APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND ADULT TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AS AN
INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE LIFE COACHING PRACTICE

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by

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<u>Approval of the Dissertation</u>

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This dissertation by Michelle T. Carter has been approved by the committee members
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Abstract

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND ADULT TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AS AN
INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE LIFE COACHING PRACTICE

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Although there are numerous models that influence the practice of coaching, there is a gap in the research exploring the connection between a practice and outcome specific to the field of life coaching. This dissertation investigated the application of Appreciative Inquiry to facilitate adult transformative learning within the context of the life coaching relationship from both the coach and client perspective. To support the exploration of a theoretical framework to guide life-coaching practice, this dissertation examined the question: Can the practice of life coaching, informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry, foster an integrated process of adult transformative learning? The coach experience focused on the question: How are Appreciative Inquiry principles incorporated into life coaching practice? The investigation of the client experience was led by the question: What conditions of the coaching practice, informed by Appreciative Inquiry, best support adult transformative learning?

In a grounded theory process, 10 coaches paired with one of their clients, were engaged in semi-structured interviews to investigate their perspective of how a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry could facilitate a transformative learning experience. An outcome of the analysis of the data revealed the coach and client-participants'

experience fell into three central categories: (a) Provocative partnership; (b) Generative and performative learning; and (c) Whole person learning. The data within each category were then analyzed and revealed 8 subcategories: Purposeful engagement, intention for learning, coaching presence, context of the inquiry, dialogue and storytelling, philosophical framework, interpreting the learning, and conditions for learning.

The study revealed that Appreciative Inquiry, as a theoretically informed approach to life coaching practice, facilitated an integrated process of transformative learning. Client-participants indicated that the transformative learning experience affected cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social dimensions of their lives. Within relationship, participants engaged in a provocative cycle of inquiry, dialogue, storytelling, and reflection to construct and to take action on new life affirming perspectives. The research expanded an understanding of how Appreciative Inquiry, a large-scale organizational intervention for positive change, can be translated to facilitate an integrated transformative learning experience for the client within the context of the life coaching relationship.

Dedication

This dissertation is in memory of my mother, Dorothy Reckinger-Pultorak and my father, Joseph Pultorak. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Michael Carter, my husband, my best friend, my warrior, and my soul mate. With his support, I was able to achieve a life long vision quest of completing the Ph.D program. This work is also dedicated to my family: Alyson, Matt, Casey, Garrett, Stephanie, and Ashley. I hope that each of you will explore and discover your hopes and dreams – to realize the provocative potential and possibilities of life.

Acknowledgments

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In terms of life coaching, the empirical literature is almost silent
(Grant & Cavanagh, 2004, p. 9)

For centuries, if not longer, most people knew what they would do with their lives. Children born on farms would be farmers and those born in factory towns would work at the factory. Most married locals and lived the way their parents lived. However, with the advent of the modern world, old templates of how one lived life no longer worked. With industrialism evolving into technologically based societies, humans were faced with many unexpected challenges as life choice possibilities became far more complex than ever before; it was not uncommon for people to become lost in the maze of choices in myriad aspects of life far beyond employment and life-partners. For these individuals to be able to move ahead in their lives, they needed to make personal transformation, which is most effectively accomplished by learning.

Life coaching as a profession emerged in response to the need for learning that had the capacity to transform adults' lives and choices regarding relationships, health, family, and other personal and professional goals. While psychologists might use traditional psychotherapeutic practices to identify and resolve problems, life coaches focus on opportunity within personal and professional goal development and fill a necessary niche not ordinarily covered by psychotherapy.

Life coaching establishes a relationship with clients for the purpose of fostering new learning and transformation to improve performance skills, enhance development, and navigate "transitions on the path to realizing their ideal vision for the current and merging chapters of their lives" (Auerbach, 2001, p. 10). Albeit there are multiple

definitions of transformation Jarvis's (2006) description offers a whole person process

relative to the goals of the life coaching practice.

> To transform something is to alter either its form or its function and in a sense this is precisely what learning is – transformation through two processes, altering first the sensations of the external world into an experience and then changing the experience into an element of our biography, which could be knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, emotions or the senses – or any combination of them. (p. 87)

> Hargrove (2003), author of *Masterful Coaching,* asserted: "When a

transformation occurs, something powerful happens in who people are being that is

beyond a mere *change in behavior.* The person who is there now was not there before,

the person who was there before does not exist" (p. 91). Transformation involves learning

and "Learning involves change. It is concerned with the acquisition of habits, knowledge

and attitudes. It enables the individual to make both personal and social adjustments"

(Holton, Knowles, & Swanson, 2005, p. 11).

Within the emerging field of life coaching, there are many unexplored

interventions that could provide opportunities for coaches to more effectively facilitate

client-learning processes. Appreciative Inquiry is one of those intervention processes; it is

a philosophical approach grounded in *social construction* that allows a life-giving way of

being in relationship and creates conditions for a client to experience a process of

learning and transformation (Cooperrider, 1986). There is little research that explores if

Appreciative Inquiry, a theoretically informed intervention for large-scale organizational

change, can be applied within the life coaching relationship to facilitate adult

transformative learning.

Motivated by this gap in research, four assumptions guided this grounded theory

study.

1. A client seeks life coaching to learn new ways for improving his or her life. The purpose of the life coach is to facilitate new learning for the client. The client's new learning is connected to challenging old thinking and integrating new insight for purposeful action.

2. Translating Appreciative Inquiry practice as an intervention that fosters large-scale organizational change in the context of the life coaching relationship has the potential to construct conditions that facilitate adult transformative learning.

3. Adult transformative learning theory provides a potential framework of conditions, phases, and dimensions of learning to inform life coaching processes and practices.

4. There is an interface between life coaching and an Appreciative Inquiry – Adult Transformative Learning framework. This research will seek to discover what potentially makes the combination of the two systems work as an integrative model to guide life coaching practice.

This study investigated the application of Appreciative Inquiry to facilitate adult transformative learning within the context of the life coaching relationship from both the coach and client perspective. To investigate if adult transformative learning, facilitated by an Appreciative Inquiry approach, offers an integrated framework to guide life coaching learning practice, this grounded theory study engaged participants in semi-structured interviews (Cooperrider, Stavros, & Whitney, 2003). Taking life coaching research to the next level, 12 life coaches who have used Appreciative Inquiry principles for a minimum of 1 year, and 12 clients, one from each of the coaches, who have participated in the appreciative coaching process, were interviewed. To support the trustworthiness of the research, coaches have been recruited from one of the following professional organizations: Corporation for Positive Change, NTL Institute, Case Western University, College of Executive Coaching, and Taos Institute.

The information revealed in these interviews contributed new knowledge about how Appreciative Inquiry facilitates adult transformative learning. The intention of this

study was to determine if research results contributed to a new understanding of several questions including: How are Appreciative Inquiry principles incorporated into life coaching practice? Can the life coaching practice that is informed by Appreciative Inquiry result in adult transformative learning? And, What conditions of the coaching practice, informed by Appreciative Inquiry, best support adult transformative learning?

Background

Though people have given and received advice about the journey through life for as long as there has been social interaction, the professional occupation of life coaching is a fairly recent phenomenon. In the last decade life coaching has mushroomed into a growing area of practice in the coaching industry. Ten years ago, I became a life coach and over the course of this past decade, I have learned that clients engage in a life coaching relationship for new learning and personal empowerment. The fact that people live and work in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world has resulted in greater challenges for navigating the chapters of their lives—career, family, and community connections—and a greater need to find alternative ways to find direction (Hudson, 1999). One significant way that many have chosen has been to seek assistance from life coaches.

For 15 years prior to becoming a life coach, with a background in business and psychology, I served organizations as an executive coach specializing in strategic planning. My roles included holding a Fortune 500 position of vice president, hiring and developing senior management teams, writing and presenting organizational development seminars, and presenting keynote lectures on the topic of how to develop a positive approach to growing a successful business. I worked with chief executive officers and

their department heads to construct and implement a course of strategic business planning. Part of the process included discovering the ability and potential of each senior manager to construct, evaluate, integrate, and implement new business initiatives. I discovered that people's ability to develop ideas requires an investigation of how they learn and interpret new information. Through my personal experience of coaching numerous adults, I have come to know that the process of facilitating learning is not a solitary process, but occurs within relationship and involves *multiple ways of learning,* including the internal and external cognitive, emotional, and social learning dimensions.

Because I wanted to facilitate an integrated process of learning that might positively influence the client's personal and professional life, I chose to transition from executive coaching into the field of life coaching. Auerbach (2001), founder and president of the College of Executive Coaching, differentiated life coaching from executive coaching, suggesting that personal development and navigating life transitions is central to the framework of life coaching. "Most personal coaching clients are focused on the development of an ideal future self, an ideal career, or an improved family life" (p. 10).

