assessment of assumptions. It leads toward a clearer understanding by tapping collective experience to arrive at a tentative best judgment. Discourse is the forum in which "finding one's voice" becomes a prerequisite for free full participation. (pp.10-11)

Effective participation in discourse is not guaranteed. It requires cognitive abilities that are typically in the domain of adulthood. Besides the cognitive processes, emotional maturity, what Goleman (1995) terms *emotional intelligence*, and his partnering concept, *social intelligence* (Goleman, 2006) affect the potential of interaction and the discourse between individuals. The individual's competency to understand and articulate thoughts and feelings relates directly to the principles of transformative learning. Mezirow (2002) summarizes:

> Preconditions for realizing these values and finding one's voice for free full participation in discourse include elements of maturity, education, safety, health, economic security and emotional intelligence. Hungry, homeless, desperate, threatened, sick, or frightened adults are less likely to be able to participate effectively in discourse to help us better understand the meaning of our own experiences. (p. 15)

In essence, the context of one's circumstances plays an important role in the potential of transformative learning. This is coupled with the internal dynamics of the individual, such as cognitive ability, personality, and emotions. These potentials depend on and are affected by individual and social dimensions. The social dimension includes the desire for social change, a common element of adult education in general. Mezirow (2002) connects this: "Full potential for transformative learning depends on values such as freedom, equality, tolerance, social justice, civic responsibility, and education" (p. 6).

Learning in transformative theory exists within three *domains of learning*, based on three areas identified by Habermas (1971): instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory. *Instrumental knowledge* allows the individual to control and manipulate the environment. *Communicative knowledge* is the understanding of ourselves, other people, and the rules of society. *Emancipatory knowledge* is the understanding that brings freedom from constraints. For Mezirow (2002), learning involves elements of both instrumental and communicative knowledge: "Learning may involve a transformation in frame of reference in either domain" (p. 9).

Mezirow (2002) sees the transformation of frames of reference as occurring through critical reflection on the assumptions and contexts of our beliefs and ways of thinking. Yet, others have explored how this transformation is not exclusively dependent on the mind. Dirkx (1997, 2006) has explored ways in which transformative learning can occur outside awareness. This is also explored in more detail as *expressive ways of knowing* by Yorks and Kasl (2006) and as a holistic approach to transformative learning (Cranton & Roy, 2003).

Brookfield (2000) contributes to the aspect of critical thinking that is essential to transformative learning by elaborating on the components of critical thinking. Not all reflection is critical. Identifying and challenging assumptions, challenging the importance of context, imagining and exploring alternatives, and developing a reflective skepticism are central to critical thinking (Brookfield, 1987). Throughout this thesis, I use the terms *critical thinking* and *critical reflection* interchangeably.

Mezirow (2002) acknowledges that when transformation of habits of mind occurs, it can be of two kinds. The first, *epochal* is "a sudden, dramatic, reorienting insight" (p. 21). The second type is *incremental*, "involving a progressive series of transformations in related points of view that culminate in a transformation in habit of mind" (p. 21).

Mezirow's early writings on this process are focused on the individual and internal processes; transformation involves adjusting one's meaning perspectives through critical self-examination. Freire (1970) contributes the term *conscientization* for a process of personal development and awareness similar to Mezirow. Whereas Freire extends the focus to praxis and social change, Mezirow's focus remains more individualistic. In response, Mezirow (1990) suggests that change begins with the individual first before greater social change can occur afterwards. He goes on to say: "Thinking as an autonomous and responsible agent is essential for full citizenship in democracy and for moral decision making in situations of rapid change" (1997, p. 7). Clark and Wilson (1991) question whether Mezirow adequately addresses the social contexts of learners' experience by putting too much emphasis on the individual dimension and not enough on the social.

While Mezirow's initial framework of transformative learning relies on the cognitive abilities of the individual; others counter that a purely rational approach is limiting. Cranton (2002) suggests that "intuition, emotion, relationships, and personality may also play roles" (p. 65). She adds that psychological type preference may influence the ways in which people change their perspectives as well (Cranton, 2006). Taylor (1998) catalogues various research studies on transformative learning and notes the possibility that intuition, spirituality, and interpersonal relationships may contribute to the transformative process (see also Dirkx 2001; Tisdell & Tolliver, 2001).

Cranton and Roy (2003) compare the transformative process to Jung's process of individuation. They explore a complex and holistic process of transformative learning. They elaborate: "We can say that the central process of transformative learning may be rational, affective, extrarational, experiential, or any combination of these depending on the characteristics of the individual and the context in which the transformation takes place" (p. 90).

Dirkx (1997, 2006), Davis-Manigaulte et al. (2006), and Yorks and Kasl (2006) contend that individuals can know in ways outside their awareness. There remain unanswered questions about the extent that transformative learning resides within or outside awareness. How does limiting transformative learning to within awareness limit the understanding of all aspects of this process? How can elements of transformative learning outside awareness be recognized, measured and understood?

Recognizing Transformative Learning

The main focus of the literature is on theories of transformative learning and fostering transformative learning, rather than on recognizing transformative learning. To

understand how to recognize transformative learning, it is useful to understand how it can be fostered.

Cranton (2002, 2006) discusses various teaching strategies to foster transformative learning, which can be inverted to provide a measure for recognizing transformative learning. She suggests looking for an activating event that has exposed the individual to "viewpoints that may be discrepant with their own" (2002, p. 66). According to Cranton, the individual needs opportunity to articulate assumptions about themselves and the world and engaging in critical self reflection.

Brookfield's (1987) discussion of recognizing critical thinking provides some insight that parallels the process of transformative learning. He elaborates: "Critical thinkers are actively engaged with life. They see themselves as creating and re-creating aspects of their personal, workplace, and political lives" (p. 5). Revising assumptions and perspectives and acting on these revisions through this process of critical thinking. He continues:

> The indicators that reveal whether or not people are thinking critically vary enormously. For some people, the process appears to be almost wholly internal; very few external features of their lives appear to change. With these individuals, we can look for evidence of the critical process in their writing or talking. With others, critical thinking will manifest itself directly and vividly in their external actions. (Brookfield, 1987, p. 6)

Media Literacy and Learning

Critical reflection is a key component of media literacy as it is in this research study. I anticipated that media literacy would be a variable in the transformative learning of the documentary participants. In this section I examine the literature on media literacy with particular attention to elements of learning from and about the media. I begin with a discussion of the foundations of media literacy. I then examine literature that suggests

how the media can model transformations. I conclude this section by looking at the literature on discussing experiences of participants in video documentaries.

Media Education Foundations

The modern discourse of media literacy and everyday conversation is influenced by the ideas of Marshall McLuhan (1964). Perhaps his most famous axiom is the concept that modern people live in a global village. He makes the perceptive observation that media extend the capabilities of humanity. He suggests, "All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms" (p. 64). Understanding these translations generated by the media, and learning from them, is a major part of media literacy; perhaps the metaphors generated by the media can assist or influence individuals in their transformative learning.

Masterman (1985) expands the theoretical framework for media education. He was one of the first writers to provide a comprehensive approach to responding to the media; ideological critique is a major focus of his approach, something that is developed further in the work of Brookfield (1986, 1987, 2005) and discussed later in this section. Masterman (1985) notes, "the media are symbolic (or sign) systems which need to be actively read, and not unproblematic, self-explanatory reflections of external reality" (p. 20). All media productions are carefully constructed, and in the process, they represent reality rather than merely reflecting or transmitting it.

Media literacy is concerned with equipping learners with critical skills to read (and write) various media texts. If the media were benign in their presentation of information to viewers, the significant influence in everyday life would be less of a concern for educators. The fact is that the media are motivated by ideology and by

commercial interests, even if these motives are concealed by the artifice of the production. The concern for educators is that "the mass media socialize adults to view political issues, disputes, and events in an excessively simple, unidimensional manner" (Brookfield, 1986, p.152). Media literacy is concerned with exposing a media text for what it is, and engaging in the process of problem posing. This fits well with the emphasis of critical thinking discussed often in the field of adult education. More specifically, challenging the simplified version of the world relates directly to the process challenging adults in transformative learning:

> Television also encourages viewers to incorporate epistemic distortions into their meaning perspectives. Epistemic distortions ... are distortions concerning the nature and the use of knowledge. Examples of these are believing that every problem has a single correct solution; reifying a source of authority as the sole purveyor of "objective" truth; or thinking concretely when abstract thought is necessary. (Brookfield, 1990, p. 236)

A major focus of media education is to explore the complex relationships of an individual to the world. The world is less black and white and more grey. The subjective experience of individuals--and in the case of this research study, the experiences of participants in a documentary--can be significant. If participants look critically at the process of documentary films and how they are represented through the televised medium, they could approach the type of critical thinking put forth by Brookfield (1990). He furthers this:

> When we question the accuracy of sitcoms or news broadcasts, and when we hear others raise similar doubts, we not only focus on the distorted and oversimplified nature of television, we also critically reassess the validity of our own assumptions. (p. 241)

Brookfield (1986, 1987) suggests that this process of critical thinking about media amounts to ideological detoxification. Promoting media literacy helps adults understand

the ideologies that operate behind the media, and what power structures control these systems. Graham (1989) points out that "the development of media literate adults also contains the possibility of producing a more critically aware citizenry" (p. 159). He further notes that this approaches Freire's writing on emancipation of the oppressed through critical awareness of their conditions.

There is a danger of resorting to essentializing both the media and audiences. A determinist point of view would reduce the corporate media to a shorthand antagonist who preys on the helpless victim-viewer. Buckingham (2003) suggests that children of today are media savvy and already possess many of the skills needed to think critically about the media influence. Brookfield (1986) makes a similar point about adult audiences and their grasp of media; this determinist view of the media fails to allow room for "elements of resistance and opposition within the media and considers media producers and workers to be robotic automatons working at the behest of ruling elites. It also denies the possibility that education can help adults become more critically aware of the media as social forces within society" (p. 154).

It is worth acknowledging that the shift from modernism to postmodernism has influenced the field of media education. Modern society has experienced a growth in media opportunities to the extent that there is less and less a homogeneous media experience as there was a generation ago. Buckingham (2003) notes how modernist assumptions of a unified understanding of a media text, of audience behaviour, and audience identities are fragmenting with the diversity provided by the Internet and by the plethora of cable channels. Many adults of today have matured with this media growth; this influences their perspectives and shapes their responses of transformative learning.

A central aspect of media literacy is to educate learners in the language of the media. Educating adults on the language of the media, and providing them with an understanding of how to use media tools to communicate is a democratizing process; it gives voice to learners by allowing them to speak (Buckingham, 2003); their voice can be mediated and perhaps amplified with a camera or computer software.

Transformations and Media

Are adult perceptions of transformative learning influenced by media habits? The popularity of human-interest documentaries, talk shows and reality television shows all contribute bountiful examples of individuals confessing personal problems for cathartic ends on television. Does learning in front of the television influence learning in front of the camera lens? The literature helps to explore these issues.

Dirkx (as cited in Mezirow, Dirkx & Cranton, 2006) suggests that within people's inner world exists a dimension of learning outside awareness, which can be an important part of the transformative process. He explores the power of various media such as film to present publicly what is going on below the surface; "Often we are drawn to such works in inexplicable ways, held captive by them for varying lengths of time, seemingly spellbound by their messages—our inner worlds refracted through the lens of image and metaphor and story" (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006, p. 127).

White (1992) explores the intersection of psychology and media consumption and finds examples of transformative moments repeated often on television; the repetition of these transformations forms a precedent for the viewer. The media is a therapeutic surrogate for viewers who watch and feel better. She explains:

> The modes of therapeutic discourse constructed through television and other media, fully implicated in consumer culture, participate in the production of social

> and cultural identities. Television programs not only transmit therapeutic strategies taken from the world of psychological theory and clinical practice but also construct new therapeutic relations. (p. 19)

Although she suggests that television demonstrates transformative moments, she qualifies this by noting the confines of series television programming: "particular pressure is exerted by series television as a form of popular narrative that must renovate itself on a weekly basis in relation to familiar, regular characters and genre/program conventions" (p. 178). In the moments depicted on various television shows (*The 700 Club* is an example she uses) transformative moments are repetitive and formulaic, raising speculation that these moments fit with transformative learning theory; further speculation on this is generated by White's observation on the edited nature of televised transformations.

Television remains incredibly influential to a discussion on transformative learning. Brookfield (1986) notes that television is "less a river of messages, symbols, and images into which we occasionally take a dip than an ocean in which we perpetually swim" (p. 152). The influence of television on viewers establishes an expectation for future encounters with both media programming and production. Filmmakers Berlinger and Sinofsky (1992) conduct long-term interviews on participants for their feature documentaries. They suggest an increased awareness and perception of events by the participants of their films because of the influence of television. In some cases they noted the pervasive nature of the media reports affected the types of interviews they captured because documentary participants *played for the camera* because of what they had learnt previously.

Popular documentaries with a biographical focus abound in the video store and on network programming. The long-term documentary in particular focuses on the journey of the participant, often portraying major life events and change that occur during the course of the film. Films applicable to this study include Apted's *42 Up* (1998) and *49 Up* (2005); James' *Hoop Dreams* (1994), and *Stevie* (2002); and Hegedus and Noujaim's *Startup.com* (2001).

Audience Research

The literature on documentary participants and their experiences is limited. It is difficult to chart examples of how the media model transformation, yet there is a useful body of literature on audience research that provides some insights.

Horton and Wohl (1956) contributed important early writing on audiences. They examine the para-social relationship between the audience and individuals represented on television. It offers audiences opportunities for "playing a vicarious or actual role" (p.222) as they watch individuals' lives play out before them. Television can play an instructive role; perhaps this role is both educational and therapeutic (Bianculli, 1992; White, 1992). Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) present a more pessimistic, if not deterministic, approach to culture and audience in their writing and in the work of the Frankfurt School. Relying on Marxist analysis, they provide a critique of the dominant and hegemonic ideology of the culture industry; the powerful cultural elite limits the freedom of the audience (cited in Lorimer & Gasher, 2004). There is debate in the literature of media education mostly surrounding treatment of the audience. Theories that reduce the awareness (and intelligence) of the audience and, therefore, require what is

termed an *inoculation approach* towards media education are viewed as suspect (Buckingham, 2003).

Audience research examines the *process of effect* on an individual, and the *outcome of the effect* on the individual. Both the process and final outcome are useful when considering transformative learning. Blumler and Katz (1974) note the process of effect is best explored by the audiences' *uses and gratification.* In this approach the audience is "actively selecting aspects of the text for its own use: it is using that material actively to work through interests and concerns" (Burton, 2005, p. 89). This approach may make an active audience, but human agency is still limited to what is programmed by the media. Concern for the empowered individual is paralleled in the literature critical pedagogy and adult education (see also Freire, 1970; Brookfield, 2005).