What occurs within the practice of life coaching can serve as a catalyst for the client's process of navigating challenging transitions, discovering provocative new insights and developing new opportunities. Life coaching attends to the entirety of an individual, with an essential focus on promoting action and discovering new learning that develops a more effective way of living (Kimsey-House, Sandahl, & Whitworth, 1998). Whereas executive coaching primarily focuses on a specific area of performance improvement within the framework of the client's career or business environment,

Auerbach (2001) defined the context of executive coaching as focusing on issues related to "effectiveness and fulfillment at work…developing key executive and managerial skills, enhancing teambuilding and leadership skills" (p. 15). Whether serving as an executive or life coach, I agree with Hudson (1999) that a coach is an agent of positive change and learning "who facilitates experiential learning that results in future-oriented abilities" (p. 6). My research conviction was to investigate learning specific to life coaching. My background in business and psychology has particularly influenced my coaching practice. I was curious to explore beyond what I know as a coach. I was seeking a deeper understanding and interpretation of Appreciative Inquiry as a practice intervention to facilitate adult transformative learning within the context of the life coaching.

My background of business and psychology is not common to all coaches. Individuals come to the general practice of coaching from backgrounds, which include psychology, philosophy, health, business, and sports. The range of theories influencing coaching practices includes system, organization, psychology, and adult learning theories. Theories are translated into practice as frameworks that could potentially guide the coaching process. For example, the field of executive coaching has been influenced by general systems theory. An executive coach informed by systems theory would shape his or her practice approach to engage an organization as a "group of interacting or interdependent elements that form a complex whole" (Cavanagh, 2006, p. 315).

With practical experience as an executive coach, I understand that systems theory can inform a practice framework, but an intervention such as Appreciative Inquiry can be necessary to translate the whole system approach to practice. There has been significant

research addressing the use of Appreciative Inquiry as an intervention that constructs large-scale whole system organizational learning (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). With experience as both an executive and life coach, and from a scholar-practitioner perspective, I investigated how principles of Appreciative Inquiry contributed to constructing conditions that facilitated an adult transformative learning process within the context of the coaching dyad. Rather than studying the use of psychotherapeutic techniques within the field of life coaching, I investigated if a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry could result in adult transformative learning experience.

Statement of Problem

This study acknowledged and sought to expand on the body of coaching models connecting a theoretical approach (intervention) with a theoretical framework of results (outcomes). Inherently, it makes sense to address how this research fits into the current body of work influencing coaching practices. While there are promising and innovative models which serve as a framework to guide coaching practices, none offer a theoretically informed intervention to facilitate an evidence-based outcome that has been researched from both the life coach and client perspective. As a number of authors have made significant contributions to the field of coaching, and several authors and coach-practitioners have connected learning theory to coaching (Cox, 2006; Flaherty, 2005; Hargrove, 2003; Hudson, 1999; Kimsey-House et al., 1998), there is still an absence of research specific to life coaching, investigating the connection between a philosophically informed practice that fosters adult transformative learning as an outcome.

The review of literature revealed that psychotherapy is the predominant model connecting evidence-based interventions to learning outcomes, albeit most

psychotherapeutic techniques have not been researched in the context of life coaching (Stober, 2006). I concur with the consensus held within the coaching industry that coaching is not psychotherapy and therefore, I sought to develop an alternative intervention to facilitate learning in the life coaching relationship.

It was not the intention of this research to diminish the theoretical validity of psychotherapeutic practice. Within the practice of serving clients, there is a benefit for all coaches to familiarize themselves with psychological theory and research. Although psychotherapeutic practice in relationship to learning outcomes has not been researched within the context of life coaching, this was not the intended objective of this study. Rather, I proposed an exploration of Appreciative Inquiry as a practice to facilitate adult transformative learning to determine the potential to benefit a population of coaches with diverse backgrounds. The findings of this study provide new knowledge and theory building to expand the choices available in life coaching practice and to inform the learning processes of life coaching.

The literature review revealed the predominant theoretical model currently influencing the practice of life coaching is psychotherapy (Davis & Williams, 2007; Menendez & Williams, 2007; Thomas & Williams, 2005). Psychological and psychotherapeutic theories such as cognitive behavior and humanistic person centered are the primary disciplines informing life coaching practices. Although I concur with Auerbach's (2001) contention that "Philosophically, coaching emphasizes a positive, humanistic perspective" (p. 44), as a researcher, I acknowledge the relevance of Stober's (2006) statement that while humanistic techniques are evidence based in a therapy

environment, the same interventions lack a research review when applied in the field of coaching.

Essentially, therapy and coaching are often times different in the goals of the process. For example, through focusing on particular problems, therapy focuses on helping the client have a higher functioning life; whereas, coaching helps a generally well functioning individual achieve a higher level of personal and professional achievement. Though the goals are separate, coaches could intertwine the two practices by framing life coaching with psychology, thus creating difficulties for themselves and their clients. The review of literature revealed two challenges with the use of psychotherapy as framework to guide life coaching: (a) Formal training in the field of psychology is not mandatory for practicing as a life coach, so there is a need to clearly differentiate between life coaching and psychotherapy; (b) psychotherapy interventions in relationship to learning outcomes have not been studied within the context of life coaching. Numerous executive and life coaching institutions have addressed the first challenge in certification programs (Auerbach, 2001; Davis & Williams, 2007; Leonard, 1999; Menendez & Williams, 2007). There is a lack of literature and academic research addressing the second challenge.

Prior to developing the objectives of this study, an initial inquiry that prompted this research was whether psychotherapy is the best overall model to influence learning processes within the context of life coaching. Or, is psychotherapy the prevalent influence on life coaching practice because: (a) There has been a transition of professionals trained in psychology now working within the field of executive and life coaching, and therefore, influencing awareness and use of psychotherapeutic models; and

(b) coaches, untrained in psychology and working in the life coaching field, use psychotherapeutic models to access evidence-based methods to guide their process and practice.

Specifically, the literature revealed this emerging practice of life coaching – unlike psychotherapy – has launched itself and is not yet universally regulated as a profession by certification, licensing, insurance, or has a theoretical body of knowledge. Coaching practices grounded in psychotherapy might be inappropriate when used by coaches who do not have education and expertise within the field of psychology. Psychologists who have transitioned to life coaching have an advantage of having expertise and experience with a variety of psychotherapeutic models. However, Peltier (2001), author of *The Psychology of Executive Coaching: Theory and Application,* suggested, "a coach must be able to provide a good working definition of coaching and articulate the difference between coaching and psychotherapy" (p. xxvi).

Whether the coaching approach is influenced by psychodynamic, cognitive behavior, person-centered theory, or any of the myriad approaches available, there are potential problems when practices informed by psychotherapy are used in life coaching without proper training. Psychodynamic approaches are typically more focused on delving into the conscious and unconscious past rather than implementation of action (Peltier, 2001). Whereas coaching is "action oriented, data driven, present-moment focused and designed for a high-functioning client" (p. xxvi), a coach using psychotherapy techniques that focus on revealing the intrapersonal feelings of a client's past trauma is inappropriate.

Currently, most coaching models are looking for cognitive behavior change or modification (Ellis, 1998; Flaherty, 2005; Grant & Stober, 2006; Hargrove, 2003; Hudson, 1999; Kimsey-House et al., 1998; Peltier, 2001). Behavior modification does not claim to access the meaning aspect of one's life. Although this is a clear distinction from the focus of a transformative practice, the use of cognitive behavior techniques without an understanding of how the theory applies specific to life coaching practice boundaries, can risk delving into emotionally charged negative areas of the client's past.

Beck (1976) and Meichenbaum (1994), key figures in the development of cognitive psychology and cognitive therapy, have both influenced how coaches facilitate a shift in a client's self-limiting thinking. Peltier (2001) differentiated cognitive psychology and cognitive therapy as follows: "Cognitive psychology is the study of the mind, its ways, and patterns [whereas the core concept of cognitive therapy is that] people can learn to notice and change their own thoughts with powerful emotional and behavioral benefits" (p. 82) through conscious thinking rather than unconscious processes. The philosophical basis of cognitive therapy proposes that feelings come from thinking, rather than the circumstances of an event or situation.

Therefore, if a client is aware of his or her thinking, and the connection to ineffective behavior patterns, there is a higher probability that the client can shift the affective state. If a coach, untrained in theoretical principles, approaches all clients with a standardized cognitive method, the risk can be that the client will be frustrated and experiences a negative outcome (Peltier, 2001). The same can be true if a coach is using a cognitive intervention in coordination with an outcome of behavior modification, and

does not understand the theoretical underpinnings of a behavior modification theory (Meichenbaum, 1994).

Behavior modification connects a practice with a process outcome. A central characteristic of behavior modification is teaching the use of precise techniques and methods to alter how the individual functions in response to events, people, and objects in their environment (Martin & Pear, 2003). Behavior can refer to covert behaviors such as thinking and feeling or overt behaviors such as performance or action. Behavioral psychology holds that "behavior is a function of its consequences" (p. 44), as well as offers tools and technique that, when used by a trained psychologist, can facilitate positive outcomes.

If the practice goal is to change specific behaviors, the role of the teacher or psychotherapist in relationship to the client is that of an expert in behavior modification. A well-intentioned coach, not trained within the field of psychotherapy, may lack an understanding of the laws and methods of behavior therapy. Behavior modification requires a specific focus, systematic measurement, analysis of cause and effect, a practical plan, and evaluation of results to access the desired result. In promoting behavior change as a life-coaching outcome, one of the greatest challenges for a coach without psychology expertise, is the development of the ability to identify and quantify behavioral change. Without knowledge of the principles of behavior modification it can be a challenge to break apart a large system of behaviors into smaller measureable behaviors to develop achievable goals (Peltier, 2001). Clients who have the potential to engage in coaching relationships could waste time and money; in some cases, they could even come to harm.

Downey (2003) author of *Effective Coaching* highlighted that coaching is not therapy, consulting, or spiritual counseling. He emphasized that if a coaching process crosses into these professional areas, "then the instant it does so it is responsible to the rules of those established in those domains" (p. ix). While many of the psychological models and methods are effective, I was interested in exploring other life coaching interventions that are not bound by the rules and regulations of psychotherapy. It is my conviction that the outcome of this research has the potential to inform an alternative practice to facilitate learning processes and offer new knowledge specific to the field of life coaching.

Of additional importance to this study was the review of the substantial body of scholarly literature, investigating the theory of adult transformative learning; however, there is a paucity of published academic research investigating the practice of life coaching. For example, as part of an annotated bibliography of peer reviewed research on executive, workplace, and personal coaching, Grant (2003) reviewed 128 papers published between 1937 and 2003 in *PsycInfo* and *Dissertation Abstracts International* databases and found that the majority of research was in executive coaching, with only two papers by Wilkins (2000) and Grant (2003) specifically addressing the topic of life coaching. I discovered an additional six papers *investigating* the field of life coaching cited in *Dissertation Abstracts International* and published between 2002 and 2006: Baldwin (2006), Clifford-Rapp (2005), Creane (2002), Disbennett-Lee (2005), Elliott (2006), Marshall (2006), and K. Rogers (2004). This lack of published research is, perhaps, not surprising considering that life coaching is relatively new to the field of coaching.

In contrast to the scarcity of peer-reviewed papers, there were a variety of articles published in popular consumer publications; however, these, too, contributed little to the substance of life coaching research and, more specifically, to the development of theory-based practices. This gap in research guided the construction of questions directing the research of this grounded theory study.

Research Questions

The review of existing literature on models influencing life coaching shaped the development of the central research question: *Can the practice of life coaching, informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry, foster an integrated process of adult transformative learning*?

Additional subquestions in support of answering the primary research question were:

1. In what ways can Appreciative Inquiry principles be incorporated into life coaching practice?

2. What conditions of the coaching practice, informed by Appreciative Inquiry, best support adult transformative learning?

Purpose of Study

In this qualitative study, the philosophical integration of Appreciative Inquiry and the theoretical perspectives of adult transformative learning has been explored to reveal evidence and new knowledge relevant to guide life coaching practice. This study attempted to understand if the *philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry* applied to life coaching have the potential to facilitate an integrated adult transformative learning process, and if so, how. The research leveraged current knowledge of professional organizations, which have recently begun to engage and train practitioners in the principles and processes of Appreciative Inquiry.

The principles and applied philosophical practice of Appreciative Inquiry have the generative potential to facilitate a new process of learning within relationship (Cooperrider, 1986) and to influence every dimension of coaching practice from the initial contact to the action phase. Appreciative Inquiry is a relational and collaborative approach, which invites positive, powerful, and rapid change inquiry (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003). Canine and Sloan (2007), authors of *Appreciative Inquiry in Coaching,* describe Appreciative Inquiry as a "co-creative partnership between the client, the coach and the clients' relevant social system" (p. 1). Coaches, trained in Appreciative Inquiry, practice a process of qualitative questioning that includes participants interviewing one another in *generative* dialogue (Canine & Sloan, 2007). Appreciative Inquiry's *performative* ability integrates inquiry with action for a viable and generative approach (Patton, 2002).

Within the context of the life coaching practice, there were three primary objectives of the research. The first was to explore in what ways are Appreciative Inquiry principles incorporated into life coaching practice; the second objective was to investigate if life coaching practice that is informed by Appreciative Inquiry can result in adult transformative learning; the third objective was to identify conditions of the life coaching practice, informed by Appreciative Inquiry, that best support adult transformative learning. Through investigating these objectives there was the potential to discover "the whole range of conditions involved when learning processes that are not only cognitive significantly change the personal capacities, understandings, and orientations of the learner" (Illeris, 2004, p. 84).

I agree with Mezirow (2000) that there is merit and importance of an individual (client) exploring and understanding the circumstances of his or her learning process when he stated, "We make meaning with different dimensions of awareness and understanding; in adulthood we may more clearly understand our experience when we know under what conditions an expressed idea is true or justified" (p. 4). Exploring how a life coaching practice – informed by Appreciative Inquiry – fosters adult transformative learning conditions helped to develop a practical understanding of how to construct an effective process of learning and development.

Significance of the Study

A life coach's understanding of how his or her practice shapes adult transformative learning conditions will support an intentional process to foster the client's learning experience. Practitioners within the field of life coaching would benefit from ongoing research that understands and proposes an integrated intervention and framework – other than the current models – to inform the practice of life coaching. Consequently, if theories and models exist that inform coaching practices, why propose Appreciative Inquiry and adult transformative learning to guide life coaching practices?

Unlike some models of psychotherapy that view the therapist as the expert, Flaherty (2005) viewed coaching "as a learning experience for both coach and client" (p. 11) emphasizing a shared commitment within relationship as being essential to coaching practice. This shared commitment requires a language of dialogue and inquiry as fundamental for constructing new realities. Binkert, Clancy, and Orem (2007), authors of *Appreciative Coaching,* believed that this kind of inquiry and dialogue is found in a *language of appreciation*, which is essential for helping individuals to transform old

beliefs into new learning, which, in turn, create new realities. The authors were influenced by the Gergen's (2004) social construction theory, which proposes that reality is constructed within relationship.

A central characteristic of an integrated and appreciative adult transformative learning process is to engage the individual in a relational process of inquiry, dialogue, and reflection to construct new ways of knowing and acting. While a behavioral approach to inquiry might focus on behavioral change that offers little opportunity to consider what is meaningful, a new reality can be constructed with an Appreciative Inquiry approach. Powerful provocative inquiry, which is integral to Appreciative Inquiry, asks a question that promotes the client's learning, rather than simply telling, and allows the client to experience a process that leads to discovery of the answer. For example, provocative open-ended questions crafted to solicit new ideas and thinking processes support contemplation that facilitates new learning. A telling and talking approach in dialogue have a higher probability of evoking compliance rather than learning (Grant & Stober, 2006).

Exploring an integrated Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning framework that is specific to facilitating learning has the potential to contribute to (a) the evolution of alternative theories to inform coaching processes, (b) the construction of a process to facilitate an integrated experience of learning phases and generative outcomes, and (c) the expanded choice of interventions and frameworks to guide life coaching practices. Clear articulation of an intervention to influence a positive adult transformative learning process could guide practice and better serve positive life coaching outcomes for the clients. Life coaching practice – informed by Appreciative Inquiry – has the

impending ability to facilitate the process and outcomes of an integrated adult transformative learning experience.

Definition of Terms

The purpose of providing definitions is to create a shared understanding of terms used in this dissertation.

Appreciative Inquiry – Appreciative Inquiry is a communication method that creates a collaborative search for what gives "life" to a living system when it is at its best. Appreciative Inquiry values and recognizes the best in people and affirms strengths and positive potential. Appreciative Inquiry is an art and practice that involves the act of "exploration and discovery" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 7) in asking questions to discover positive potential.

Coach – A coach is a person who "facilitates experiential learning that results in future-oriented abilities" (Hudson, 1999, p. 6). The coach is not perceived as having the answers but is responsible for asking powerful questions to establish an environment for the client's learning.

Coaching relationship – In this form of relationship, the coach and client work together to construct a powerful alliance that suits the client's needs and learning styles (Kimsey-House et al., 1998). A key objective of this relationship is to develop a communication approach that engenders mutual responsibility for engagement and participation within the coaching partnership.

Constructivist perspective – The primary source of the construction of reality is within the processes of how an individual construes and interprets the world (Gergen,

1994). Reality is constructed in a cognitive rational internal process by the individual learner (Mezirow, 1990).

Constructionist perspective – Social construction places the emphasis upon reality being constructed within relationships (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). The language an individual uses can be treated as a picture of his or her interpretive and meaning making depiction of the world (Gergen, Gergen, & Schrader, 2009).

Generative discourse – This method of communication entails thoughtful ways of talking to evaluate and challenge accepted ways of knowing and understanding to invite new meaning and action (Gergen, 1999). This process of evaluation includes assessment of alternative perspectives and an assessment of assumptions (Mezirow, 2000).

Integrated process of adult transformative learning – Learning involves the integration of two processes: (a) an internal psychological process of the learner, which is representative of traditional cognitive learning theories; and (b) an external interaction processes, which is representative of social constructionism (Gergen & Gergen, 2004) focusing on the interaction process within relationships (Illeris, 2004). An open definition of an integrated learning process incorporates a diversity of processes that result in sustainable change within "motor, cognitive, psychodynamic (i.e. emotional, motivational or attitudinal) or social character, and not due to genetic-biological maturation" (Illeris, 2003, p. 397).

Learning – Learning involves an experiential active process in which an individual uses previous understanding to construct new understanding. Learning implies some type of change, and change indicates process, with processes subject to modification and transformation (Bateson, 1972). From a systems approach that

categorizes the process of learning into specific identifiable components, Thomas and Williams (2005) summarized the characteristics of learning in a way that can be easily addressed by life coaching within the life coaching relationship as: (a) The input phase: information gathered through the five senses; (b) the elaborate phase: incorporating the sensory information in a cognitive context or mind set; (c) the processing phase: the attribution of personal meaning to the perception (information and mindset); (d) The output phase: the verbal and/or non verbal expression of an idea or thought (p. 320).