If one can assume an active audience, it then becomes important to address the effect on the individual. Burton (2005) outlines the influence of media on audience in terms of types of change. The media can have an effect on people's attitudes "towards or against certain ideas or behaviours;" a cognitive effect on "people's values and beliefs—how one thinks about a subject;" an emotional effect of "what one feels about a subject;" and can effect people's way of looking at and thinking about the world" (p. 101). Each of these outcomes of effect can be seen as a parallel to the processes of critical thinking needed for transformative learning.

Documentary Filming as Learning

In this last section I examine the literature on learning through the documentary film process. I begin with a look at the various formats of video. Next, I discuss the process of filming. I then examine the literature on the effect on the individual. I

conclude this section by looking for connections in the literature on videotaping to transformative learning.

Research and Motion Picture Mediums

The literature on the topic of film studies is typically focused on the genres of film criticism and the craft of filmmaking. The former genre, which is more substantial, uses various approaches of textual criticism to explore completed films for themes. The latter genre, a much more limited body of literature, explores the dynamics of filmmaking in the language of the industry. Neither of these is meant to address adult learning, yet there are some parallels that assist in this study.

There are several key historical examples that suggest the connection between cinema and its educational potential. Filmmaking contributes to discourse on film, which feeds back again to filmmaking. Andre Bazin, a school teacher in France during World War II gave up his responsibilities in the classroom to pursue the potential he saw in cinema (Andrew, 1978). He possessed an amazing vision to equip audiences with the tools to watch a film critically. Bazin created cine clubs and public film screenings where critical discussion could occur. As Bazin's France was devastated by the Nazi occupation, he saw critical viewing as a psychological and sociological transformative process. His writing inspired a legion of filmmakers and film critics who would go on to make films of their own; the French New Wave of film was a direct offspring of Bazin's work.

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB), under the early direction of John Grierson, established a series of film screenings taken from town to town with a significant social education focus (Evans, 1984). The NFB has on many occasions

promoted community involvement in the making of films, often in conjunction with significant social events. George Stoney, an American filmmaker, who also spent time in Canada working with the NFB, used the creation of his films to educate local communities (as the participants in the film, or the residents of the location represented in the film); he furthered this educational focus through the publicity and community-based screenings of his films (Abrash & Whiteman, 1999). One example of Stoney's activism is the film *The Uprising of '34*, where he created a historical documentary film about a long forgotten union protest to help restore the memory of the event and rejuvenate a community's identity (Abrash & Whiteman). In each of these examples, there was a connection among filming, the screening of the film and learning.

There are several important examples of learning represented in various video formats. Video is often used in research as a means to gather data on human participants (Boman, 1994; Paterson, Bottorff, & Hewat, 2003; Rosenstein, 2002). Videotaping is often used in the field of psychology to assist with therapeutic processes (Getz and Nininger 1999). Ethnography and sociology use video as a form of data recording as well (Russell, 1999). Goodman (2004) outlines the intersection between the process of filmmaking and research.

There is a rich tradition of autobiographical and first person video documentary (Caouette, 2003; McElwee, 1986, 2003) where the director's transformative journey is portrayed on screen. A more recent trend in the use of video for research has been towards participatory video. Tuladhar's (1994) use of participatory video with women in rural Nepal demonstrates the pedagogical opportunity of using video to develop literacy. In the study, community members are provided means to produce their own videos.

There is a potential here to allow individuals the opportunity to "name the world and to change it" (Freire, 1970, p. 69). Braden (1999) makes the connection between advances in inexpensive video technology and the application of Freire's ideas to the use of video as a legitimate pedagogical process:

> Certainly at the beginning of the 1970s portable lightweight and low-cost video equipment was not available. Today, his theme about critical thinking is one which need not be seen as tied to specific forms of literacy when new media for recording communication are readily available. (p. 120)

It is important here to consider the influence of post-colonial and feminist research on the filming process. Much has been written on how *the gaze* of the powerful reduces *the other* to an object (Bannerji, 1993). Kindon (2003) notes that

> Using video makes the gaze explicit within a research process. It highlights the relationship between researcher/researched, observer/observed, drawing attention to who is in control of the viewing technology, what is being framed and how the images are being produced or represented. (pp. 145-146)

Filming, like research, involves ethical and political decision. The movement towards video technology in research and participatory video offers the potential to democratize the process and to give more power to the participant. One example of this is McLarty and Gibson's (2000) use video in their emancipatory research involving adults with disabilities. In their work they allowed disabled participants more control of the video production process, and therefore gave them more of a voice as they engage in a unique learning process. There certainly is a pedagogical potential in the process of filming when video is considered a form of literacy:

> The introduction of video enabling the poor to use spoken and visual recordings challenges the dominance of reading and writing. The revolution in the way that information is transmitted and received is led by the global media, which already reaches some of the poorest ghettos and rural communities. (Braden, 1999, p. 120)

The proliferation of television and the popularity amongst adult learners does not insure a media literate audience. Brookfield (1987) offers that a media-literate adult might be defined as one "who possess some critical awareness of television's capacity for distortion in its supposedly objective reporting of events in the 'real' world" (p. 189).

The Filming Process

There are many educational connections to be made regarding the documentary filming process. This section explores the literature related to the filming process, but not all of the literature is directly related to filmmaking because of the limited amount of literature. Connections can be made through parallel writing such as issues on research interview techniques.

Essential to this discussion is the issue the relationship of the filmmaker to the documentary participant. Much has been written on the significance of a learner-centred approach to adult education (Brookfield, 1987; Dewey, 1916; Knowles, 1980; Merriam & Caffarella, 1998). The same principles can be applied to the filming relationship, if it too is considered a site of adult learning. In this case, the documentary participant is the learner in a way that parallels the learning of adults in the classroom. This is further paralleled in the field of psychology where the interviewee and the interviewer relationship invites investigation.

There is more literature on the research elements of interviews, not specifically documentary interviews. The observations from these studies can be applied to the learning of documentary participants. Hiller and DiLuzio (2004) discuss the development of the research interview towards a mutually beneficial exchange for both the interviewer and the interviewee:

> In contrast to the traditional approach in which the interviewee is viewed as a repository of answers and the interview process itself is visualized as a conduit or pipeline of information that the researcher seeks, constructivism understand the interview as a meaning-making experience and as a site for both producing knowledge through the "active" collaboration of both interviewer and interviewee. (p. 3)

The parallel connections to learning and the field of critical pedagogy are significant. Hiller and DiLuzio note, "the participant is not merely a container to be emptied of its relevant information but that the respondent is a real person" (p. 3). This moves towards a greater respect for the individual and corresponds directly to Freire's (1970) writing on the banking approach to education:

> In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. (p. 53)

Renov (1995) recognizes a progression from religious confessional to psychotherapist's couch to the potential of video to act as a modern confessional site. White (1992) further notes that this televised and storied confessional is usually also commodified:

> There is a sense that participating as the confessional subject is part of the therapeutic ethos projected by television: telling one's story on television is part of the process of recovery (and repetition). At the same time this confers on the participants a sense of celebrity. (p. 182)

Both Renov and White are indebted to Foucault's writing on confessions. Foucault (1978) notes that the West has become

> a confessing society. The confession has spread its effects far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell. (p. 59)

Long-term documentaries use sequential interview to gather footage. Oritz (2001) notes that research interviews of this nature allow participants to explore themselves and their learning in more detail. These conditions could facilitate the critical thinking and challenging of assumptions described in transformative learning. Bell and van Leeuwen organize media interviews into three types: revelatory, adversarial, and conversational (as cited in Bonner, 2006). Each of these three types of interviews stimulates the thinking process of the interviewee; there are potential connections here to Mezirow's (2002) description of transformative learning. The media interview can present the interviewee with a disorienting dilemma, provoke self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, and provide critical assessment of assumptions.

Hiller and DiLuzio (2004) note that the "the evolving dialogue represents the interviewee coming to terms with his or her perceptions, emotions and evaluations about the topic at hand. The answers to questions are not necessarily already formed or packaged into concise answers" (p. 6). This parallels the process identified by Mezirow (2002) and Brookfield (1991) regarding critical thinking and challenging assumptions.

A comparison can be made between the process of video interviews for documentary and the practice of adult education. Video interviews for documentaries that follow ethical standards are consensual (Rabiger, 2004), with individuals being intentional about their participation. The relationship established between filmmaker and participant is parallel to that of the teacher/student. Rabiger elaborates on the process of interviewing for documentary film:

> To face another human being while making documentaries is to probe, to listen, to reveal oneself by responding with further questioning. It means helping someone express the meanings of her life ... Subtly or otherwise, the interviewer directed

> the participant, providing the necessary support, guidance, or encouragement to help make a soul emerge. Part of that process means providing resistance to the immediate and superficial when one senses there is something else beneath the surface. (p. 330)

Brookfield (1985) notes six principles of critical practice in adult education that provide several parallels to the intentions of a documentary film director. In adult education, participation is voluntary, there is a respect for self worth, the exchange is collaborative, participants are involved in a constant process of activity and reflection (praxis), the goal is to foster a spirit of critical reflection, and the aim is to nurture self-directed, empowered adults. Indeed, these principles are common in adult learning literature of many other writers (Cranton, 2006; Freire, 1970; Merriam & Caffarella, 1998; Mezirow, 1991).

The Effect on the Individual

What is the effect of participating in a documentary on the individual? The context of the interviews has a significant effect on what is revealed by the participants. Both psychology and education are influenced by humanistic learning theories that suggest adults need a supportive environment to flourish (Merriam & Caffarella, 1998). As in the educational relationship, Hiller and DiLuzio (2004) note the intimacy generated in the interview does affect the interviewee and what they get from the experience. Several studies recognize that research interviews can become therapeutic (Gale, 1992; Ortiz, 2001). Oritz and Hiller and DiLuzio (2004) suggest that interviews may have a therapeutic effect as a byproduct.

Rouch, a documentary filmmaker, notes that the camera often acts as an stimulant: "it has the possibility of doing something I couldn't do if the camera wasn't

there: it becomes a kind of psychoanalytic stimulant which lets people do things they wouldn't otherwise do" (cited in Levin, 1971, p. 137).

Can an interview empower the interviewee? Empowerment is important to the field of adult education; giving voice and agency to individuals in a relationship of power is a thesis central to Freire (1970). The interview process of a documentary is a potential site for education and empowerment of documentary participants. Although they are not working in the field of video, Hiller and DiLuzio (2004) find something significant happens for the interviewee, there is a sense that the "research interview legitimizes the experience and, in its own way, is 'empowering' (p. 12). They suggest the benefits of a constructivist perspective applied to research interviews. Their discussion echoes Freire: "The implication here is that the participant is not merely a container to be emptied of its relevant information" (Hiller & DiLuzio, p. 4).

Many attempts have been made to try and empower individuals through video production. Researchers Ramella and Olmos (2005) suggest giving participants a voice by allowing them to control the video camera to tell their story; they suggest the label *Participant Authored Audiovisual Stories*. Taylor (2002) suggests a similar use of photography in relation to adult education and research with teachers:

> The participant is responsible for taking photographs instead of the researcher, making it possible to explore what visual images come to mind when the participant thinks of a teacher, a student, and/or learning. These photographic images can also be used as interview prompts to help participants more effectively conceptualize what they believe to be fundamental about teaching adults. (p. 123)

The desire for authentic and critically reflective teachers (Brookfield, 1995b, 2005; Cranton, 2002, 2006) is mirrored in the field of documentary filmmaking (see also Cunningham, 2005; Stubbs, 2002; Goldsmith, 2003). Some filmmakers try to be less

intrusive in their craft by filming without interviewing participants: instead they attempt to capture action that is occurring before them. Maysles, an early founder of the cinema verité style of documentary filmmaking, is critical of the interview process:

> When you do an interview, the answer is your question, so it's a setup every time, and you're getting away from what documentary, I think, should do and what is its divine right or responsibility, which is to film people's experiences rather than set up an artificial situation where you're pumping them for information, information that is probably better recorded in literature rather than in cinema. (cited in Stubbs, 2002, p. 8)

This verité style does not remove subjectivities, nor does it remove the influence of power from the interaction between filmmaker and documentary participants. Morris, a leading documentary filmmaker and opponent of strict verité retorts:

> You can tell a documentary story completely differently than in the verité idea, and produce some very, very interesting and powerful really stuff in the process... Style is not truth. Just because you pick a certain style does not mean that you somehow have solved the Cartesian riddle of what's out there, that you no longer have to think about anything. You just adopt a methodology. (cited in Cunningham, 2005, p. 58)

The reality is that the filmmaking process is guided by the filmmaker's agenda and cannot be reduced to a positivist perspective. Ruby (1992) observes that objectivity in documentary filmmaking is a myth; documentarians cannot "speak for" anyone, and have therefore begun to "speak about" or "speak with" their subjects. Rabiger (2004) states that the relationship between filmmaker and interviewee

> is seldom as equal as it is between friends. The director arrives with advantages and hoping to get access to another person's life. As such we always exploit other people because there can be no film without such access. So you have the obligation to give and not just take, to be sensitive yet also assertive in the positive sense. (p. 330)

If the documentary interview can be considered a modern form of confession, Foucault (1978) concludes that the confession finds "the speaking subject is also the

subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it" (p. 61)

It is worth noting Brookfield's (2005) clear exposition of power based on the writing of Foucault (1980). For Foucault, power is all pervasive and should not be seen as merely possessed but as exercised. If power is present in small ways in small interactions, it is present even in the exchange between filmmaker and documentary participant. How can this be applied to the filming of a documentary? It is useful in that it complicates the exchange on a documentary film set. There is power exercised by both parties in different ways.

Transformative Learning and Filming

It has already been noted that interviewees are affected by the process of research interviews (Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004; Oritz, 2001) and by appearing on video (Lomax & Casey, 1998; Ramella & Olmos, 2005; Rosenstein, 2002). Using video with learners to explore essential skills and provide unique pedagogical opportunities has been noted by Braden (1999), Stumpf (2000), and Kearney and Schuck (2004).

Photography has been used on many occasions with interviews to elicit a response in participants (see Hurworth, Clark, Martin & Thomsen, 2005). Taylor (2002) makes a direct link between the use of photography in research and adult education. He suggests that in this research process "the photographs are not merely being interpreted by participants, but have the potential to promote a deeper understanding of their underlying values and assumptions about the environment, and contribute to the development of new

understandings of the self" (p. 126). Collier elaborates: "The imagery dredges the consciousness (and subconsciousness) of the informant, and in an exploratory fashion reveals significance triggered by the photographic subject matter" (cited in Taylor, 2002, p. 126). This language echoes Dirkx's discussion of transformative learning outside of awareness (as cited in Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006).