Multiple learning dimensions – These are characteristics of a multidimensional learning style to be influenced by the following elements: environment and emotions; as well as sociological, psychological and physical factors (Thomas & Williams, 2005).

Theoretical sensitivity – In grounded theory, theoretical sensitivity refers to a personal quality of the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 41). It is the characteristic of having the ability to interpret and understand the data, while discerning what is or is not relative to the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Performative – Inquiry that produces or originates an action.

Transformative learning – "Transformation involves intervening in the context that shapes who we are being and therefore our thinking and our actions" (Hargrove, 2003, p. 94). Transformation is a significant change that usually involves an improvement. Therefore, learning that is transformative involves an experience in which deep learning occurs, identified by a basic change in beliefs, principles, and feelings that results in a fundamental shift in an individual's understanding of oneself and others in relationship (Mezirow 1990).

Summary

This exploration of an Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning theoretical framework sought a new understanding of an appreciative practice approach to facilitate adult transformative learning within the life coaching relationship. This integrated framework to current models has the potential for making a practical and valuable contribution for both practitioners and clients. A theoretical framework, grounded by Appreciative Inquiry and adult transformative learning, has also the potential to construct life coaching practice as relational, performative, generative, and transformative.

Based on my own experience, it seems there is a natural interplay between life coaching, appreciative inquiry, and adult transformative learning. I contended that there is the potential for provocative new learning embedded in the life coaching relationship. This potential connection was the focus of this research and provided the backdrop for developing a model that integrates life coaching with Appreciative Inquiry and Adult Transformative Learning, and to present an integrated framework that could anchor life coaching practice in a comprehensive humanistic and appreciative learning theory.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Coaching: The Context of the Study

Background

In a less complex time, people's lifestyles were well defined by their place in society. As apprentices, they were trained by masters to duplicate the skills of their trade. Personal concerns were resolved within the family or with the spiritual advisor – priest, rabbi, or minister. With the advent of the industrial revolution, the break-up of the extended family, and the growth in jobs that had never existed before, many people were left without adequate direction about what to do with their lives.

Coaching, as a profession evolved from the field of sports into psychotherapy, business, and personal development to fill the need for expert guidance that was left wanting as society became more complex. In the late 1980s, corporate or executive coaching, which focused on enhancing teambuilding, managerial skills, and leadership qualities was developed in response to the recognition that if organizations were going to experience productive change, then the individuals working within these business systems would need to change. During this time, the primary focus of a coach was to facilitate personal evolution, leadership training, work-home balance and personal and professional renewal (Hudson, 1999). The philosophy of corporate coaching is that a well-rounded person makes an effective employee or manager.

There are multiple descriptions and definitions for coaching. The Professional and Personal Coaches Association describes coaching as a collaborative relationship that focuses on the client taking action to manifest personal vision, goals, or desires. The belief that individuals have the ability to change and improve their lives is a premise that

informs the practice of all coaches. In review of all perspectives, the essence of this

process is that coaching helps clients get unstuck (O'Neil, 2000), recognize their highest

potential (Binkert et al., 2007), and transition their new learning into results.

According to Kimsey-House et al. (1998) personal and professional coaching

attends to the entirety of an individual, with an essential focus on promoting action and

discovering new learning that develops a more effective way of living (Kimsey-House et

al., 1998). Clients seek coaching to re-evaluate and reinvigorate their personal and

professional life potential. In many cases the client engages in the coaching process in

response to questioning a significant life event that is perceived as a challenge or

opportunity. Gray (2006) pointed out that in response to the client's quest for new clarity

and understanding the coach focuses on enhancing the client's learning, performance, and

improving his/her quality of life.

This chapter covers the literature that forms a foundation for this study,

investigating how Appreciative Inquiry integrated into life coaching can support adult

transformative learning. First, the literature regarding life-coaching has been reviewed,

followed by a review of the literature regarding the relational framework of life coaching,

which includes the role of both the client and the coach. Second, the literature related to

learning theory, the language of dialogue and inquiry, current models guiding practice,

and psychotherapy's influence on the field of life coaching has been discussed. Third,

literature related to Appreciative Inquiry as a practice to facilitate adult transformative

learning, has been reviewed.

Coaching Research

In the coaching arena, one of the most recognizable organizations is the International Coach Federation, an organization of 11,000 members. Coaching, a rapidly growing industry, lacked definitive information about the field until the International Coach Federation's Global Study (2007) provided the first baseline global perspective of the coaching profession. This study indicated an estimated 30,000 coaches are operating worldwide. The objectives of the study included gathering information regarding profiles of coaches (e.g., gender, age, and education), to gain an understanding of the types of coaching specialties that are available to clients, to provide estimates of coaching revenue, as well as to determine who hires coaches, why coaches are hired, and what future trends might occur in the industry.

Although the study does not claim to be perfectly representative of the whole coaching population, it did collect a substantial amount of data from 5,415 respondents surveyed from 73 countries. The breakdown of the statistics revealed that this sample of the coaching field was approximately 63.5% female and 36.5% male, and that the largest age group, 38.8%, were between 46 and 55 years. Only 39.2% were fulltime coaches, and the majority, 86.4% of respondents, had less than 10 years of coaching experience. Coaching clients who were actively involved in the process, were found to be adults whose age ranged between 38 and 55 years.

The 10 specialty areas within the coaching field were identified as: Executive, Leadership, Life Vision and Enhancement, Business/Organization, Career, Small Business, Personal/Organizational Management and Development Issues, Relationships, Health and Fitness, and Internal coaching. Of these, the most frequently cited three

specialty areas were: Executive (18.8%), Leadership (18.3%), and Life-Vision and (personal) Enhancement (15.7%) coaching. The study showed that male coaches were more predominantly represented in executive and leadership coaching, while female coaches were more predominantly represented in life-vision and enhancement coaching.

Executive and leadership coaching, which together represented 37.1% of coaching, were the most predominant classifications in the field and have been the focus of the majority of academic research. The survey indicated over half of the participants (53%) have an advanced degree, while 35.2 % of the respondents held only a university undergraduate degree. Therefore, 88% of the respondents hold a university degree.

Educational development in both personal and professional arenas was recognized as significant for advancement in the field. Nearly 71% of the respondents believed that academic inclusion of coaching as a discipline will be a part of the future. "As of 2007, over four dozen colleges and universities offer either a certificate program in coaching or a full graduate degree in coaching" (Menendez & Williams, 2007, p. xxiii). This information supports a belief that there is an academic audience existing within the coaching field, and that these scholar-practitioners will be interested in the development of theoretically informed practices to guide coaching practice. This interest in the development of an academic base is true for all the subfields within the coaching arena, including life coaching, which is the focus of this dissertation research.

Because there are multiple theoretical models that influence the field of coaching, it is possible that the presumption of a gap between theory and practice within the field that needs to be filled, might be interpreted as inappropriate. Although there is reason to believe that such a gap exists in all coaching arenas, life coaching provides evidence of

this gap. This research study investigated how Appreciative Inquiry-Adult

Transformative Learning as an alternative framework can guide the practice area of life

coaching. The initial examination of the life coaching relational framework as a potential

to facilitate adult transformative learning and change may provide data that would be of

benefit to practitioners.

<center>*The Relational Framework of Life Coaching*</center>

The Client

Williams (2004), founder and president of the Institute for Life Coach Training,

described the basic philosophy behind life coaching to be a belief that all humans have

immeasurable talents, energy, and knowledge, all waiting to be discovered and utilized.

By engaging a life coach, a client can utilize existing resources to initiate new learning

and achieve his or her full potential. While this broad description begins to answer the

question of purpose and benefit, it is appropriate to be more specific and investigate the

major reasons a client seeks out a life coach and the potential benefits of engaging in life

coaching.

Clients generally seek a life coaching relationship to acquire new learning, make

significant changes (Richardson, 1998) and to help them move beyond "self-doubt, fear,

distraction, or busyness (Menendez & Williams, 2007, p. 19). Binkert et al. (2007),

authors of *Appreciative Coaching: A Process for Positive Change,* proposed the swift rise

of client's seeking coaching is directly related to a "desire for self-construction" (p. 11)

and a wish to create a connection with life purpose.

Although there are multiple interpretations of what is a life purpose, "a common

definition of life purpose is a calling, an overall theme for your life, or an intent that

transcends your daily activities" (Menendez & Williams, 2007, p. 162). In a quest to reconnect with their life purpose, clients seek new learning to "think beyond their own assumptions, mind-sets, and preferences…and to be capable of visioning preferred futures" (Hudson, 1999, p. 25).

Menendez and Williams (2007) expanded upon the reasons that clients typically hire life coaches to achieve results by identifying three general areas: (a) performance goals, for example, improving results in a specific life area; (b) learning goals, for example, developing healthy nutrition habits; and (c) fulfillment goals, for example, creating satisfying family relationships. In light of these objectives the life coaching learning process, also, invites clients to explore how their existing beliefs contribute to how they construct and respond to the opportunities and challenges occurring in their lives.

Although effective problem solving and constructing positive solutions might be considered primary benefits of engaging in the life coaching relationship for the client, within a larger context, there are other positive life-giving benefits. Ellis (1998), author of *Life Coaching: A Manual for Helping Professionals,* proposed that in relationship with clients, life coaches "promote celebration and a deep appreciation of life" (p. 4). He suggested that within the context of the life coaching relationship, clients have an opportunity to heighten awareness of the greatness of their lives, experience profound shifts in how they approach life, reinvigorate their creative genius, and realize undiscovered possibilities for the provocative potential in how they can construct their lives. In essence, within the context of the life coaching relationship, clients have the opportunity to engage in a process of learning to construct and take action on goals.

The Coach

The facilitation of the client's process of constructing new realities is grounded upon the intention and the practice of a life coach. Downey (2003), author of *Effective Coaching*, defined the practice of coaching as "the art of facilitating the performance, learning, and development of another" (p. 15). To achieve these objectives, a coach must have clarity regarding his or her intention and role of how to practice in relationship with the client.

Martin (2001), author of *The Life Coaching Handbook,* proposed that through focusing on the results, life coaching participants are enabled "to define and achieve these with ease, [and] then the clients can eventually be guided to examine their beliefs" (p. 5) and discover new learning. Leonard (1999) founder of Coach U, one of the first coaching institutions, believes in ongoing learning for all coaches stating, "It's very important to coach while you learn and learn while you coach" (p. 33). Being open to life long learning to improve competence within the life coaching relationship is essential for anyone who wants to improve the quality and effectiveness of his or her coaching practice.

A coach's role is to understand what brought the client to seek coaching and what changes the client is looking to attain. Another goal of the coach is to discover how the internal dimensions of the client are influencing the external actions relative to the attainment of their goals. The life coaching processes that occur between the coach and client are a combination of inner work and outer work focusing on both the client's internal self and the manifestation of external goals (Hudson, 1999).

The inner work involves coaching directed toward understanding the beliefs the client holds, self-esteem—or lack thereof—that the client feels, and purpose the client has for his or her life, with an end result of transformation of limiting assumptions that prevent the client from experiencing the life that is desired. The outer work involves investigating the social elements of the client's environment and relationships to facilitate integration and an ability to achieve goals effectively. Hudson (1999) suggested that the transformation of the inner self is directly connected to the client's outer question and that the coach must understand how to facilitate multi-dimensional processes for the client. Often, a client enters coaching to address the outer work; however, within the inner or ontological work of the practice, the transformative learning process can potentially begin to take place within the life coaching relationship. Coaches should keep in mind the criteria of new learning, and results are intended outcomes for both the client and the coach. Flaherty (2005) proposed the best way to facilitate new ways of knowing is to be clear about what is intended to be accomplished within the scope of the relationship.

The Relationship

Kimsey-House et al. (1998) maintained "the relationship adds a significant measure of motivation…coaching uses this power to keep the client on track, remain in action, and focus on the learning" (p. 81). Flaherty (2005) viewed coaching "as a learning experience for both coach and client" (p. 11) emphasizing a shared commitment within relationship as being essential to coaching practice. He outlined the elements of a generative relationship as being "mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual freedom of

expression" (p. 48). A collaborative learning process invites an equality of shared power for the client to explore the conditions that contribute to how he or she responds to life.

The client's role is to be open and willing to engage in a process that stimulates new learning. From a constructionist perspective of the coaching relationship, a coach's role is not to change specifics, but rather, to identify habits that limit the client's ability to develop awareness of appropriate choices and options (Flaherty, 2005).

A constructionist perspective focuses on the ways that each individual constructs the reality of his or her world in a uniquely different way. Experience reinforces these meaning structures and expectations of what is reality. Unlike a modernist positivist approach to reality that "seeks the *facts* or *causes* of social phenomena apart from the subjective states of individuals" (Palmer, 1969, p. 69), post-modern constructionist discovers how individuals, instead of groups, establish their own criteria for perspectives and paradigms. Social construction has its origins in postmodern thinking and maintains there are multiple contextual realities. Social construction within human science inquiry brings the individual into a social relational perspective with the relationship as the center of society and world construction.

Gergen (1999), noted social psychologist, is a primary contributor to the theory of social construction. Gergen maintained that social construction is about the nature of relationships and being curious about where one wants to go in a relationship.

> As constructionist ideas have become increasingly widespread, so has critical reflection on *our every day lives*. Why is this so? Because the moment we become aware that any pronouncement on the nature of things – regardless of the status, achievements or the apparent genius of the speaker – is only "one way of putting things," that we also realize that it could be otherwise. (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, p. 26)

Within a relational framework, social construction invites a pluralist view and a shift in understanding to consciously co-create an alternative future. From a constructionist perspective, it is through the relational process that individuals come to a new understanding of themselves. In *An Invitation to Social Construction*, Gergen (1999) wrote, "Social Construction invites the creation of new, more inhabitable ways of going on together" (p. 5). Social construction's principles originate from the idea that individuals can control their destiny through envisioning what they want and crafting actions to achieve the vision.

Within the reconstruction of an individual's life plan is the opportunity to reconnect and reinvigorate the client's life purpose to live a fulfilling life with intention and with purpose. Kimsey-House et al. (1998) positioned the client's life purpose as being about "using the talents they have been given as well as the unique learning of their lives, their experience and their wisdom" (p. 124). A life coach guides the client into a renewed awareness of the client's inner uniqueness, a reconnection to his or her innate sense of self in relationship to the world, and a rediscovery of a personal/professional vision and purpose. The benefit to the client is learning that allows him or her to live with purposeful intention, which leads to a more authentic and successful life (Thomas & Williams, 2005).

Within the scope of the coaching relationship, O'Neil (2000) emphasized paying attention to the "ecosystem" (p. 10) in which the client functions. Clients are influenced by myriad interrelationships, and external contexts including their family, friends, and working environment. The coach needs to know the patterns of interaction within the client's social circles of influence, because it is relevant to his or her assumptions about

being in relationships. Southern (2005) shared a perspective on the process of learning stating, "that power distance weakens relationships and creates a barrier to communication and learning" (p. 47), whereas, a relationship that exists within the context of collaboration contains respect for what each person can offer one another. Once known, the coach can reflect those patterns back to the client, who can then release the ones that are no longer life giving or productive. The coach would want to learn how the client views being in relationship with authority figures such as parents, teachers, or doctors. Investigating how the client views himself or herself in relationship to authority can guide the coach's facilitation of conditions to empower collaboration within the context of the life-coaching dyad.

Based on the perspective of the profession using this form of interaction there seems to be one concept that is universal, which is that learning is a key goal of life coaching. However, the question remains as to what is the most appropriate and effective way to facilitate the helping process within the context of the life coaching practice. The following section is a review of transformative learning as a way of constructing an integrated perspective of adult transformative learning within the context of the life coaching practice. The relevance of the connection between life coaching practice and learning is important to the proposed research. To appreciate fully the concept of learning in relationship to practice this study moves to a discussion of the literature that has evolved around learning and transformative learning.

Learning and Life-Coaching Practice

Underpinning the coaching process are the principles guiding effective adult learning.
(Grant & Stober, 2006, p. 4)

Learning and Transformation

Learning, which leads to personal transformation, provides ways for an individual

to emerge and grow in relationship with others. In a sense, learning is about being and

becoming, or as Jarvis (2006) suggested, "Life is about being, human being is about

learning" (p. 133). Jarvis, author of *Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Human*

Learning, stated,

> To transform something is to alter either its form or its function and in a sense this
> is precisely what learning is – transformation through two processes, altering first
> the sensations of the external world into an experience and then changing the
> experience into an element of our biography, which could be knowledge, skills,
> attitudes, values, beliefs, emotions or the senses – or any combination of them. (p.
> 87)

For transformation to occur within the context of life coaching, the coach must

intervene in the context of the client's perspectives, beliefs, and assumptions through

reframing the context, which shapes the client's mindset. "People transform who they are

by surfacing, testing, and revisiting beliefs and assumptions that have been successful for

them. This is always an emotional process" (Jarvis, 2006, p. 86). Inherently,

transformation involves change and is connected to a complex phenomenon of learning.

Foundational to the context of life coaching is the intention for learning and

change. The complexities of learning involve the integration of two processes: (a) an

internal psychological process of the learner, which is representative of traditional

cognitive learning theories; and (b) an external interaction processes, which is

representative of social constructionism (Gergen & Gergen, 2004) focusing on the

interaction process within relationships. The internal aspect refers to a psychological

process of acquiring new learning in which new insights are connected with the results of prior learning, while the external aspect of this interaction addresses those processes that take place between the learner and his or her social and cultural environment (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). Beyond the physiological, emotional, or psychological attributes of learning, Jarvis (2006) eloquently summarized the complexity of the learning process by stating, "Learning is about the way that human beings are in the world and the world in them – it occurs at the intersection of humanity and society" (p. 7).

The life coach engages not just the client but also the client in relationship to his or her entire world. Grabove (1997) pointed out that, "transformative learning in practice, described from a diversity of perspectives and contexts, is a powerful venture for both learners and educators" (p. 93). Transformative learning theory suggests that once an individual has experienced personal transformation it is highly unlikely that he or she will return to previous, old perspectives. However, most individuals will not experience a consistent forward movement in their learning process, but have a tendency to become stuck in different phases. An individual needs to work through risk and uncertainty, make a commitment to action, and continue through the phases of adult transformative learning (Schugurensky, 2002). For adult transformative learning to occur, a coach would potentially benefit from understanding an integrated perspective of learning philosophy to guide his or her practice.