Several researchers using video to gather data noted that participants learned as they were allowed to watch themselves on video. Perhaps participants learn as they watch themselves in a manner similar to transformative learning: "It is assumed that viewing a video of one's performance will stimulate recall of the performance, which in turn will produce reflection on that action, which in turn will lead to learning" (Rosenstein, 2002, p. 17). To facilitate this encounter, with video footage, Watling (1996) created what he termed *portraitures* of video participants, excerpts from video footage during the filming for his research. These sketches were presented to participants "to stimulate reflection and dialogue" (p. 10).

Goodman observed through his work with young gangs in New York City how "video defamiliarizes the familiar." He continues:

> We tend to go through life almost being lulled into accepting our conditions. But there's something about video that captures life, reframes it, positions it. The residents themselves had been going to the fire hydrant to get water because there was no running water in their buildings. They lived it. But to see it on the video somehow made it more real. It was a transformative experience for them. (as cited in Pall, 1999)

It is not clear from this brief quote if Goodman's use of the term transformative fits with the field of transformative learning, but it is evident that there is an educational experience present for the participants of the video. In what sense is the experience of

documentary participants educational, and are these experiences transformative? Do the experiences of documentary participants meet the criteria for transformative learning?

Direct references to transformative learning in documentary video interviews are limited, suggesting a gap in the literature. Again, the discussions in the field of qualitative research interviews provide a parallel source for this discussion. Hiller and DiLuzio (2004) write that the interview is a significant opportunity for the interviewee: "So, while the research interview is a meaning-making occasion, it is by its very nature a meaning-making occasion primarily for the interviewee" (p. 6). They go on to say that "the evolving dialogue represents the interviewee coming to terms with his or her perceptions, emotions and evaluations about topic at hand" (p. 6). This connects to Mezirow's (1997) work on transformative learning and points of view. What did participants learn about themselves? Did they identify through critical thinking some of their habits of mind? Hiller and DiLuzio (2004) elaborate on the significance of the interview:

> It provides an opportunity for the interviewee to critically evaluate her own logic and behaviour. In that sense, the interview can serve as a form of self-discovery and even enlightenment for the respondent, as the interviewer contributes to a form of guided reflection. Statements like "I had never thought of it that way before" or "I think I downplayed this factor in my own thinking because of ..." revealed that new linkages and new explanations occurred as a result of the interview. (p. 19)

While not specifically referencing confessions in video interviews, Foucault's (1978) discussion of confessions offers something of value. The confession is "a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him and promises him salvation"

(p. 62). While not a directly connected to the principles of transformative learning, this quote provides an additional aspect of the interpersonal dynamics of these processes.

Rosenstein (2002) offers an example of the videotaping of Holocaust survivors that furthers the potential of the filming process:

> The video inadvertently compensates for the humiliation of the past. Thus, the survivors are able to overcome the psychic numbing that had prevented them from giving vivid account of the life that they managed to live under the horrifying circumstances of the period. This phenomenon suggests depths of cognitive, therapeutic, ethical and even aesthetic possibilities. (p. 14)

The process of observing yourself on video provides an opportunity for critical reflection in a manner similar to Mezirow (2002) and Brookfield (1987). Rosenstein (2002) elaborates on how watching videotape of a real situation stimulates recall, which in turn provides a look at the "thought process leading up to an interaction" (p. 19).

Trying on others' point of view is part of the process of transformative learning Mezirow (2002). White (1992) explores the therapeutic effect of television watching on a media literate audience; she points out specifically the popularity of self-help and talk shows. Perhaps the process of watching others and then watching themselves approaches the critical reflection process of Mezirow? It is helpful to revisit Brookfield's (1986) statement at this point:

> When we question the accuracy of sitcoms or news broadcasts, and when we hear others raise similar doubts, we not only focus on the distorted and oversimplified nature of television, we also critically reassess the validity of our own assumptions. (p. 241)

The representations of the media, either in sitcoms, news, or human-interest programming present the viewer with assumptions in action. This does not guarantee that the viewer will critically evaluate the content on television, and more importantly their own assumptions, but it presents the opportunity.

The experiences of an individual participating in a long-term documentary may be similar to Mezirow's (2002) description of incremental transformations. The nature of long-term documentaries lends itself to change over time rather than sudden transformations. Apted's (1998, 2005) *Up* series of documentary films is a profound example. Starting with a film in 1963, Apted filmed a group of 7 year olds and asked them questions about their current life and what they hoped for the future. He then returned to make another film with the same participants 7 years later, asking the same sorts of questions. He has made a new feature documentary with this group every 7 years since then. The progression of the individuals is exciting to watch. They proceed through common events in life, many of their experiences could be considered transformative. The participants discuss the positive and negative aspects of being in front of the camera, a useful connection to this study. A further example is Berlinger and Sinofsky (1992), makers of the film *Brother's Keeper,* who observed the dramatic changes of social abilities in the three brothers who are the participants in their documentary over several years. Again, the filmmaking process is not the only influence at work in these complex situations, but it plays a part.

Summary of the Literature and Gaps Identified

In this chapter I have explored the literature of transformative learning, media literacy and documentary video learning. In this closing section I summarize the major elements of the literature as discussed above. I then identify the gap in the literature that motivates this study.

The adult learning literature has given considerable attention to the topic of transformative learning. Transformative learning is a theory in progress. The foundations

of the theory have been expanded to answer the criticism of Mezirow's (1978) initial work. One area of significant discussion is the inclusion of extrarational ways of knowing to the body of transformative learning literature. A recent issue of the *Journal of Transformative Education* included a discussion between Mezirow, a proponent of a rational view of transformative learning, and Dirkx, who favours the addition of the extrarational in the theory (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006).

The literature of media literacy is well established in areas of methods of media production, media text critique, and audience response theories. A major development in the literature is towards a critical media literacy, one that provides an ideological critique. The vast majority of the literature on media focuses on K-12 students, and although many parallels exist, the literature is not directly written for the field of adult education.

The literature exploring aspects of documentary film is focused primarily on film criticism and the craft of filmmaking. Few selections discuss directly the effect of filming on the participants of documentary films. Literature in other areas provides some helpful parallel discussion on interviews and interviewee dynamics. By looking at the literature on research interviews and therapeutic uses of interviews, I have suggested the pedagogical potential of the documentary film.

As the above literature review reveals, there are gaps in the intersecting literature of transformative learning, media literacy, and documentary video learning. Based on my review of the literature, I discovered that there is not much known about adult learning through documentary participation, nor is there significant research completed on the transformative learning of documentary participants. Taylor (2006) acknowledges the developments of this field:

> Another emerging research phenomenon has been the engagement of photography and video when researching transformative learning. They can assist study participants who lack the necessary verbal skills and reflexive ability to adequately describe their beliefs, values, and or feelings, which often operate at a subconscious level. Also, photograph and video provide a means to help stimulate reflection through a mutual visual context for both the participant and researcher, promoting a more collaborative research experience. (p. 396)

The pedagogical potential of documentary filming is significant; "Interviewing—indeed, documentary making in general—can create a liberating arena for discovery and growth" (Rabiger, 2004, p. 330). It seems that the discovery and growth identified by Rabiger includes potentially transformative learning. This gap is interesting to me and provides the focus for this research study, which I describe in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

In this chapter I describe the planning and implementation, the participants' life situations and results of my research study. In the first section I provide the planning of the study and my involvement as a researcher. It includes a subsection that describes the research process. In the second section I present the participants. The last section provides an account of the findings of the study.

Planning and Implementing the Research

In the summer of 2005 I approached the administration of the treatment centre that operates the school where I teach with a request to create a video documentary on the experiences of several people proceeding through the treatment program. I was intending to combine my knowledge of the treatment program (as a former treatment staff person before I became a teacher) with my interest in education (as a teacher and as a student in the St. Francis Xavier University Master of Adult Education program). I was confident that the final video would be compelling; my observation of the treatment program over the years had led me to the belief that the successful completion of the treatment program was a fascinating process of change.

The documentary film can be classified as an independent film, and my study can be described as independent research. The treatment centre was not involved in funding the project and was not involved in the production beyond granting consent for it to occur. The filming consisted of me sitting down for a lengthy interview of 30 to 60 minutes with a single participant; I sat behind, and the participant sat in front of the video

camera. This interview process recurred a total of 75 times and involved four interviewees. Depending on the location and time of day, the film set was complicated by several stage lights and lapel microphones. Periodically, the filming was conducted in locations in the treatment centre with other people present. I mention these elements because they are factors that influenced the content presented by the participant during the documentary filming and then later in the research study. With time, the participants grew accustomed to the process of filming and forgot the camera, lights, and microphones.

I began interviewing the first participant on a weekly basis in January 2006. I eventually recruited three other participants for the film. I conducted regular interviews each week with each participant. During the documentary interviews, we discussed several areas related to their experience. I asked questions about why they entered the treatment centre, what their circumstances were like, and probed for the nature of their addictions. I then explored what it was like to first enter the addictions treatment centre: what did they think and feel when they first arrived? I asked about the routines and responsibilities of the treatment program: what was it like to live in a long term treatment program? I asked about the main challenges and their difficulties it the program. I asked them about their learning: what did they feel was most significant about their experience, and what had they learnt so far in the treatment program?

In spring of 2006 I began to focus my research for the Master in Adult Education program St. Francis Xavier University around this documentary project. It was clear to me by this time that the documentary participants were learning from the process. I was confident this would make an interesting research study, one that would contribute to the

field of adult education and documentary filmmaking. I formalized my intentions in a request to the Research Ethics Board of the university to use the documentary participants as the focus of my research and thesis. This request was granted (see Appendix A) and my formal research was conducted from May 2006 to July 2006 in the form of separate interviews with research-based questions. The documentary filming continued during this time as well. I also used excerpts from the previous documentary footage during the research interviews.

My Role as Researcher

It is important to situate myself in this study. My personal involvement affects the individuals in the research process. My subjectivity affects the data collection and the analysis generated in this study. I am a white, middle-class male whose interest in this study surfaces from my love of teaching and filmmaking. In both my teaching and film directing I make every effort to set aside my position of privilege to work respectfully with my students and actors/documentary participants. In this particular study, my prior knowledge of the treatment program, my employment in the adult learning centre which is run by the treatment centre, and my sympathetic stance to their treatment approach all affect the study. My previous interaction and rapport with some of the research participants affects the study as well. In each of these instances I have made every effort remain objective and impartial during this process of investigation, gathering and analysis of data. Yet, I am also cognizant to allow my subjective knowledge of the program and the participants to enhance the interpretation of the results.

My background work as an addictions treatment worker before I began teaching is where I first met Curt and Graham, participants in the documentary and this study (all

names have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants). This past career proved valuable in that it gave me an understanding of the daily routines of the participants in this particular residential treatment program. I was able to discuss their experience in the context of the philosophy of the treatment program.

The philosophy of the program is less conventional than popular opinions on addictions in that it focuses on the psychological and sociological factors, and the effects of behaviour as the source of addictions. The treatment program refuses a disease approach to treating addictions, popularized by treatment models such as alcoholics anonymous. Instead, to free one's self from addictions is to make lifestyle and behaviour changes.

While my interactions with participants remained consistently focused on the educational nature of their experiences, my probing questions were informed by my understanding of the process of treatment as a past *keyworker* (a case worker employed by the treatment centre working with residents in their treatment programming). I could anticipate what participants were going through in various aspects of the daily routine of the program. My questions probed at thoughts, feelings, and learning that I anticipated through my work with clients in the past.

In my current work as a teacher at my adult learning centre, I was able to make contact with several of the participants in the documentary. I met Sandra as a student and I found myself back in touch with Graham through my English classes. My work as an adult education teacher greatly informed this research study. I was able to recognize and respect the need for participants to explore thoughts and experiences on their own. I was

sensitive to the importance of self-directed learning to adult education, applicable to all pedagogical sites, including this study.

As I am in the habit of doing in my high school classes in the adult learning centre, I used Socratic questioning in the interviews to stimulate discussion. This allowed the exchange between documentary participants and myself to approach a form of critical discourse. The questions were carefully posed, and on some topics I would return to the same questions asked in the past to see if there had been any changes for the participant. When the research study began, I also probed for an understanding of the value of the documentary to the participant. These latter interviews remained semi-structured and also used the Socratic approach to gather data.

When I approached the research design of this study, I was tempted to structure the project as an action research project to help me understand my own work in teaching and documentary work. But, with time, I realized that the focus of my films is the participants, and my research would therefore be the same. I was sure that there would be ample opportunity for self-reflection on my own role in the research process and in my practice as a filmmaker and educator. This I will discuss in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis. I focused the study on the experiences of the documentary participants.

Strategies as Researcher

As I prepared for the research interviews I established a set of strategies that would guide the process. I wanted these strategies to inform my actions in the interview and anticipated they would assist in obtaining meaningful data for the subsequent analysis.

The first strategy was to insure a positive environment for the interviews. I tried to create a context where participants could leave their responsibilities of the treatment centre and their busy lives to have a moment of reflection. My goal was to allow a space that created the potential for learning. This took the form of a quiet room, free from interruption. I began the interview sessions as the rituals of the interviews for the documentary, with a casual conversation about how they were doing. I would respond to their comments with my own reflections (with an emphasis on things I found interesting, or what I was learning) to try and set a tone of openness. They were free to talk about what ever they wanted before I shifted the focus to the questions for the research. I wanted to help learner move "into a more holistic learning context ... to an empathic field for learning-within-relationships" (Davis-Manigaulte et al., 2006, p. 31).

I wanted participants to feel comfortable with the purpose of the study and with the two research interviews. In order to facilitate this, I approached them early on with my idea for them to be involved in my research study. I followed up with formal written requests for their participation (described in detail below). I explained my interest in the study and how it would link our work in the documentary and my graduate studies. The participants were given an overview of the semi-structured interviews and the motivation for including excerpts from the documentary video footage. There was a consistent positive response to the description of the study.

My goal was to be attentive to the complex interpersonal dynamics of the interview process. I planned to pay close attention to verbal and nonverbal cues of the participants. I knew that at times I would approach topics that might be of an emotionally sensitive nature; I wanted to avoid clinical issues that are best dealt with by a trained

professionals. Yet, I did want to watch ideas hinted at in their responses, comments that needed further probing to obtain responses related to the study. I also was interested in managing the interview when it drifted off topic. I knew from the past documentary interviews that one participant had a habit of focusing on a particular issue which could quickly take centre stage at the expense of other important topics for the study.