Similar to the learning perspective of Jarvis (2006), Thomas and Williams (2005), authors of *Total Life Coaching,* acknowledged the characteristics of a multidimensional learning style to be influenced by environment and emotions, as well as sociological, psychological, and physical factors. Their work outlined a learning process in four

distinct phases: (a) The input phase: information gathered through the five senses; (b) The elaborate phase: incorporating the sensory information in a cognitive context or mind set; (c) The processing phase: the attribution of personal meaning to perception (information and mindset); and (d) The output phase: the verbal and/or non verbal expression of an idea or thought (p. 320).

No one theory will reveal all that needs to be known about learning; therefore, it is necessary to include several learning perspectives that have potential relevance to the practice of life coaching. Because adult transformative learning often requires a lengthy incremental process of learning, a review of theoretical perspectives of the dimensions and phases of learning that precede transformative learning is useful. There are multiple learning theories from which to construct an understanding of learning processes, such as Bateson's (1972) levels of developmental learning, Argyris and Schon's (1974) cognitive theories of action and theories-in-use, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model, and Illeris's (2003, 2004) integrated model of learning. Each offers insight in how individuals learn.

Learning Perspectives: Bateson, Argyris and Schon, and Kolb

As a developmental theorist and pioneering analyst of transformative learning, Bateson (1972) proposed that learning is based on altering the context rather than acquiring data. Context is defined as the form, order, and patterns of an individual's relationships (May, 1976). Bateson highlighted the idea that logical types of learning and feedback within context precede change. He maintained that learning implies some type of change, and change indicates process, with processes subject to modification and transformation.

Within Bateson's (1972) learning processes, there are five domains of learning: zero learning, and four levels of learning that he identified simply as I - IV. Zero learning involves expanding a meaning scheme, which is how an individual reacts to a situation or event, to include other data and habitual response. Learning I incorporates knowing of our habitual reactions, but no other change takes place. Learning II is cultural assimilation, where new information is accepted, and the ability to learn in another way through process reflection and change of our meaning schemes. Learning I and II are the most likely to occur in current life coaching. Learning III involves a shift in assumptions and references to experience a sort of perspective transformation and require the individual to integrate his or her life in a totally new and different way. Level III represents an optimum life coaching outcome describing an adult transformative learning experience. Level III learning requires an individual to challenge and change habits acquired in Level II, learning to allow a meta-analysis of his or her context of learning. Bateson described Level IV as a change in learning III and a "combination of phylogenesis and ontogenesis" (p. 293). He stated that relative to the human organism the developmental process of a species, which occurs over time, would probably never occur in combination with an individual's phases of development.

Another framework of adult learning is provided by organizational theorists Argyris and Schon (1974). As significant contributors to a theory of how knowledge informs action, Argyris and Schon contended that people create cognitive planning maps that directly influence how they act, and suggested most people have a theory of action, or "an espoused theory of action…which may or may not be compatible with [his or her] theory-in-use" (p. 7). Investigating the relationship between theory and practice, Argyris

and Schon maintained that most individuals are unaware when their actions or theories-in-use are not congruent with their theoretical espoused plan or theories of action plan. Theories-in-use include working with an individual's governing variables in relationship to information and choices, and the person's ability to make a commitment to these choices through consistent evaluation of his or her implementation and process.

Argyris and Schon (1974) proposed a relationship between theories in action and the dynamics of how an individual learns. For an individual to become aware of the connection between his or her theories-in-use and theories of action requires a transition from single loop learning to double loop learning. Single loop learning occurs when an individual learns techniques to correct or suppress a conflict between his or her espoused values and theories-in-use, whereas in double loop learning, the individual learns how to change governing variables to question the assumptions underlying his or her theories-in-use.

A client's theory-in-use is identified by observing his or her behavior and attitudes. For example, within the context of theories-in-use, an individual would use single loop learning to construct actions that would validate his or her goals. By understanding an individual's theory-in-use, the coach can use a practice of dialogue and inquiry to reveal the connections between the client's assumptions and actions. Ultimately, the practice of the coach facilitates the individual's awareness of beliefs that construct his or her theories-in-use and action. Finding ways to assist the client's ability to access double loop learning would facilitate a reconstruction of the assumptions shaping his or her espoused theories in relationship to the person's lived experience.

Kolb (1984) is a recognized contributor in the field of experiential learning, which, as its name indicates, is an approach that emphasizes the experience of the learner. He is less interested in the process of facilitating the acquisition of learning for the client and more interested in the content of interaction within the learning experience. He believed that learning is constructed through a transformation of experience that creates new knowledge.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model consists of four phases: (a) a concrete phase, in which a learner identifies, names, and describes concrete experiences; (b) a reflective phase that incorporates learner engagement in activities to reflect on the meaning in his or her life; (c) an abstract phase, during which the learner synthesizes and reflects upon information relative to theoretical concepts; and (d) the experimental phase, where the learner takes action. Kolb's model provides a framework of discovery, imagination, and design, which integrates social, psychological, and cultural perspectives to guide the learning experience. Kolb's approach to learning is relevant to life-coaching practice. For example, the abstract phase requires the coach to use a practice of dialogue and inquiry to discover old patterns and develop the synthesis for new information.

Each of these learning theories (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Bateson, 1972; Kolb, 1984) offer insight about learning process outcomes to guide life-coaching practices and build a foundation of support for the objectives of this study. Because most clients engaging in life coaching are adult learners, I believe it is essential for a life coach to review how his or her practice might be more meaningful and effective for the client. Therefore, it is appropriate to define adult learning and to introduce primary contributors to adult transformative learning theory.

Adult Transformative Learning Theory

Holton et al. (2005), authors of *The Adult Learner,* explained, "*adult learning* is defined as *the process of adults gaining knowledge and expertise*" (p. 174). Expanding upon Holton's et al. description of adult learning, this review discusses several recognized contributors to the field of adult transformative learning among them Mezirow's (1990, 1991, 1997, 2000) constructivist viewpoint. Daloz (1986, 1999), Dirkx and Prenger (1997), Illeris (2003, 2004), and O'Sullivan (2002) conceptualized learning as an integrated process of navigating the tension between the external and internal forces created by cognitive, emotional, and social factors. The accumulation of theoretical perspectives is used to compare emerging concepts to the actual data from adult transformative learning research (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). It is appropriate to begin the review of literature on adult learning with Mezirow (1990), because his work is recognized as foundational to adult transformative learning theory.

Mezirow (1990) published his first book, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood,* and launched a new field of study to determine how adults could learn in a way that supported them in changing their lives to realize their purpose and potential. Mezirow (2000) explained that, "*learning* occurs in one of four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind" (p. 19). When an individual experiences *transformative learning*, he or she experiences a shift and an evolution in how he or she interprets an experience. For example, in caring for an aging parent, a client might benefit from the process of adult transformative learning to alter how he or she engages with the parent. An adult transformative learning outcome might be that the client will live with

the tension and dealing with the unknown related to caring for an aging parent as a natural part of the life cycle process. Mezirow's contribution suggests that this new way of knowing guides future understanding, awareness, and action.

Mezirow's (1991) cognitive perspective positioned critical reflection as being central to transformation. From a *constructivist* viewpoint, Mezirow's approach emphasized that critically reflecting on meaning perspectives and schemes and taking action are essential for individual empowerment. Mezirow (1991) defined the term *meaning perspective to* "refer to the structure of assumptions within which one's past experiences assimilates and transforms new experience" (p. 42). This *habitual framework of expectations* creates the frame of reference through which an individual's *symbolic model* or belief system interprets the meaning of a life event. Mezirow suggested three types of perspectives, which are epistemic perspectives (how we know and use knowledge), socio-linguistic perspectives (norms, language, philosophies) and psychological perspectives (self-concepts and characterological preferences). These perspectives determine the essential conditions for developing the patterns of meaning, or *meaning schemes* relative to a life event and guide an individual's process of judging right and wrong, true or false, and other evaluations. A meaning scheme is "the concrete manifestation of our habitual orientation…the particular knowledge, beliefs, value judgments and feelings that become articulated in an interpretation" (p. 44).

An individual's meaning perspective and schemes are shifted through a process of perspective transformation, which evolves from an internal, rational, and individual cognitive dimension of learning, and involve:

> (a) An empowered sense of self, (b) more critical understanding of how one's social relationships and culture has shaped one's beliefs and feelings, and (c)

more functional strategies and resources for taking action. Taking an action is an integral dimension of transformative learning. (Mezirow, 1991, p. 16)

Mezirow's (1991) description of adult transformative learning outcomes incorporated four reasons why clients seek coaching, which include: empowerment, understanding, strategies, and action. However, his perspective is bound within a constructivist tradition that perceives reality as being constructed within the internal processes of the learner. This perspective differs from a central philosophical orientation of *constructionism,* which places the emphasis upon reality being constructed within relationships (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). The important distinction between these two concepts relative to life-coaching practice is the role of relationship in learning.