I was interested in having the interviews informed by a rational approach to understanding participant experiences. The documentary facilitated opportunity for participants to think carefully about themselves and their circumstances. Why are they in treatment? What has helped them during their treatment process? How do they respond to the treatment approach of the program? For the research interviews, I wanted to use the same sorts of "what if" questions to probe the cause and effect relationship of their being in the documentary. My purpose for the research interviews mirrors the principles of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2002); to articulate assumptions, foster critical reflection, allow participants to explore other viewpoints, engage in discourse with me on their situation and circumstances, revise assumptions, and act on assumptions.

My strategies for the research also included openness to an extrarational approach to understanding participant experiences. I wanted to provide environment conducive to expressive ways of knowing (Davis-Manigaulte et al., 2006; Yorks & Kasl, 2006). I believed with Yorks and Kasl "that not only must feelings be dealt with when they arise, but feelings must be intentionally evoked and engaged when the educational purpose is to foster transformative learning" (p. 46). The inclusion of video footage from past documentary interviews was to complement participants' responses from the research study. I assumed that watching themselves on video would allow them a degree of

reflection that would not just rational, but include extrarational impressions as well. Yorks and Kasl (2006) give examples of activities that demonstrate how "expressive ways of knowing codifies learning so it can be re-experienced by the learner at some future date" (p. 59). The video excerpts offered the potential for accessing impressions in a unique way; participants can see themselves and react to the thoughts and feelings represent on the screen.

A final strategy for the research was to follow proper ethical protocols for the study. This began with my application to the Research Ethics Board explaining in detail my intentions for the study (See Appendix A). In my proposal for the study I explained the steps I would take to keep participants informed of the details of the study, and maintain the confidentiality of the participants in all documentation. My contact with participants in the interviews would remain respectful, I would not disclose information about the others to any participant in the study.

The Research Process

This study involved four current or former residents of the treatment centre. The research used a basic interpretive qualitative study methodology (see Merriam, 1998). My assumption here followed Merriam and Simpson (2000) in that "reality is constructed by individuals in interaction with their social worlds" (p. 97).

As the researcher, I was the sole person responsible for both data collection and analysis. My purpose in conducting the research was for understanding. I have already acknowledged how my involvement in the study, my subjectivity, shapes the investigation and the subsequent findings.

The research participants were participants in a long-term video documentary I was directing/producing. The final documentary film, when completed, will be used as an educational tool explaining the dynamics of addiction treatment from the unique behavioural health perspective. Since I began filming in January, 2006, the documentary process demanded intensive weekly interviews, with each participant examining his or her learning while in addictions treatment. The film follows them from their entry into the residential treatment facility until they have made the transition into the community to apply the things they have learnt. The research occurred mid way through the filming process from May-July 2006; the documentary interviews continued after the research was completed.

I was careful to follow appropriate ethical protocols during the study. The participants in the documentary had already provided written consent to be videotaped for the film. For the research project, each participant was provided a detailed "Invitation to Participate" (Appendix B) explaining the research study. This invitation was followed by a "Consent Form" (Appendix C), specific to my study, through which they confirmed their participation in the research project. Participants consented to allowing footage from the documentary to be included in the research project; select video footage from past documentary interviews provided a useful supplementary source of data.

To begin the study, each individual participated in a semi-structured interview (Appendix D). The focus of this first research interview was to explore the experiences of participants during the filming process. The questions from this interview were grouped according to categories. First, I wanted to know their reasons for participating in the documentary and if these reasons changed with time. Here I explored the process of

filmmaking and how it affected the participants. I wanted to know how aware they were of the process and if they were conscious of their learning. Second, I explored aspects of participants' knowledge of other documentaries. My desire here was to assess their level of media literacy to later judge if this would affect the depth of their experience in any way. I included here questions about the influence of the camera and potential audiences to their responses. Finally, I posed questions that explored the learning and potential transformative learning of the participants. I focused here on key aspects of the transformative process such as, important thoughts and feelings, assumptions, empowering moments, and any changes in self-perception and behaviour.

This first research interview was video taped and transcribed; a written summary report of the interview was returned to the participant for comment. There were no changes required from these reports, as each participant concurred with what was recorded.

After I completed the first research interview I went through the collection of video footage I had from the previous months of taping for the documentary for excerpts of what I considered to be significant learning moments, or for moments that the participants had noted in the first interview. I was eager to present this footage to participants and see their responses in the second interview.

Three of four of the participants had the second research interview approximately a week after the first interview. The other participant was more difficult to meet with consistently after she had left the treatment program. To ensure the interviews would take place, I held both the first and second interviews on the same day with her. I videotaped participants as they viewed these excerpts of themselves from the documentary

interviews; I transcribed both the excerpted video and their comments. The second semi-structured interview (See Appendix E) followed immediately after this viewing. Participants were asked for reactions to the critical incidents presented on video. I continued with questions on my three themes; the filming process, media literacy, and transformative learning.

This second research interview was also video taped and transcribed; a written summary report of the interview was returned to the participant for comment. None of the participants found any discrepancies in the transcriptions.

The two sets of semi-structured interviews on four participants produced a rich cache of data I then analyzed for results. On my first reading of the data I highlighted statements from participants that were noteworthy. Next, I created a chart of participant responses in order to compare responses for each question. At this point I began to identify common themes between participants and by questions. The general themes from the results appear in chapter 3 of this study.

After I had organized what they said, I then looked at their responses through the lens of transformative learning. At this stage of the research study, I also looked to the broader adult learning literature, particularly on transformative learning that matched the data. I compared the themes in their responses to the literature on transformative learning, using Mezirow (1978, 1991, 2002), Dirkx (2006) and Cranton (2006) to identify links to transformative learning. This became the focus of my analysis and interpretation found in chapter 4 of this study.

The Research Participants

Each of the participants in this research study had the similar experience of having a substance addiction and was engaged in long-term residential treatment. In terms of transformative learning, they had already experienced the disorienting dilemma of their addictions, similar to that identified by Mezirow (1978, 1991, 2002), before entering the treatment program. Mezirow (2002) suggests that individuals' "values and sense of self are anchored in our frames of reference. They provide us with a sense of stability, coherence, community and identity" (p. 22). Each participant was in the process of questioning the *frame of reference* affecting their identity and subsequently their addicted behaviour.

The treatment model of the addictions treatment centre shares many of the elements that define transformative learning. Addiction is not a disease but is based on lifestyle choices and behaviours; a life free of addiction is based on examining assumptions leading to past behaviour and outgrowing these past attitudes. The documentary participants were in a residential program designed to facilitate transformative learning, although it did not directly using the label of transformative learning. Their participation in the documentary echoed this learning. The learning site of the treatment program and the learning site of the documentary interview create the complex context of this research study. Brief biographies are provided below.

Curt

Curt is a Metis man, 28 years old, and in treatment for his crack addiction. I first met Curt when he was in treatment as a teenager; I was his caseworker in the treatment

program. Curt has struggled with addictions since then and more recently had started dealing drugs to support his habit. He reached a point of crisis when he was arrested while trying to sell some drugs. Now facing charges for trafficking crack cocaine, he decided he needed to address his addiction in a more structured way. He finally entered treatment to address his addiction. He planned to stay as long as necessary, but he assumed that this would be approximately 6 months. He joined the documentary after he had been in treatment for approximately 30 days. He agreed to take part in this research study after he had been in treatment for 6 months; his research interviews were conducted at the end of his treatment stay, a few weeks before he successfully completed the program and returned to the community. The research with Curt began after 5 months of documentary interviews.

Graham

Graham is a single Native man, 29 years old, in treatment for his solvent and alcohol addictions. I first met Graham when he was in treatment as a teenager in the program where I was a treatment worker. Since that time he had continued his substance use on his home reserve and in the city. As his addiction progressed, his circumstances became more extreme; he eventually ended up living on the street. He had sought treatment several times before his current participation in the program. Previously, he had stayed for 3 to 6 months; he stated he had left his treatment prematurely, before he had really learnt how to stay sober. When he entered treatment this last time, he indicated that he was more focused and ready to stay for a longer duration to make a more significant change. He joined the documentary after he had resided in the treatment program for

twelve months. Graham joined the research study after 5 months of documentary interviews.

David

David is a 45 year old Native man in treatment for alcohol and crack addictions. He indicated that his substance use was influenced by the problems on his reserve, and by the attempts to assimilate his people through residential school. The recent death of his daughter from cancer had a compounding affect on him. His substance abuse contributed to many dysfunctional relationships and the break up of his family; eventually his children were taken into the care of child and family services. His addiction affected his family and social relationships. He tried unsuccessfully to quit using drugs and to reunite with his children. After an unsuccessful meeting with child and family services over his children, David began to binge on drugs; to support his cravings, he robbed a gas station to buy more drugs. David's entry into treatment was directly linked to this last event, which proved to be the significant motivator to change. After 2 months of documentary interviews, David agreed to participate in the research study.

Sandra

Sandra is a Jewish woman, 36 years old, and was in treatment for crack addiction and a life of prostitution. I first met Sandra as a student in my high school classes for adults while she was in treatment on another occasion. She struggled for many years with her addiction and the dysfunctional relationship with her spouse; all 5 of her children were in care of Child and Family Services, or adopted by extended family or others in the community because of these habits. With the apprehension of her youngest child, she agreed to enter treatment again to straighten out her life and hopefully regain custody of

her child. During the filming of the documentary, she remained in the treatment program for three months, at which time she exited to live in the community. Within a month of leaving treatment she returned to her previous lifestyle of addiction and prostitution; her transition made her availability for documentary interviews difficult, but she continued to participate, although less frequently. She participated in the documentary interviews for five months, before she left the program. I lost contact with her for several months. When the research interviews began, she had been out of the stable environment of the treatment program for 3 months.

The Research Data

In this section I record the results of the research according to the five significant themes I identified from the study data. These themes are: the positive learning experience, the therapeutic experience, the stimulation of critical thinking, the sense of personal development, and the perception of media literacy when viewing their videos as audience.

Positive Learning Experience

All of the participants were eager to accept the invitation to join the study. When the first semi-structured interview began, they were quick to enter into dialogue, much like the interviews we had done in the past. Consistently, all participants acknowledged that appearing in the film was a positive experience.

The environment that I created with the camera through the regular documentary interviews was very conversational. I avoided using a camera operator and sound recordist, typical crew of documentary filming, in order to offer a more comfortable environment for interviews to occur. Participants would face a different, and limiting

situation with the addition of another person behind the camera, and a third person holding a microphone. As the interviews continued over many weeks, the participants were relaxed and able to share.

Each participant stated the interview process was a learning experience. In some cases this amounted a greater understanding of the nature of addictions. The motivation for learning was focused several areas. Learning about the dynamics of addictions was one of the reasons for participation. David joined the film with clear intentions of learning about more about his substance use:

> I just wanted to address my addictions and fully understand them. It would be ... maybe see the movie later on in life, whenever it is done, to really understand. At some point in time, if I am in the documentary, to understand my feelings, where as I'm always seeing them, but I can actually see myself there talking. To understand that. How far I have to come to get the healing.

Another important learning intent for participants was to learn more about themselves. Sandra was excited by the chance to join the documentary, and said she thought at the beginning, "I could probably learn from it while I'm talking." Curt took the opportunity to participate in the film because I had worked with him many years previously, and it gave us a chance to meet regularly again. His interest began to change with time. He said, "I got into thinking, maybe I can learn something. I didn't think too much about this, maybe I can learn something."

Graham originally hoped the film would be helpful to teach others about addictions, but as the film progressed he said, "I learned some things about myself"; he was learning about himself while participating. He continued, "the questions made me think. Some of them were tough. It was educational to me in that I learned about myself."

Therapeutic Experience

Each interview typically lasted for 30 minutes to one hour and several of the participants began to refer to the meetings as weekly counseling appointments, though we agreed that the purpose of the interviews remained educational. While not my intention, the interviews were taken as a therapeutic experience, providing a measure of dialogue similar to the counseling sessions they received (or that they hoped to receive) in the treatment program.

While the filming process was focused on the educational aspects of the treatment experience, we returned often to emotional terrain. The line of questions at the start of the series of interviews focused on the nature of their addictive lifestyle and the affect of addictions on them and their families. The interviews remained focused on learning about aspects of health; this included body, mind and their sense of well-being. Curt explained how he felt about the documentary interview sessions:

> The sessions are almost, well like I said before, like a counseling session in a way, you are not a counselor, but you ask the right questions and you know, I think you know a little bit more about what you are asking than you tend to let on. And you know what direction you are going with your questions.

Sandra felt that the sessions offered her a more consistent opportunity to share her experiences and problems from the program. She reported later about her experiences in treatment: "when I was there, that was more my keyworker session, counseling."

Being in the documentary added to their treatment experience, it motivated them to be active in their treatment. I found my background as a former keyworker in the treatment centre very helpful during the interviews. Because of this, the documentary could focus closely on what it was like in the treatment program and how the resident

was (or was not) following his or her established program. Curt recognized that he had an advantage by being in the documentary:

> Not everyone sits down to talk about their program they way I get to, and analyze it and pick it apart and put it back together and look at it for what it is or isn't. So yes, I do think I look at it differently because of this documentary. And like I said, it would be helpful to more people, but you can't do a documentary on everyone, or else it isn't very interesting. But if it helps, you never know.

The interview sessions typically looked closely at attitudes and actions. I would routinely ask participants what the signs were of their progress in the program. I encouraged them to be thinking about potential issues to discuss in the next session. Participants stated they were critical in their thinking as they anticipated opportunities to talk about their program in the next interview session. David elaborated: "When we first started there, I used to think about it, actually every day. Even at nights, I'd be reading and thinking of what has changed in my life so far, what positive things can I say?" Is worth noting that part of the motivation for comments such as this could be to please me or perhaps to please the future audience of the video, however, there were many comments that surfaced through probing questions during the interviews where participants stated that they were talking frankly, not to please anyone.

The residential treatment program is highly structured; every resident is involved in a work crew from the first day they enter. They remain busy with daily chores and responsibilities until the day they finally complete the program. Motivation to remain in a consistent routine can be difficult and the temptation to leave the program and return to a life of addition is always there. The documentary offered them accountability. Each of the participants felt that the documentary gave them added reason to follow through with

their daily responsibilities and to work intentionally on their treatment program. Curt said:

> It helped me keep myself motivated because I know that one session to the next it was good to come with a change, it was good to say look what changed, it was nice, it was good to be motivated to change, not just for the documentary, it also helped. I could sit here and do the same thing everyday for six months. Kevin would have a pretty easy time; although it would be pretty boring for you. But I was motivated from one session to the next to prove myself in ways, prove some of the talk I would say. I was motivated and empowered by the things I would come up with, like you said, epiphanies, wow, I'm motivated I'm empowered by my own self positive talk, or I'm empowered by the fact that I've learnt something

One of the documentary questions that I returned to often was about the future. The interviews provided an opportunity for them to articulate what their plans were for the short and long term. A major focus here was there exit plans and how they would remain sober after they left the treatment program. In David's case, he thought his treatment progress and his role in the documentary gave him hope and direction for the future.

> I think I changed quite a bit. I know who I am, I know where I have to go, and I know what I have to do to get there. I know who I really am now. And why I was like that for so long. But it is so far back there, but I can't keep going back there or I'll always be dysfunctional and I'll always be a drug addict, my kids will always be in care and I'll never have nothing and when I die I won't have anything. It is no reason for me to suffer, or for my kids, and have nothing, like I did.

The treatment program recommends a stay of 3 to 6 months to successfully complete the program. The help that residents obtain is a combination of practical life and work experience, with therapeutic counseling determined by the treatment staff. I mention this at this point to make a distinction between the professional support they obtained with respect to their treatment, and the secondary support that they felt through the documentary interviews.

Critical and Autonomous Thinking

At times the interview questions were difficult or frustrating; at times they provoked strong emotions. The interview often stimulated (critical) thinking and feeling. Graham said, "the questions made me think. Some of them were tough. It was educational to me in that I learned about myself." Participants found the experience encouraged them to be aware of what Mezirow (2002) identifies as their *habit of mind* and their *point of view* expressed through "expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes and judgments" (p. 18). Several noted that their point of view was often pessimistic. The conversations in front of the camera (and through their other treatment work) encouraged them to think constructive (positive) rather than negative thoughts about themselves and world. This was repeated often by David in the interviews; here is one example:

> I don't know, sometimes the ideas would just come in my head. I guess I would think of negative issues, then slowly everything started to turn to positives, like doing a lot of these interviews. I noticed too, a lot of times I did talk, it was everything about negative things that happened in my life. There was nothing ever positive that we talked about. So I just figured if I start thinking and doing positive things, then I'd have something positive to say. That is part of healing. I think that is what you just said, this the way you've got to do it. That is something I thought and learnt.

David was challenged on the assumptions that guided his behaviour and actions. During the interview process my initial questions would often raise issues, and the probes that followed would pursue more complex reasons for assumptions. These probes created the potential for critical thinking.

Beyond critical thinking, the process permitted participants to advance their autonomous thinking. As David suggests in the previous quote, he reflected on his assumptions independently and returned to other documentary interviews with a change in thinking that he achieved himself. He was developing a greater sense of autonomy,

which Mezirow (1997) recognizes as "understanding, skills, and disposition necessary to become critically reflective of one's own assumptions and to engage effectively in discourse to validate one's beliefs through the experiences of others who share universal values" (p. 9).

Personal Development

Residency in a treatment centre for addictions provided a significant opportunity for personal development. Each participant made progress on his or her behaviours and lifestyle choices that led to addiction. The daily work routine of the treatment program, the life skill seminars, and the counseling sessions were catalysts for each participant to establish new ways of thinking and living. The documentary process operated in parallel to the treatment programming. Participants stated that the documentary made their progress even deeper, and in some cases led to additional personal growth in their thinking and living. David talked about his personal growth:

> But I guess deep down, I wanted answers, I wanted people to hear what I had to say about what was bothering me. But now, it made me, all that talking, and videotaping, where I was telling you my feelings, I thought of them later on, I have to think of answers as to how to address them. I'm the only one who has to find those answers.

Curt highlighted the changes he observed: "I learnt a lot from seeing myself on that camera. I sound differently than what I think. I look at that and see a man there, not a kid anymore. I see a man, although a small one. I see a man there. Coming out of his shell."

Graham, who has struggled for years with obesity, identified that the film helped him address his perceptions of his weight. He said,

> That has helped me. We usually talked about my weight issues. It was a big deal. We did talk about my weight on camera. I used to worry about that. It has helped

> me not to care about it. If you don't like it, you can lose weight. But I don't care about it.

The videotaping provided opportunities to build self-esteem, confidence, and independence. All four of the participants said that the repeated interviews, once or twice per week for three or four months, permitted them to feel at ease in front of the camera and more comfortable with answering questions. Graham overcame his insecurities in the interviews over time; previously, he recalled that he was always terrified of cameras. He said, "Before I was nervous, talk slow, with a few words. Now, I feel like now like I'm breezing through the questions. I don't know if you noticed." On occasion, videotaping was conducted during the daily life of the residential treatment program; participants indicated that the camera no longer bothered them in closed interviews, or in more public settings. Sandra said, "I learned more about myself and the more I learn about myself my confidence and self esteem goes up." Despite the progress she made through her treatment, a month after leaving the treatment centre, she returned to crack and prostitution. In the research interview, conducted during her relapse, she said, "That is why I guess I have to be back where I am now, because I haven't learnt everything. And I'm not learning it in treatment because I'm not there anymore."

Media Literacy and Audience Perception

The thought of appearing on television some day was not a main motivator for three of the four participants. Yet, as the filming continued, all the participants confessed to thinking about what it could look like on television and who the audience might one day be.

Several participants thought their television watching skills (media literacy) had improved since being in the documentary. They thought their understanding of the

process of making a video production, like a television show, was less of a mystery because they had seen directly how a show is produced. While they watched news programs or documentaries, they could relate to the person being interviewed, and understood what it was like to appear before the camera lens. They were more aware of the reality behind media representations, and how the individual's ideas and mood on a particular day are captured and can be recreated for viewing at a later date.

Participants demonstrated a more complex understanding of themselves through the filming process. Their perception of themselves, including their assumptions about who they perceived themselves to be, was brought into the spotlight. They made reference to the audience at times, suggesting that the future audience was important to them. They were concerned about how they would be represented to others on video.

During the second part of the research collection process, each participant viewed excerpts from the documentary interviews for the first time. All of them were very curious to see how they had been captured over the months of videotaping. The video excerpts I selected were moments that portrayed a significant idea, thought, or emotion. In several cases, participants knew I would include various scenes from the past interviews because they were significant moments that remained with them. The total length of the video they watched was less than 20 minutes, but this contained five to ten key clips.

When they watched the interview footage, they were pleased and proud of how articulate they looked and sounded on video. Curt stated:

> I couldn't fake that. That stuff I'm saying is coming right out of me. It is raw. It is good stuff. I sounded pretty positive a lot of the time. I've got a good head about me. It is like I know how to explain myself, when I watch myself. Articulate, that is the word, right?

Asked what he thought of seeing himself on video, Graham said, "It feels good. I always thought I'd be shy or embarrassed to see myself, because no one likes to see themselves on tape or to see pictures of themselves. But I didn't mind it at all." This comment illustrates growth, learning and the confidence he developed in his self-perception. His assumptions about himself had changed. The connections here to transformative learning will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

Summary

The planning of the project established a means to examine the experiences of documentary participants for learning. A key feature of the implementation was to use semi-structured research interviews similar in structure to the documentary interviews that the participants understood from our past meetings. The results of the research study demonstrated that participants felt the documentary process was a positive learning experience. Participants stated that at times they felt the interviews were not only educational, but therapeutic as well. The process aloud individuals to think critically about their circumstances and assist them in the personal development they were experiencing in the treatment program. The next chapter provides my discussion and interpretation of implications of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In this chapter I return to the original purpose of the study and compare my findings to the literature. I begin by discussing various aspects of transformative learning that I observed in the results. I move then to observations and implications of documentary filming as a site for pedagogical practice. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the implications of my findings, as well as a discussion of my personal learning from this research study, followed by conclusions and recommendations.

The purpose of this study is to study the experiences of documentary participants. I wanted to determine if they learnt something from the filming process. What about the experience was educational? What influenced their learning? Did their previous knowledge about documentary and television shows further their experience in any way? Would showing participants examples of themselves on video increase the significance of their experience? Were their experiences transformative? Did they realize the elements identified by writers such Mezirow, Dirkx and Cranton? In the following sections I revisit my purpose.

Transformative Learning of Documentary Participants

In this section I take a closer look at the research data for details that connect to the literature on transformative learning process within awareness as identified by (Mezirow 1978, 1991, 2002) and the processes outside awareness as noted by Dirkx (1997, 2001; Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006).

All throughout the study I was very much aware of the problem of assigning transformative learning to other people. I recognize that teachers and researchers can

make attempts to foster transformative learning, but ultimately the business of transformative learning rests with the individual (Cranton, 2006). My notes that follow are recorded with a cautious awareness of my role as the researcher naming other people's experiences. I have made every attempt to make connections that are obvious from their statements.

Recent discussions in the literature of transformative learning have highlighted two important aspects. Mezirow (1978, 1991, 2002) has focused his writing on the rational processes of transformative learning, whereas others such as Dirkx (1997, 2006), suggest the extrarational domain must be included. Both of these approaches are evident in this research study. Mezirow (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006) sees the process of transformative learning within in awareness, as an individual engages in critical thinking to transform a previously acquired *frame of reference*. A frame of reference is a mindset made up of assumptions (involving values, beliefs, understandings of the world) that are applied in behaviour. For Curt, David, Sandra, and Graham who faced addictions, their frame of reference has come to include the regular use of substances for a variety of personals and contextual reasons. The burden of an addiction has caused them personal and social dissonance, which reach a point of crisis and made them seek treatment. Mezirow (1978) first termed this a disorienting dilemma in transformative learning theory.

What follows in transformative learning is the process of critical reflection and examining of assumptions, which Mezirow suggests make "frames of reference more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006, p. 124). There is considerable testing, evaluation and

discourse as the individual moves to a transformed perspective. The treatment process is such a site of transformative learning. It is an opportunity to evaluate previous frame of reference, in particular the reasons for addictive lifestyle and behaviour. Critical reflection is used to establish how an individual's values, beliefs and understanding of the world have contributed to their addictive lifestyle. The residential treatment setting in which my four participants lived allows for a comprehensive change of daily living; the adjustment to new behaviours and attitudes allows for a unique opportunity to re-evaluate previous assumptions.

An additional aspect of transformative learning is the inclusion of learning outside awareness, defined by Dirkx (1997) as soul work or inner work. In essence, there is an inner aspect to the process of learning, one that engages the learner's imagination and intuition. The approach to transformative learning that Dirkx suggests is

> a more integrated and holistic understanding of subjectivity, one that reflects the intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions of our being in the world. This integrated view also seeks to account for the ways in which the social, cultural, and embodied as well as the deeply personal and transpersonal aspects of our being potentially play out in the process of transformative learning. (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006, p. 125)

While not readily available to the rational mind, expressions of our inner world are often evoked by reflection, dialogue and through experiencing the arts, "it reveals itself through art, poetry, music, theatre, and film" (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006, p. 127). In my study I was particularly interested in the potential of how video footage of participants would evoke reactions of an extrarational nature. The data confirmed that long-term documentary interviews are a pedagogical site, one that is characterized by both rational and extrarational elements. The dialogue repeated in weekly interviews was useful to participants as a means to learn about themselves and aspects of their addiction; this

presented itself as a rational process. The context of the treatment setting meant that the documentary interviews evoked content emotional in nature; these feelings and impressions approach the extrarational domain. Seeing themselves on screen during the research provided each participant with an opportunity for intuitive reflection of this other representation of who they were at a previous time during the documentary filming.

The extrarational is an integral part of the residential treatment program. The treatment centre operates as a therapeutic community. The work of residents includes holistic view of health, including body, mind and emotions. All of these components are connected and implicated in the dynamics of addictions. This was apparent in the research as participants considered both their affective and cognitive landscapes for the documentary. As participants commented on aspects of their life, choices and behaviour, they could not separate facts from how they felt about their situation and past. Their circumstances were complicated, and in each case, emotionally heightened because of the trauma of addiction.

The documentary film I began was designed to observe both the rational and extrarational experiences of residents in treatment for addictions. I intended to use the interview process to engage in rational discussions of the experiences, but I also probed for impressions of the emotional and intuitive as well. The research study was focused on both dimensions. The interviews provided a setting for dialogue on the rational (observations of thoughts, feelings, assumptions) but the study included opportunity for representations (through the video excerpts) to elicit even greater critical reflection on assumptions as the four participants—Curt, Graham, Sandra, and David-- saw themselves articulating their frame of reference for the camera. The process offered a chance for

them to see themselves (or where they were previously) during the treatment process and in some cases confirmed their new frame of reference. Viewing images of themselves in dialogue (articulating their frame of reference) provided opportunity for a holistic evaluation, one that included the extrarational. David's reflections on grieving and loss were an example of an evaluation of his emotions, but the extrarational domain surfaced as well. His thoughts about these impressions and feelings were accentuated by later seeing himself on screen. The video footage presented to him showed him crying about the loss of his daughter; like a dynamic mirror, the video allowed him to explore these affective and perhaps even extrarational elements of himself with greater depth. While this affirms the emotional and affective dynamics at work in transformative learning, it needs to be said that affective and extrarational remain elements that overlap but are not the same.

The points for comparison I use to organize this discussion on transformative learning by documentary participants are: dilemmas and compounding circumstances, social-cultural context, critical reflection, discourse, finding stability, and action and reintegration. Each of these elements corresponds to the stages of transformative learning presented by Mezirow (1978, 1991, 2002).

Dilemmas and Compounding Circumstances

Curt suggested in an interview, "You reach rock bottom when you decide to stop digging." While the first phase of transformative learning identified by Mezirow (1978, 1991, 2002) is the disorienting dilemma, others such as Cranton (2002, 2006) indicate that transformative learning is more complex than a step-by-step process. Mezirow suggests that this involves "recognition that an alternative way of understanding may

provide new insights into a problem" (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006). For this research study, I was faced with a the task of delineating between the experiences facilitated by the treatment program and by what occurred in the additional context of the documentary interview process. It was difficult to decide where one started and the other ended. Participants in the documentary entered the treatment program because of a variety of addictions, and destructive lifestyle patterns.

Curt entered the treatment program for a crack addiction and criminal charges for selling drugs. Graham was using alcohol and sniffing inhalants while living on the streets. David, a single father of three young children, voluntarily placed them in care of Child and Family Services because he had resorted to armed robbery to support his daily use of crack. Sandra's newborn baby, her fifth child, was taken into care of Child and Family Services because of her crack addiction and prostitution. All of these scenarios resemble a disorienting dilemma identified by Mezirow (1978, 1991, 2002), but perhaps align more closely to what Clark identified as gradual "integrating circumstances" (as cited in Taylor, 1998). I found that a strict definition of these circumstances did not adequately address the complex nature of their past, present and pending experiences. Each participated in the documentary after a traumatic life experience and the subsequent cessation of their addictive lifestyle, yet the ongoing circumstances of the treatment program compounded the other aspects of their initial presenting problem, which had led them to seek help in the first place; their crisis induced by their addictions was epochal, whereas their long term treatment demanded incremental changes. I understand this by relating Cranton's (2006) range of possibilities of epochal and incremental transformative learning, informed by rational and extrarational transformative learning theories.