These proposed benefits could be integrated with Mezirow's (1991) 10 phases in his adult transformative learning model to develop a framework that guides a practice of dialogue and inquiry facilitating reflection and action. This theoretically informed map could potentially shape the life-coaching process of inquiry, dialogue, reflection, and action. The 10 phases present a potential point of entry and pathway for the life coaching practitioner to construct an integrated learning experience with positive outcomes.

Mezirow's Model Applied to Practice

Mezirow's (1991) phases of perspective transformative learning, which are listed below and will be expanded upon in greater detail later, provide a potential framework of process outcomes to shape the dialogue and inquiry within the coaching relationship.

1. A disorienting dilemma;
2. A self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame;
3. A critical assessment of assumptions;
4. A recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
5. An exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
6. The planning of a course of action;
7. An acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;

8. A provisional trying of new roles;
9. The building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (p. 169)

One might ask how these 10 phases of Mezirow's (1991) model influence practice. The answer is that central to Mezirow's model is the concept that learning occurs with experiencing a *disorienting dilemma*, which acts as a catalyst for a personal transformative learning process. Mezirow (2000) defined a *disorienting dilemma* "as an experience that causes a person to question what he or she has previously believed to be unquestionable" (p. 333). A coach who is informed by a framework of adult transformative learning perceives a client's dilemma as an opportunity for essential reflection and a transformation of meaning perspectives. Mezirow's (1991) phase 1, guides the inquiry toward a discovery of the client's perspective about his or her disorienting dilemma.

Clients who seek coaching are not always motivated by a negative life experience. Positive life experiences, such as financial inheritance, religious conversion, marriage, and pregnancy, can stimulate questions addressing new relationships and situations. This questioning is, also, identified as *subjective reframing* and occurs through a process of critical, essential self-reflection. In the self-examination of phase 2, the coach engages the client in dialogue and inquiry to explore his or her thinking and feelings about the situation. Questions are designed in phase 3 and 4 to stimulate the client's critical reflection of beliefs and feelings that might be limiting his or her process of learning. Phase 5 focuses on encouraging the client to imagine and reflect on new roles and processes relative to his or her dilemma. Within the structure of phases 6 through 10, the

coach facilitates a course of designing a plan, exploring new competencies, building practical skills, and initiating purposeful action.

Mezirow (1991) proposed that the 10 phases (identified and studied through empirical studies of application) are significant to facilitating critical reflection. In life coaching practice, facilitating critical reflection is central to discovering the assumptions that define clients' beliefs and inform their thinking and behavior. Adult transformative learning as described by Mezirow is a process of critical self-reflection, reflective dialogue, and reflective action with *critical self-reflection of assumptions* being central. Mezirow maintained critical reflection on assimilated epistemic assumptions is necessary to validate new assumptions for transformational learning. Assumptions or *habits of mind* are a subtext, or *frame of reference* that are taken for granted by an individual, but give meaning to the context of how an event is interpreted and understood.

These assumptions translate into an individual's meaning schemes, expectations, attitudes, and beliefs that shape and define his or her worldview. Mezirow (1997) contended that critical reflection on assumptions is a cornerstone of all the stages of transformative learning. A cognitive pattern of unconscious or unexamined assumptions limits the horizons of an individual's understanding. A focus on old assumptions without reflecting on them potentially limits the individual's capacity to construct new horizons of thinking and learning. A coach can invite the client to join in a collaborative examination of how that client is approaching a situation. Through a practice of dialogue and inquiry a coach can invite the client to tell a story about his or her disorienting dilemma to reveal the client's frames of reference or underlying assumptions.

Assumptions serve as a subtext, which is taken for granted by an individual that creates a pattern of meaning and guides how an event is understood. This pattern of assumptions has been identified with several words or phrases including: a *mental model, a conceptual framework, approach, worldview, cognitive filter*, or *habits of mind* (Mezirow, 1990). A cognitive pattern of assumptions limits the horizons of an individual's understanding. A practice of dialogue and inquiry to facilitate reflection upon old assumptions can potentially expand the individuals' capacity to construct new meaning-making structures of thinking and learning.

While Mezirow's theory does not exclude emotional and social dimensions, it focuses primarily on the cognitive dimension of learning. To further explore the potential relevance of an integrated adult transformative learning framework to guide life-coaching practices, an overview is required of the integrated adult transformative learning perspectives. The next section will begin with an overview of Illeris's multiple dimensions of learning, followed by the perspectives of Daloz (1986, 1999), Dirkx and Prenger (1997), and O' Sullivan (2002). Through addressing all three dimensions of learning—cognitive, social, and emotional—there is the potential to identify "the whole range of conditions involved when learning processes that are not only cognitive significantly change the personal capacities, understandings, and orientations of the learner" (Illeris, 2004, p. 85).

Integrated Learning Perspectives: Illeris

Illeris' (2003, 2004) learning theory effectively supported the purpose of this study. It highlights the significance of multiple dimensions of learning (cognitive, social, and emotional) embedded in relationship in a way that encompasses the wholeness of

diverse contributions that work together, rather than in opposition to one another, to create an integrated learning experience. Illeris' (2003) theory of learning is founded on an open definition of learning, which incorporates a diversity of processes that result in sustainable change within "motor, cognitive, psychodynamic (i.e., emotional, motivational or attitudinal) or social character, and not due to genetic-biological maturation" (p. 3). Illeris conceptualized learning as an integrated process of navigating the tension between the external and internal forces created by cognitive, emotional, and social factors. The external aspect of this interaction is that which takes place between the learner and his or her social, cultural, and material environment. The internal aspect refers to a psychological process of acquiring new learning in which new insights are connected with the results of prior learning. Illeris believed that transformative learning occurs within significant and crucial life questioning occurrences.

Within this whole system approach, Illeris (2003) posited that all learning includes three dimensions: the cognitive dimension of knowledge and skills, the social dimension of communication and cooperation, and the emotional dimension of feelings and motivation, all of which are embedded in the context of social relationship. For Illeris, the cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of learning work in collaboration rather than in opposition to one another. Each description of the three dimensions could be identified as intended outcomes of a life-coaching practice. The *cognitive dimension* (knowledge and skills) leverages the individual's ability and understanding for learning. According to Illeris, the task for the learner "is to construct meaning and ability to deal with the challenges of practical life and thereby develop an overall personal functionality" (p. 399). The *social dimension* deals with the external interactions of the

individual, such as, "participation, communication, and cooperation…. It serves the personal integration in communities and society and thereby builds up the sociality of the learner" (p. 399). The *emotional dimension* incorporates the individual's "mental energy, feelings and motivations" (p. 399). Its ultimate functionality is to secure the mental balance of the learner and, thereby, simultaneously develop a personal sensibility. These dimensions of transformative learning are relevant as outcomes to life-coaching practices: connecting knowledge and skills, acknowledging feelings and motivation, and engaging the participation and cooperation of the client within relationship. Understanding an individual's cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of learning could potentially facilitate an interpretation of how a client integrates his or her learning processes (Illeris, 2003).

Illeris (2003) outlined four levels of learning: cumulative, assimilation, accommodative, and transcendent. An example of the first level, cumulative (mechanical) learning, would be engaging the client in a practice to memorize a specific string of words to use in a self-talk exercise. Assimilative learning is not a deep shift in perspective but more of learning by addition that happens when individuals link new information to knowledge they already possess. This creates new knowledge in all contexts and engages their "cognitive, emotional or social-societal nature" (Illeris, 2003, p. 402). An application of assimilation within the context of life coaching would be witnessed as clients make connections between their prior patterns of thinking and feeling and new ways of knowing and understanding. This process supports clients to develop their skills to expand cognitive, emotional, and social capacity of learning in the context of this situation.

Learning by accommodation involves the ability to break apart a pattern of thinking and behaving, and translate the information to accept a new situation. "This could be conceptualized more as 'expansive learning' [but more of expanding beyond the usual horizons of knowing] than as transformative learning" (Schugurensky, 2002, p. 71). Expansive learning adapts previous experience and learning to adjust and accommodate a broader worldview of knowing and understanding. The fourth level, transcendent learning occurs when an individual challenges old ways of knowing, incorporates new information, and connects new capacities to interpret a life event (Illeris, 2003). A life coach, facilitating the client's reflective experience and meaningful transition through a divorce or serious illness, integrates this fourth level of learning into the client/coach dialogue. Through a process of dialogue and inquiry the coach supports the client in their process to "relinquish and reconstruct" (Illeris, 2003, p. 402), which is part of the existing painful scheme to integrate something new and different. Facilitated by a process of critical reflection and challenging old assumptions, clients move through each of these levels of learning, as they incorporate shifts within the context of their cognitive, social, and emotional orientation in relation to the situations they face. Informed by the perspective of both Illeris (2003) and Mezirow (1990), a coach's practice of dialogue and inquiry would address multiple dimensions of the learning process within the context of the client's phases of learning.

Daloz, Dirkx, and O'Sullivan

Daloz (1986, 1999), a college professor and author of *Effective Teaching and Mentoring,* emphasized a developmental, intuitive, holistic and contextually based approach to adult transformative learning. He maintained, "adults seek out education in

part to help them make sense of 'lives whose fabric of meaning has grown frayed'"
(Daloz, 1986, p. 1). Daloz's developmental approach suggests that to guide adult
transformative learning, one must understand the individual's environment, including
culture, community, family, and social dynamics (Merriam, 2001). Within a narrative
format, he encouraged his students to tell stories of their challenges to construct creative
images and construct new realities. Baumgartner, Caffarella and Merriam (2007), authors
of *Learning in Adulthood,* stated that since the 1990s, the field of learning's "historical
recognition of the importance of experience in learning, as well as learning as a meaning-
making activity, have made for the ready acceptance of narrative as learning" (p. 209).