The treatment experience provided participants with an important educational experience, one that produced significant changes. Seminars at the treatment centre give residents an explanation of how addictions are not rooted in a disease model, whereby if you have an addiction you have it for life. Rather, the focus is on identifying patterns of thought, lifestyle, and behaviours. The program is rigorous, with daily work duties just as in society; the program teaches residents a new lifestyle. Although not the focus of this study, three of the four participants talked of their treatment experiences as transformative. I was interested in their additional participation in the documentary process as a separate educational process. Was this a transformative process?

There were clear references in the research interview data to indicate the significance of the treatment experience on participants. Comments and reflections on the day-to-day experiences of life in the treatment centre were to be expected, as this was the purpose of the documentary. Participants would discuss situations that they had observed or been involved in that were noteworthy. On the surface the interviews gave participants a chance to describe what it was like to be in treatment. Yet, the experiences provided by the documentary interviews facilitated an additional opportunity of examination. Each participant experienced how challenging the interviews could become. Their reactions to the topic and probing questions displayed the strong emotion reminiscent of what Taylor (1998) calls the "acute internal/external personal crisis" of transformative learning (p. 41). Curt discussed his motives for joining the documentary and what happened as the experience became more involved:

> Right at the beginning it was cut and dry. I'll do this documentary; hang out. You ask questions, I'll answer them, basically; maybe it will help someone. That was the main reasoning for it. I remember thinking, yeah, only if it is going to help someone. So yeah, but then the reasons did change. I started noticing that it was

> helping me to explore myself and understand more things about myself, the questions I was answering, and I put forth to myself. I had to think about things a lot. And sometimes, I'd leave a session, I'd leave one of your sessions and I'd be distraught, or disturbed, or thinking about some of the questions that you asked or the answers that I'd given. So, yes, things changed a little bit, then it became about learning, and helping me move on, too.

The documentary interviews provoked a similar reaction in David:

> I just did a lot of thinking afterwards. I did talk about some issues there, it made me think a lot. The experiences I talked about, whether it be CFS, residential [school], or my mom passing away. I guess I just sat down and really thought about it. That was just an issue at some time I had and address, whether it was grieving, to understand that I need to keep moving on, frustration, I had so many mixed feelings … after doing it made me think of what I was experiencing. It made me think of life and death and all that. Try to deal with drugs and addictions, drug addictions. A lot of times I just sat there and said, "Holy geez I have a lot of problems." Ha ha, that is what I thought. That is what I thought, I have a lot of problems here, and I'm doing this here [documentary interviews]; all the things that are reflecting my life…

Social-Cultural Context

Personal and socio-cultural factors influenced participants' learning experiences. This was true for all four participants—David and Sandra in particular. In terms of transformative learning, Mezirow identifies this as "context awareness of the sources, nature, and consequences of an established belief" (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006). I have already discussed the background of addiction, crime, poverty and anti-social behaviour that each participant experienced in varying degrees. This context precipitated their entry into treatment, and was the focus of much of the work they did on themselves in the months in the program. As Clark and Wilson (1991) suggest, the relationship between individuals and their social-cultural, political, and historical setting is an important influence on transformative learning. The participants' context for entering treatment was a constant presence in our sessions together. Graham reflected on his past situation in one of our documentary interviews:

> Quite a few times I'd wake up in the remand centre not knowing why I was there. And I was thinking, telling myself ... I was often scared to knock on the window to ask the guard "hey, what am I in here for?". I was scared he was going to come to me and say, "you just killed someone", or something like that. That is very scary. That freaked me out. I didn't want that anymore because the sniffing and alcohol combined together, it is ... blackouts. It makes you do crazy things.

The interviews provided opportunity for residents to consider their thoughts and feelings while living in their past negative lifestyles. Yorks and Kasl (2006) have noted the significance of bringing feelings and emotion into consciousness, a process that allows participants "to create congruence between their affective states and their conceptual sense making" (p. 53). David goes on to discuss his emotional reaction to discussing the context of this situation in the documentary interviews:

> Yes, it was useful. All the questions were getting me to consider what my real response would be, and how I felt on those topics. I guess sometimes it would boil down to anger. Not angry at anyone but at the situations ... Deep down, the only answer that kept popping up was jail. How are you going to deal with your criminal charges, questions like that and there are processes in place, the reality in the end is it could be jail, plain and simple. It made me think too, how to deal with situations.

I structured my data collection to include two sets of semi-structured interviews. Prior to the second interview I showed each participant video footage from a past session. Participants reflected on where they were in their treatment, and on the context of these interviews. In one video excerpt, Curt had just been drug tested because of suspicions that he had been using while in the treatment centre. It was a very traumatic event for him and our interview occurred immediately after that incident. He said at that time, "I'm wondering if you didn't offer me this opportunity to do this. How would I feel? I wouldn't ... half of this shit wouldn't have come out of me. I would have just thought of it. I probably wouldn't have even thought of it. I wouldn't have been challenged. I'm such a bad guy, fuck. [Why are you a bad guy?] I don't know."

Months later, during our research interview, Curt reacted to the context of this video clip and stated, "I know what I was thinking then. There is something going on in that guy's head; feeling sorry for himself. The way I see it, a pretty good guy, who made bad choices. [Do you remember what day that was?] Yes, that was the day I got piss tested." Watching the video clips and discussing them proved to be a meta-cognitive experience where they could think about their thinking. In the context of this particular addictions program, it demonstrates an internalization of the behaviour model of addictions (as opposed to a disease approach where one is an addict for life). Participants' observations of these videos were quite perceptive and led them to further thought and reflection. Curt's process identified here is a useful extension the use of photography in adult education by Taylor (2002, 2006) and of Yorks and Kasl (2006) demonstration of the using of photographs to trigger expressive ways of knowing to encourage transformative learning. Instead of a photograph's depiction of his emotional state, Curt interacted with motion pictures, of himself, leading him to important new assumptions about himself.

Critical Reflection

Reflection was an integral part of the documentary film process. All of the participants agreed that the interviews made them think in a variety of ways. These reflections occurred in the sessions and between our meetings. Curt said, "As I'm speaking I think I am learning things. Because you'll ask a question and I have to think about it. And come up with an answer that is honest. And when I do, I figure it out." At this stage of transformative learning, Mezirow suggests this sort of thinking is represented by "critical reflection of the established beliefs supporting epistemic

assumptions" (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006, p. 124). From this point of view, participants were involved in all three levels of critical reflection; content, process and premise (Mezirow, 1991).

There are many instances during the documentary filming where participants engaged in reflection on the content of their lives. Here they reflected on past experiences, relationships, and the environments they found themselves in during their substance use. They also moved into considering the factors influencing these experiences. This evaluation is similar to the process identified by Brookfield (1986, 1987, 2005) in terms of personal and social factors that affect and at times restrict the potential of the individual.

The critical reflection on addictions that participants were engaged with addressed both habits of mind and points of view. These past frames of reference did "limit or distort communication and understanding" (Mezirow 1998, p. 192). David reflected on changing his mindset through reflection:

> Not everyone gets to do something like this. It gave me a reason to reflect on my life. Everything is going to be new on there every week, so why can't my life be new every day for the rest of my life? That is how I thought of it. It has helped me lots too. It has made me do a lot of thinking, a lot of soul searching for answers. A lot of times I was thinking, did I say the proper answer, did my proper feelings come out? Maybe I should have said this, or maybe I shouldn't have said that.

Comments like David's were common for the other participants as well. They suggest this process was productive and positive, and both a rational and emotive process. This confirms Brookfield's (1987) earlier definition of critical thinking and the recent movements in transformative learning towards a holistic perspective, including both rational and extrarational elements.

A habit of mind is often expressed as a point of view. The meaning schemes of people's points of view contain "immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes and judgments" (Mezirow, 2002, p. 18). All four participants indicated the interviews were a catalyst to evaluate their past lifestyle (this included a mixture of thoughts, feelings and attitudes); the treatment program encouraged them to accept responsibility for the consequences of their past actions. The treatment experience at times was a crucible to move beyond the surface to stimulate deeper changes. Curt reflected in an interview on his desire to leave the treatment centre prematurely:

> I wanted to leave a month, or so, ago. I wanted out. I didn't care, I wanted out. But then thinking about it more I was realizing that not having patience could get me into trouble. I could just leave, and be stuck. Be outside again, no resources, nothing. Not even be ready to leave, but just because I wanted to leave. I wanted it and wanted it now. So it caused me trouble. So by identifying that, and picking it apart and putting it back together in the session, it really helped me. That is how I can tell how I've made changes.

Mezirow (1998) explained that "critical self-reflection of an assumption involves critique of a premise upon which the learner has defined a problem" (p. 185). Curt's drug use stemmed from his habit of mind and point of view; he discussed how the interviews allowed him a place to define his problems. Curt elaborates on the choices that led to his addiction:

> Handling the addiction, being able to deal with it and to verbalize it as in the feelings that I'm going through. What I'm doing to change those feelings … Identifying weaknesses in myself. Yes, identifying the weaknesses that could lead me back to using and changing them. As well, identifying my lack of patience as a huge weight for me and it tends to set me back and cause a lot of problems, and identifying that on my own terms. Thinking about that on my own time. Then bringing it forth to you and telling it, explaining it, making me verbalize it. That changed a lot of things.

I have mentioned previously that the documentary process was a therapeutic experience for all of the participants. At times the documentary interviews provided

participants an opportunity to engage in what Mezirow (1998) calls *therapeutic critical self reflection on assumptions* (p. 193). It was evident that participants were evaluating the assumptions about their feelings and the consequences for their actions. David explains how he critically examined the result of his emotions:

> If I let my anger control every issue I'm in, or it leads to anger they are going to label me; I have anger problems, which I don't. I need to separate frustration and anger, my emotions. When I define them I need to define them properly. Individually. I can't say they are all one, or I'm a loose cannon. That is what I mean. That time. I need to control the situation I am in.

This emotional terrain is significant to critical reflection and transformative learning. As Mezirow notes (1998), it is a "type of problem-posing and problem-solving in which one examines the sources, nature, and effect of assumptions governing the way one feels and is disposed to act upon his or her feelings" (p. 194). David explored his assumptions of letting go of emotions. He explained

> I guess it was kind of therapy; talking about my issues. In itself that helped lots too. Too many times I thought about of my daughter, grieving, the loss of my mom and dad and sisters, talking about in a positive way, where as not so much the groups and that. It is part of letting it go. In order for a person to heal, it is one of the processes of ... they say. I never really did understand that. They say you have to let it go, as a part of your healing journey, move on. I could never figure out what they meant by that. I kind of have an understanding of what that really means. Talking, letting it go and accepting. I'm still here, and I still have kids here. And today is today. Tomorrow is tomorrow.

David felt that being in the film helped him process his feelings about the death of several family members, an event that he said contributed to his crack addiction. Scott (1997) notes that "grieving is integral to transformation. The grieving process involves both rational and extrarational notions of change" (p. 41). Here David showed his attempt to bring a rational order to the feelings of grief:

> Because after a lot of times that I talked, when I did talk about issues that were really bothering me or affecting me emotionally, because it made me do a lot of

> thinking about how can I have a structured life if I keep living in the past? Pain, grieving and all that. That is not moving ahead, structuring myself to continue preparing a decent life for my children. If I bring those issues with me everyday, I never went anywhere. I'm just walking in one spot, with different words everyday. I need to put those words in action, take only the good words, the good feelings of what I want to achieve and keep walking. That is the way I see it.

The extrarational aspect of transformative learning is an aspect attributed to the dimension of learning outside awareness (Dirkx, 2001, 2006; Yorks & Kasl, 2006). During the filming, there were many personal moments, often characterized by a lack of language to identify the thoughts and or emotions that surfaced. After watching himself on video discuss his grief over losing his daughter to cancer, David said, "Well. Seeing myself cry made me cry. I don't know ... I just miss my daughter. Seeing myself talk is something different. It is hard to explain. Talking there and watching it ... it is a different experience ..." The opportunity to watch themselves contributed to critical reflection of participants in the documentary interviews and in the research interviews.

The research data is consistent with the holistic and complex definition provided by Cranton and Roy (2003): "The central process of transformative learning may be rational, affective, extrarational, experiential, or any combination of these depending on the characteristics of the individual, and the context in which the transformation takes place" (p. 90). With my participants it clearly was a holistic process involving all these dimensions. David continued, "Those are the different stages of my life that I, from watching it, can recognize. How I've come to sort out for myself things, whether it is loss, whether it is abuse from the past, to see it there, in the film. It is just an experience to see it and watch myself talk about it."

Discourse

The documentary interviews were a setting of ongoing dialogue; the weekly meetings continued for 3 to 5 months. Participants were treated as equals, and the environment was free from coercion, both of which are central for discourse to assist in empowerment (Cranton, 2006). This ongoing conversation moved towards discourse when it questioned "the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making the statement" (Mezirow 1991, p. 77). My role as interviewer routinely facilitated probing responses for clarification and implications participants may have not considered.

Participants returned often to themes we had discussed from past sessions, and the content was a range of thoughts, feelings, and impressions that they could not quite verbalize. For instance, David's exploration of his feelings of grief surfaced through these interviews (and discourse). Some theorists suggest that not everyone can fully engage in discourse, depending on the conditions of their abilities or social context; Mezirow (2003) elaborates "hungry, desperate, sick, destitute, and intimidated ... cannot participate fully and freely in discourse" (p. 60). The research participants struggled in many ways with the process of outgrowing their addictions, yet they were eager to spend session after session exploring beliefs, feelings and values. I question the limits put on these documentary participants to engage in rational discourse--as implied by Mezirow's statement above. I believe that this study confirms that a more holistic view of transformative learning is necessary to be more inclusive by "minimizing the role of

rational discourse" (Cranton, 2006, p. 125), not to remove it, but to allow for discourse and dialogue of differing degrees and forms.

At times, participants felt they were trying out new thoughts and ideas from the treatment program in the dialogue of the interviews, or they took ideas from the documentary to try in their work in the treatment program. Curt felt the documentary provided him an opportunity to consider other view points. He said about the dialogue in the interviews, "We'd analyze things. And through that, we'd learn about them, and then putting them back together ... it helped solidify it and burn it into my brain. So, yes, I did learn a lot from it."

The discourse of the documentary interviews permitted participants to question assumptions about themselves and reach new conclusions about who they are. Curt questioned his identity through our interviews. He said,

> Well, I always thought I was a bad dude. Didn't give a shit. Didn't care. I got no, I don't have enough worth to help anybody, or make a change in anybody's life. But through this, I've changed my way of thinking, so that I can help people actually. I can be a good person. I've always assumed myself to be totally negative, but I'm not totally negative, I've got a lot of positives. I've learnt that. So those things that I've assumed that I've got nothing positive are wrong. They've changed. So I've changed those assumptions about myself.

The video examples provided a pedagogical moment where participants could hear themselves talk, and several participants were moved to talk to (and about) themselves on screen. Part of their journey of an addictive-free lifestyle, as heightened by their documentary participation, suggests both transformative learning and individuation, as developed by Cranton and Roy (2003). In reference to seeing himself on screen and hearing himself explain his thoughts and feelings from past sessions, Curt said: "It is a bit of a metamorphoses. I see myself being responsible. Thinking a lot about changes. Lots

of changes in the guy in the video. I'd like to get his autograph." These observations about significant personal changes were rooted in the participants' social network as well.

David saw himself in the video clips trying to evaluate the best way to make peace with his past. He explored in the interviews (and in his treatment program) the dysfunctional relationships of his past and reached the conclusion he had to find more constructive ways to live. He saw this recognition in himself and in the things he said on camera. He continued

> Yes, I see it there. Even when I talked about my daughter passing on. When I talked there, I knew I had to accept the past, not so much dwell on the past … That is something that I recognized when I was watching it. I've got to respect what I said there. Those were feelings that came from my heart. And I'm going to give that respect to my two daughters that are still alive. Not deny my love.

The documentary filming process allowed participants the opportunity to exercise and develop their media literacy skills. Several participants noted their increased understanding of the way television shows are created. The discussion of video footage--of their representation on screen--was an act of deconstructing a media text, a primary skill of media literacy. This was not unlike the central processes of media literacy (Brookfield, 1986; Buckingham 2003; Burton; 2005; Masterman, 1985). The process of viewing themselves on screen was a catalyst to their critical reflection of themselves, and subsequently to their transformative learning.

Finding Stability

I found that the documentary participants experienced a range of emotional reactions to the changes stimulated by the treatment program and of the documentary. As they took thoughtful action, they needed to work through some anxiety. This progressive growth is consistent with what Mezirow identifies in his stages of transformative

learning, "building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships" (2002, p. 22). Curt reflected in one documentary session:

> Now I can spend my life growing up. For the last 10 years I've been stagnant. From the time I was 17 I started doing drugs really hardcore. My body and mostly my mind, I stopped learning. I don't know how to say it. I haven't really grown up. I still feel like I'm 17. For the longest time I've said that, I still feel like I'm 17. But now sitting here today, I'm starting to feel more like a man, an adult. Someone who is responsible. Accountable. I'm starting to feel reliable.

In response to viewing this video clip, he replied, "I'm progressing."

Graham noticed more confidence as well. Since the beginning of the film, he was interested in the project being helpful to others. As the film progressed, his confidence grew and he began mentoring young men who had addictions similar to his own. It was a new role that he took very seriously, and enjoyed very much. Graham noticed the changes he experienced over these months. He said, "Yes. I think people will notice that when they first see this. At the beginning [Graham] was... kind of shy, kind of quiet. I think people will notice a difference of being more open. Showing openness, more outgoing, confidence."

The dialogue of the interviews, rooted in my questions and their thoughtful responses, provided an occasion for "revising assumptions and perspectives to make them more open and better justified," which Cranton (2002, p. 66) maintains is central to the process of transformative learning. David faced an uncertain future with his pending court case for armed robbery. He explained his emotional journey:

> When you asked a couple of times when you asked about court and what if you go to jail. That was always in the back of my mind. Even from saying things like that it pissed me off. Well, it not piss me off, but it made me think. I got kind of angry because, the reason why, I sat down later a few days later. That is the reality. Who knows, I could go to jail. I think I was really angry because I put myself in that position. That made me think later on, too. Maybe he is right too. I need to try and not use anger as an excuse to not accept that as the truth.

For David, this also meant finding emotional stability and letting go of the grief he experienced with the loss of his family members. He said,

> I guess it was kind of therapy; talking about my issues. In itself that helped lots too … Whether my parents are gone. They are gone. Nothing can change that. Seeing that and talking made me stronger person to hear that. You've got to change for the better. I never really understood that I said that much words, in that form.

David's experience is consistent with what Scott (1997) finds: "grieving is integral to transformation. The grieving process involves both rational and extrarational notions of change" (p. 41).

Action and Reintegration

I found that, later in the filming, three of the four participants were more positive in their attitudes, and this was reflected in the content of the dialogue. They explored in the sessions how they were progressing in their treatment and how they were preparing to exit the treatment program for the wider community. Exit planning was a significant aspect of the documentary interviews. We talked about the new attitudes and behaviours they had established for themselves. The threat of recidivism after leaving treatment was a real issue.

I lost touch with Sandra a month after she left the treatment program for the community. Six weeks later she called and I was able to continue with our interviews. During her time away, she had returned to her past lifestyle of drugs and prostitution. While she continued to appreciate the opportunity to talk in the interviews, she said she was depressed because she was not able to remain sober.

Curt made a more constructive transition to the community. He prepared for a month for his move, then he integrated his new perspective of living sober and

maintaining a stable routine successful. He found an apartment, a job, and continued with various weekly support programs. He accomplished what Cranton (2002) phrased as "acting on revisions, behaving, talking, and thinking in a way that is congruent with transformed assumptions or perspectives" (p. 66). Curt valued the documentary interviews in this process. He said,

> So, yes, I guess you could say I've gained a little bit of confidence through this. I'm not worried about what people are thinking of me, in here, and if you ever get this out there, or whoever gets to watch this, I'm not too worried about that, I'm not sure about that, what matters is that I'm just a person who came here to get help, and I've done it and I'm confident that I've accomplished a lot through this that I can take with me.

While he established a stable routine for himself, Graham was not in a hurry to leave the treatment program. He reflected on his past stay in the program and determined that his return to drinking and sniffing was because he was not ready to leave and his previous job left him isolated from other supportive people. This links to Taylor's (1997, 1998) observation of the importance of relationships and relational knowing to transformative learning.

David continued with his treatment and with the documentary interviews. He began to integrate his new perspective on addictions, and of his self identity, into his thoughts and actions. He felt that the documentary interviews "has made me do a lot of thinking, a lot of soul searching for answers." David adjusted his thoughts and actions to match his new perspective, something that emerged through our conversations in the interviews. He said,

> I don't know, sometimes the ideas would just come in my head. I guess I would think of negative issues, then slowly everything started to turn to positives, like doing a lot of these interviews. I noticed too, a lot of times I did talk, it was everything about negative things that happened in my life. There was nothing ever positive that we talked about. So I just figured if I start thinking and doing

> positive things, then I'd have something positive to say. That is part of healing. I think that is what you just said, this the way you've got to do it. That is something I thought and learnt.

Having opportunity to watch himself on screen added to his reflective experience. He was giving himself advice that matched his transformed assumptions and perspectives. It permitted him to hear himself and validate his new ways of thinking. This in turn helped him continue to plan for the future. He said,

> I think that if I continue to be the person that we just watched... I'll succeed in life. I'll have more. If I live by my own words, I won't have any failing in my life. I'll have some roadblocks, I can somehow get over them. I find, watching that I have to believe in myself. I have to believe the words I say. I have to think about the positive stuff in my life, and listen to positive words I say. Not so much excuses and putting negative thoughts in my mind. I control my mind, I can't let my mind control me. If I do that, I will always fail. That is what I thought while watching that.

As these examples illustrate, this study contributes to the field of adult education by furthering the understanding of transformative learning theory. Throughout the two research interviews I found examples of transformative learning expressed during the participants experiences of documentary interviews; their experiences were characterized by critical reflection, discernment, and perspective transformation. In the next section I focus on the filming process itself as a site of learning.

Documentary Filming as a Pedagogical Site

The documentary was not the only, and may not have been the main, means to the changes participants experienced because of the interaction with their treatment program. Nor do I suggest here that the documentary interviews facilitated each phase of the transformative learning in each of the participants. The traumatic experiences of their substance use and the complex interrelated socio-cultural context that led them to treatment was likely an important catalyst, and for most of them, a compounding of their

original disorienting dilemma. Their treatment program provided a rigorous education program that offered the potential of a transformative experience. My understanding of their learning in the documentary, the focus of my study, is written with careful acknowledgement of this context.

All four participants experienced learning through their treatment program, and all learnt from their experiences in the documentary. Did all of them experience transformative learning? My interpretation of the results would indicate that three of the four did achieve this transformation. I base this interpretation on my observations of their thoughtful comments and the observable changes in attitude and actions during their documentary interviews. I also look at the holistic aspects that the documentary filming provided to their learning and how media literacy influenced their learning.

Observations on Transformative Learning

Curt's transformative learning is highlighted by his critical reflection of his self-esteem and his need for patience; he responded by "growing up" while in the program and them moved out into a stable environment in the community. Graham, although more introverted, acknowledged that he critically considered his self perception and his preoccupation with his obesity. He responded through growth in his self-esteem and confidence; he took on the role of mentoring young men with problems similar to his own, and maintained a stable routine, and he found a job. David addressed his persistent negative thoughts, replacing them with a more positive outlook on life; his healing journey involved grieving, accepting his criminal charges, and initiating plans to re-unite with his children. Sandra appreciated learning about the link between her body image and self-esteem and her chemical dependency; despite her progress, after leaving the

program at 3 months she returned to her past negative lifestyle. Changes she suggested during the interview, which seemed transformative, were reversed. This implies that her experience was not completed; at least not yet. Perhaps her process is more complex, and her transformative experiences remain more incremental than can be examined within the scope of this study. This is in keeping with the two options Mezirow (2002) suggests that are possible for transformations in habit of mind, sudden (epochal) or gradual (incremental). Curt and David's transformative experiences were more readily apparent, perhaps because they are more verbal and extroverted. Graham too showed his experiences were transformative, but he was more tentative about expressing his ideas, likely because of his introverted personality. These differences in experiences are consistent with Cranton's (2000, 2006) observations that personality type is an aspect of transformative learning.

Holistic Transformative Learning

The process of transformation that the documentary participants experienced was not a straightforward and linear process, as Mezirow's early work would have us believe (this is also noted in Cranton, 2002). Over the course of the long-term interviews, participants circled back on previous assumptions to form chains of critical reflection and application through action; indeed there were times when a documentary session facilitated a new crisis of thought, which would then need to be processed anew. This supports Cranton (2000) discussion of non-linear ways of perceiving and learning in transformative learning. While my research used Mezirow's (1978, 1991, 2002) ideas as a primary basis of measure, the involvement of extrarational ways of knowing was present (Davis-Manigaulte el al., 2006; Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton 2006; Yorks & Kasl,

2006). I also observed that several participants had sought treatment on several occasions, or relapsed following this study. This suggests the nature of learning about addictions treatment and healing is a gradual, complicated process, one that demands multiple occasions for learning (treatment) to address a complex array of issues, some conscious, some unconscious. I could not help but see a connection to the following statement by Dirkx:

> As one carries on this imaginal dialogue, through journaling or other practices, the unconscious energies bound up with this energized cluster of relational experience become available to conscious awareness, and we are able to gradually incorporate it into our sense of who we are. (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006, p. 136)

I suggest that the environment of the treatment program was matched with the long-term documentary interviews, which created appropriate conditions for critical incidents and disorientation to stimulate the transformative process. Participants engaged in critical reflection on themselves and on their previous assumptions, discerned new ways of thinking, and then tested and applied the new ideas in their treatment program and in their exit into the community.

I think the format of video lent itself well to the process of transformation. The ease of operation of new video and audio recording technology permitted me to operate by myself; this generated an important measure of intimacy for the discussion of personal thoughts and feelings. The unique circumstances created by the documentary interviews heightened the experience of the participants' treatment. It provided them with a unique measure of accountability because they knew that others could watch them later; it demanded a level of honesty and integrity to avoid being exposed later when someone viewed their life. But beyond this accountability, the experience proved empowering for

each person. They claimed that the process permitted them to learn about themselves and transform their understanding of themselves. These foundational changes affected their self-esteem and self-confidence. The results had practical applications. Curt decided to stay in the treatment program longer in order to establish a strong exit plan. He said, "I'm confident. And so now, I can go out into the world and do a job interview because of this. I'm more confident about having a job interview. I'm more relaxed. You ask the questions, I answer them. I'm honest, I'm not nervous about things." Each of the other participants had their own evidence for the improvements to their self-concept and self-esteem.

Media Literacy Influences Participant Experiences

I think the participants' transformative learning was affected by their role as an audience member and their level of media literacy. They each had an awareness that the experience of talking about themselves was being taped. They each considered the process of media interviews in and outside the interviews. While watching television, Graham related his new awareness of the behind-the-scenes context because of participating in the documentary. The experience was a lesson in media literacy, which helped participants "decode, demythologize, and sift the content of media messages" (Brookfield, 1987, p. 192) of which they themselves were a part. The inclusion of video clips from the past documentary interviews enhanced the experience as well. Each participant was intrigued by the chance to go back in time and hear the range of thoughts and opinions from the past. This was a catalyst for further critical reflection on the progress in treatment and plans for the future. I suggest that an adult given the

opportunity to watch himself or herself on video furthers critical thinking and transformative learning.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Personal Impact

In this final section I offer my conclusions and provide my recommendations, which focus on implications for practice. I also give suggestions for further study, and end with my statement of personal impact from the research.

Conclusions

This thesis has explored the transformative learning of participants in a long-term documentary film. The participants in the documentary were all residents of a residential treatment program for addictions; the film followed them with weekly interviews to discuss their learning and progress while in treatment. The research study evaluated four participants through semi-structured interviews and included showing video clips of participants from the documentary. The data accumulated was processed for themes and the results found that three out of the four participants' experiences were transformative. The transformative learning of the individuals followed Mezirow's depiction of the phases of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2002; Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006). Participants looked for alternatives to their previous way of thinking; examined the context of their beliefs; engaged in critical reflection on their assumptions; found new ways of thinking and acting through testing of these ideas; overcome the difficulties of the new actions; and began applying their transformative learning. There were indicators that the experiences of individuals were also extrarational (Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006; Yorks & Kasl, 2006).

I conclude that the process of documentary participation stimulated their transformative learning in conjunction with their experiences in the treatment context. Appearing in front of the camera and watching themselves on video during the research interviews was an educational event. My conclusion was that participants were learning in front of the lens.

Implications for Theory & Practice: Recommendations for Other Adult Educators and Documentary Filmmakers

As explained above, the results of my study support the findings of previous studies in relation to understanding transformative learning in a variety of learning sites outside the typical classroom setting. I think there are important implications for practice for both adult educators and documentary filmmakers.

1. The research shows that participating in a video production has the potential to stimulate transformative learning. Certain documentary films have the potential for creating the conditions necessary for critical reflection, challenging assumptions, and assisting with the process of individuation. Filmmakers should assess their motivation for filming, and move towards a greater awareness of the potential experiences of participants in documentaries, as opposed to an exclusive focus on a marketable and dramatic final product.

2. Adult educators should consider the use of video recording as a tool for reflection and discourse with adult students. The study has demonstrated the effectiveness of videotaping participants and then allowing them the opportunity to view footage; the opportunity was effective in stimulating critical reflection, and provided opportunities for transformative learning to occur.

3. The use of video interviews with adults in a documentary setting provides an opportunity for fostering media literacy. Adult educators interested in developing learners' understanding of the media could use a documentary project to help students understand the dynamics behind the representations they see on network television. The development of critical media literacy in this way offers parallels to the process needed for transformative learning as well.

4. Documentary participant experiences are significant and complex. Attention to exploring the experiences of participants in documentary films will be time well spent, particularly in an age so influenced by the media. Exploring participants' experiences in more detail may allow opportunity for improved practice in the field of documentary filmmaking; many of the same perceptions of documentary participants could likely be applied to learners in adult classrooms.

5. Some filmmakers have acknowledged their intentions to promote empowerment and social change, but not much is known of how film can accomplish this goal. Understanding the transformative potential for adults in films can legitimize this form of documentary for increased productions, and inform the process of documentary interviews.

6. I have only briefly explored the issues of power dynamics in this study, but it is clear that power is present in a complex and dynamic manner (see Foucault, 1980; Brookfield, 2005). Filmmakers should incorporate this knowledge into efforts to democratize the filming process.

7. Finally, it is important to note several aspects directly related to transformative learning theory. The study presents a further challenge to Mezirow's concept of a rational

approach to transformative learning as the experiences of documentary participants included extrarational aspects as well as rational. The transformative experiences of the individuals in this study confirm the inclusive and dynamic nature of transformative learning. The documentary participants, individuals with addictions, were selected from a marginalized demographic, characterized by people with differences of abilities, opportunities, and dispositions. While Mezirow (2003) suggests that individuals "hungry, desperate, sick, destitute, and intimidated ... cannot participate fully and freely in discourse" (p. 60), I recommend that transformative learning be more inclusive so as to embrace the potential of individuals such as those in treatment for addictions, and possibly others that are excluded or limited by Mezirow's discussion.

Ideas for Further Study

There are several aspects of this topic that I feel should be explored further:

1. This study represents the learning experiences of four people in the unique context of a long term documentary on residential treatment for addictions. A study of the transformative learning of other adults in other types of documentary films in other settings would be helpful to confirm the results of this study.
2. It would be useful to study the potential transformative learning of individuals who have more control over the filming process, as in participant video and auto-ethnography, where the subject of the film is also directing the process of the film.
3. I suggest that filmmakers consider the benefit of a more extensive evaluation of the process and effect of documentaries on participants. Other research studies could involve a more quantitative approach to a large range of data.

4. A more extensive analysis of the documentary filming process for power relations as charted by Foucault (1980), would be fascinating; this discussion could offer opportunities for improved practice as well.

5. Documentary participant experience is significant and needs more study. I was disappointed by the lack of literature exploring the experiences of participants in documentary films. Exploring participant experiences in more detail may allow opportunity for improved practice in the field of documentary filmmaking. Particular focus should be given to the affect of the filming process on the participant.

6. This study was limited to the experiences of documentary participants in the filming of interviews during the production (i.e. principal photography, all the videotaping) of the film. It could be helpful for an extended study to follow participants beyond the production of the film right through to the end of the filming process and have the participants respond to the finished product of the film as presented in a theatre, or on television.

Personal Impact of this Research

This study has affected me significantly. I have gained a deeper understanding of transformative learning theory. The most interesting aspect of this is the evolution of the theory towards a more dynamic and holistic understanding of transformative learning, one that includes extrarational ways of knowing (Dirkx 2006; Yorks & Kasl, 2006). This fits with the complex responses and learning that I witnessed from behind the camera. Yet, as I reflect on my own experiences during the filming and research process, I observed my own holistic transformative learning. My experiences are both affective and

rational. At times my critical thinking of my practice as a teacher and filmmaker led to new assumptions about myself and my craft.

The long-term documentary was filled with a range of moments that I would respond to with confidence and/or insecurity. My experiences were indeed spiral-like, dynamic, and diverse. As I asked participants questions and saw them make choices (both good and bad), I was drawn in emotionally to what I observed. This reinforced for me the affective aspects not only the filming process, but of transformative learning in this unique pedagogical site.

The arc of my studies over the last number of years has made me more aware of the complex nature of adult learners. My responsibilities as a filmmaker would often collide with my roles as a father and husband, and these in turn often gave way to my duties as a teacher and my additional identity as a student. As I reflect back over my research I can recall how my thoughts and feelings in each of these areas would blend and swell from and into each of these various identities; sometimes in concert, other times in conflict. My processing of these events by writing this thesis has allowed me to make some precious observations about how my thought processes work, within and without awareness. I realize the potential for this to appear melodramatic, but I find this tone is necessary to convey my experiences in a way that I would classify as transformative. I now recognize, with a new interest, the personal thoughts and feelings that punctuate (and interrupt) the interviews I conduct with my documentary participants. I am indebted here to Dirkx's (in Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006) discussion on his reveries of the life and work of Walker Percy as the example that helped bring this

extrarational process in focus. I treasure my new understanding of the connection between affect and learning (Dirkx 2006).

I have a new appreciation for the significance of media literacy. This study has confirmed for me the importance of media literacy for adult learning. I also see more clearly the power of the visual medium. My study reinforces for me Buckingham's (2003) suggestion that the visual text is not only a powerful tool to communicate information, but more importantly, the production of a media text is an excellent way to foster media literacy.

My experiences are consistent with Rabiger's (2004) observations of the dynamics of documentary filmmaking; I have a new understanding of the relationship between filmmaker and documentary participants. I appreciate how this research study has allowed me to appreciate the pedagogical opportunities of the filming process. I am now looking for transformation throughout the phases of filming. I see potential in the pre-production (planning and finding participants) production (shooting interviews) and post-production (editing of footage). In each of these phases I know there is the potential to facilitate and capture learning and transformative learning.

I have several observations about my learning as a teacher. I have looked as closely at my filmmaking approach as I do my teaching strategies. I agree with Cranton and Carusetta (2004) on the importance of authenticity that includes "being genuine, showing consistency between values and actions, relating to others in such a way as to encourage their authenticity, and living a critical life" (p. 7). These aspects relate to both classroom teaching and filmmaking. Vella's (2002) elaboration on including respect for learners is important to me on this topic as well. Finally, I appreciate Brookfield's (2005)

exposition of Foucault's (1980) writing on power. I am more conscious of the inevitable flux of power in my teaching and filmmaking. I can and should make efforts to create moments of empowerment and democracy in the classroom, or in front of the lens, but I know that this remains a complex dynamic that that is difficult to comprehend fully. There are elements of power at work in all aspects of life; I continue a perpetual effort to understand how power remains within my documentary interviews. I am heartened that some types of documentaries allow interviews to take a form of discourse, to allow participants a chance to interact with the ideas of others and to try on new perspectives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

REB Certificate

Certificate of Ethics Approval

The Research Ethics Board

of

St. Francis Xavier University,
Antigonish, Nova Scotia

hereby acknowledges that

Mr. Kevin Nikkel

has been granted ethics approval
to carry out a research project entitled

"Learning in Front of the Lens: A Study of the Transformative Learning of Documentary Participants"

G.P. Brooks, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board

May 11, 2006
Date

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate
St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Adult Education

Title of the Study: **LEARNING IN FRONT OF THE LENS: A STUDY OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING OF DOCUMENTARY PARTICIPANTS**

Name of researcher:
Kevin Nikkel
[address removed]

Email: kevin@nikkel.com

Name of Faculty Supervisor and contact information:
Dr. Leona English
P.O. Box 5000
Antigonish, Nova Scotia
Canada, B2G 2W5
Telephone: (902) 867-2459
Email: lenglish@stfx.ca

May __, 2006

Dear _____,

I am writing to **invite you to participate** in my research study titled **Learning in Front of the Lens: A study of the transformative learning experiences of documentary participants**. I am conducting this research as a part of the requirements for a graduate degree in the Department of Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University.

The objectives of the research are to understand the learning experiences of participants in a long-term video documentary, of which you are a part. I am interested to understand if your experiences were educational and if so, were they transformative?

There are three parts to the study. If you agree to participate, I will ask you to:

- allow me to use select portions of the videotaped interviews from the documentary for the purposes of this research study;
- participate in a video taped one-hour interview that focuses on your experiences in the documentary;
- watch select portions of the videotaped interviews from the documentary and participate in a second taped one-hour interview that focuses on your experiences watching the footage of yourself;

I want you to understand that the interviews will appear very much like our interviews from the documentary, with my prepared questions exploring your learning while in treatment and from our past interview sessions. I want to make sure you continue to be comfortable with our interviews and with any involvement with this research study.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary; your participation, or non-participation will be kept in confidence. No identifying information will appear in any report of this study. During the study, you have the freedom to decline to answer any question in either interview. You may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me by phone or in writing, or by contacting my academic advisor, Dr. Leona English. If you do choose to withdraw, you will have a choice as to whether I can continue to use the data you have provided up to that point. There are no negative consequences to your decision to withdraw. The data collected during the study will be kept for 2 years at which time all materials will be destroyed.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Kevin Nikkel
kevin@nikkel.com

Appendix C

Consent to Participate
St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Adult Education

Title of the Study: **LEARNING IN FRONT OF THE LENS: A STUDY OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING OF DOCUMENTARY PARTICIPANTS**

Name of researcher:
Kevin Nikkel
[address removed]

Email: kevin@nikkel.com

Name of Faculty Supervisor and contact information:
Dr. Leona English
P.O. Box 5000
Antigonish, Nova Scotia
Canada, B2G 2W5
Telephone: (902) 867-2459
Email: lenglish@stfx.ca

I have received a copy of the *Invitation to Participate* for the research study entitled **Learning in Front of the Lens: A study of the transformative learning of documentary participants.** I have had an opportunity to read the information provided in it and have had any questions that I may have had answered.

I agree to participate in this research study, understanding that I am doing so voluntarily, that confidentiality will be maintained, and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point using the means outlined in the *Invitation to Participate.*

_____ _____

Signature Date

Appendix D

First Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Research Study: **LEARNING IN FRONT OF THE LENS: A STUDY OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING OF DOCUMENTARY PARTICIPANTS**

Researcher: **Kevin Nikkel**
[address removed]

Email: **kevin@nikkel.com**

This semi-structured video taped interview will be transcribed with a written summary report of this stage returned to the participant for comment. The questions include the following:

Interview Process

1. What were your reasons for participating in the documentary at the beginning? Did these reasons change during the course of the filming?
2. What did you think or feel after a typical session? Anything linger over the following days? Were there things that surfaced after that you wanted to talk about? Did we talk about them?
3. Would you recommend participating in a documentary process like this to your peers in the treatment program? Why/why not? If yes, why do you feel it is valuable?
4. Was the process helpful to you? Did the process feel educational? Explain.
5. I typically tried to start each interview with an 'ice breaker' question of 'what's new' followed by more focused questions. What was this like for you? Was it useful?

Media Literacy

1. How much exposure have you had to films or TV shows about people in treatment or about people going through life trials on the screen?
2. Did you understand what it would look like to participate in the documentary from watching others on TV?
3. How much of a factor was the potential of being on television—for you joining the film?
4. How comfortable were you with the camera? With the technology involved?
5. Did you answer questions differently because the camera was on? Did you ever respond differently, or qualify your answers with me after the camera was turned off?
6. Did you think of the audience of the documentary while you were being filmed? Did you think of the audience outside of the interview sessions?

7. Can you identify a moment in your daily life while watching television where you thought of your involvement in the documentary? Do you understand televised interviews differently since taking part in this documentary?
8. How much time did you spend thinking about the process of/or content of, the doc interviews? What was the focus of these thoughts?

Transformative Learning

1. Can you identify some of the important thoughts or feelings provoked by the interviews? Do you consider these new thoughts or feelings? Were they private or would you readily share them with others?
2. Do you think of yourself differently? How has your identity or role(s) changed? How has your understanding of your role(s) changed? Assumptions about yourself? How did your involvement in the documentary influence these changes?
3. Have you changed over the process of interviews? How do you know you have changed? What are the signs or benchmarks that indicate there is something different about you?
4. Were there any moments during an interview that confirmed or validated what you'd been thinking? Were there moments that changed your way of thinking? Were there moments that made your think more critically than you usually do?
5. Did you experience any epiphanies or 'ah-ha' moments of 'seeing things clearly'? What led you to these moments?
6. Was the process empowering for you? Can you give examples?
7. Did you feel you had any/enough control over the process? Can you give examples?
8. Did it trigger thoughts about topics you hadn't thought of before? Any thoughts you hadn't had for a long time? Was this process immediate? Did this happen after many sessions? Gradual?
9. How has your self-confidence or assertive ability changed during the months of interviews? How did your involvement in the documentary influence these changes?

Appendix E

Second Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Research Study: **LEARNING IN FRONT OF THE LENS: A STUDY OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING OF DOCUMENTARY PARTICIPANTS**

Researcher: **Kevin Nikkel**
[address removed]

Email: **kevin@nikkel.com**

Participants will view sample footage from the documentary interviews prior to this semi-structured video taped interview. The interview will be transcribed with a written summary report of this stage returned to the participant for comment. The questions include the following:

1. What are your initial thoughts and emotional reaction to seeing yourself in the video footage?
2. Can you identify key moments from the video that were the most interesting to you? Why were they important to you?
3. What other experiences came to mind while watching the video?
4. What did you observe about your thinking processes? What process did you see yourself using?
5. Do you see yourself learning through the experiences represented on screen? Were these moments represented authentically on the screen? Do you have anything to add or subtract from what you watched?
6. How does seeing yourself make you think differently about yourself?
7. How does seeing yourself make you think differently about what you've gone through while in treatment?
8. How would you compare what you saw on the video to what you have seen on television in the past? How does it feel to see yourself on television?
9. Did you have anything you wanted to add from our first research interview? Explain.