Because clients seeking life coaching are usually experiencing a developmental
transition and seeking a way to make sense of the events or relationships, a practice of
dialogue and inquiry that evokes a storytelling process can be useful. Stories reveal an
individual's perspective of his or her experience and assist in the construction of a
foundation for meaningful dialogue. This process is grounded within a context of the
whole person perspective and is not limited to merely coaching the client's acquisition of
new knowledge and skills. Understanding the stories that construct the contextual
environment of the individual is potentially a central condition to facilitate a process of
transformative learning (Taylor, 1997, 2007).

Dirkx and Prenger (1997), authors of *Planning and Implementing Instruction for
Adults,* advocated "contextual learning" as an integrated approach to learning that is
grounded and relevant, within the context of the individual's life (p. 19). A life coach, in
facilitating the client's understanding of his and her contextual references, including the
social, cultural and psychosocial contextual references, will reveal the learner's way of

knowing and how he or she approaches the learning processes. For learning to take place that is active and meaningful for the client, the process "must be learner-centered…[and address]…the learner's experience, life context, needs and interests" (p. 25). The authors emphasized the need for a learner to attach meaning in his or her life, and to make sense of lived experiences in the world, as essential to the learning process. Within the learning process, it would be important for an individual to discover and reveal the frame of reference that shapes his or her meaning and life context.

Dirkx and Prenger (1997), professors of higher education, proposed learning as an integrated and holistic process, "one that reflects the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual dimensions of being in the world" (p. 125). They suggested that transformative learning is a type of deep learning, which challenges embedded assumptions about the learning process. They proposed that transformative learning is an integration of an individual's life with his or her experience of the outer world. The authors described the inner world as being comprised of internal voices of uninvited feedback and comments. This perspective of adult transformative learning guides a life coach to be aware that the outcomes of learning are influenced by the interaction between the client's inner world and his or her way of knowing and being in the world. A practice of dialogue and inquiry to guide a deeper understanding of the client's inner self in relationship to the world would potentially facilitate contemplation and discernment for new self-knowledge. Dirkx and Prenger (1997) proposed transformative learning as a way of being in the world, suggesting, in order to know others fully in relationship, an individual must first know his or her inner world.

O'Sullivan (2002), also, stated an integral nature of transformative learning is "a shift of consciousness that dramatically alters our way of being in the world" (p. 11). Such a shift involves an individual's understanding of how he or she relates to self and others, relative to an approach to living and a sense of possibilities in life. O'Sullivan maintained that central to integral transformative learning is an "education for survival, an education for critical understanding, and an education for integral creativity" (p. 4), with survival defined as a development of conditions for continuing life. He noted that the three issues challenging this survival are the dynamics of denial, despair, and grief.

Denial can be a healthy defense mechanism to protect an individual from being overwhelmed by intense problems, but in order to find solutions an individual must acknowledge his or her denial. This finding is a verification of the conclusions made by O'Sullivan (2002). With clear and unobstructed awareness of his or her challenge, the individual can experience feelings of despair. Without the loss of the denial mechanism, and left with feelings of despair, the client can experience grief at a personal and relational level. At this level within the integrated transformative learning process, the coach engages a critique of life areas that require deep critical reflection. O'Sullivan believed that the sharing of transformative stories within relationship can construct dynamic tension, feedback, and supports a process of creative transformative learning.

Drawing on a systems theory perspective, O'Sullivan (2002) suggested that an individual thrives on feedback to monitor his or her interactions with others. O'Sullivan maintained, that negative feedback, or 'no' feedback, implied the individual is on track in his or her life. Whereas, positive feedback occurs when the individual can no longer think and interpret experiences according to old assumptions. The role of the life coach is to

facilitate a process of feedback to address multiple dimensions of learning, and potentially foster transformation, because, "transformation means, in essence, the reorganization of the whole system" (p. 4).

While Mezirow's model offered an outline of adult transformative learning phases from a cognitive perspective, Daloz (1986, 1999), Dirkx (2006), Dirkx and Prenger (1997), Illeris (2003, 2004), and O'Sullivan's (2002) learning perspectives come from an understanding of the importance of an integrated approach to learning. They proposed that the philosophical grounding of the approach to facilitate adult transformative learning need to engage the spiritual, social, and emotional dimensions of the learner.

Learning and the Practice of Language

Positing that adult transformative learning has the positive potential to occur within the practice of the life coaching relationship, it is appropriate to explore the relevance of cornerstones within a practice that shape the client's learning. With the objective of this study being the exploration and understanding the connection between a practice and the outcome, it is important to investigate the elements of the language of practice, such as dialogue and inquiry that facilitate an integrated adult transformative learning process.

Mezirow (1991) suggested, "Language reflects the qualities, connections, and relationships rightly or wrongly incorporated in our symbolic models. Phenomenology and transformation theory hold that our very perceptions endow events or objects with meaning to give them coherence" (p. 20). Because language has the potential to shape an individual's connection and relationship to his or her learning experience, it is relevant

for a life coach to reflect on the relevance of language used within the context of the life coaching practice.

The purpose of this section is to enable the reader to think about the practice of language, and its role in supporting the client to discover new realities through dialogue and inquiry within the context of the life-coaching relationship.

> Language originates in and has its primary reference to everyday life; it refers above all to the reality I experience in wide awake consciousness, which is dominated by the pragmatic motive (that is cluster of meanings directly pertaining to present or future actions) and which I share with others in a taken-for-granted manner. Although language can also be employed to refer to other realities…it even then retains its rootage in the commonsense reality of everyday life. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 38)

Berger and Luckmann (1966), authors of *The Social Construction of Reality,* suggested language has its origins within daily life, and is essential to interpreting everyday reality. Language has been shown to have the potential to socially construct new reality within relationship and allow for the creation of categories and patterns that shape the meaning of events (Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

Heidegger (1971), in *On the Way to Language,* suggested that "language…is the foundation of human being" (p. 112) and encouraged the exploration of the "the web of language" (p. 113). This web of language provides a formula for humans to connect within a relational realm, which has the potential to encourage reflection and shared understanding. The philosophical models, which guide the language of a life coach, will construct how the client is engaged in his or her adult transformative learning process. Language is embedded within relationships and, as a result, constructs many of the tasks of learning discussed in early sections such as offering support and guidance, provoking a process of self-evaluation that can give a practical sense of direction, and developing a plan of action. "Language plays a generative role in enabling us to create and

acknowledge meaning as we engage in discourse and fulfill social obligations, which have, in turn, been created through language" (Herda, 1999, p. 25). Recognizing the potential of communication to construct a learning environment, Mezirow (2000) suggested discourse as being central to adult transformative learning. Carusetta and Cranton (2004) defined discourse as "a special form of dialogue that has as its goal reaching a common understanding and justification of an interpretation or belief" (p. 289).

From a constructionist perspective, and a guiding belief that language has the ability to be *performative* or construct action, Gergen and Gergen (2004) proposed, "The words we use…are used to carry out relationships. They are not pictures of the world, but practical actions" (p. 14). Through acknowledging that "language is a form of action" (p. 26), a life coach can potentially facilitate the client's awareness, interpretation, and understanding of his or her role in constructing a new reality.

Gadamer (1976) was a major contributor to hermeneutics as a study of theory, a method of interpretation, and a mode of being. Gadamer (1976) maintained that before any interpretation, there is the concept of truth, and an individual's pre-understanding of what is truth. Within the practice of coaching, investigating a person's concept of truth and realty can reveal their perspective of knowing and understanding. A primary contribution of Gadamer was his ability to connect philosophy to application (*praxis*) (Bernstein, 1983). Connecting the relevance of language to the life coaching practice has the potential to facilitate the client's process of understanding and new ways of knowing.

Gadamer (1976) believed through the practice of language that an individual defines and creates his or her social world. According to Gadamer, when individual's

horizons change, their understanding will also change. He proposed that an individual

discloses his or her world through language, coining the word *horizons* to create a

perspective of an image of a human understanding and limitation within language.

Gergen (1999) acknowledged the influence of hermeneutics in his developing the

theory of social construction. He maintained that hermeneutic inquiry reveals the

systemic origins of interpersonal understanding. Gergen suggested hermeneutic study (or

the study of interpretation) "breaks open and discovers a rich process of how human

understanding occurs" (p. 143).

Social construction accepts that there are many voices with diverse histories

within communities. These uniquely different communities hold different realities. Each

community operates around the meaning of words unique to their language perspective,

which is similar to Gadamer's explanation of multiple horizons of understanding.

Relative to life-coaching practice and outcomes, if a client steps out of his or her

language perspective that person has the potential to experience multiple interpretations

and realities within multiple communities and experience a fusion of horizons with those

with whom a meaningful dialogue is experienced.

Gergen (1999) maintained that "talk, for the constructionist *is* a form of *practice*.

One doesn't learn abstract concepts and then figure out how to apply them; to use a form

of language is itself to engage in a practice" (p. 167). Gergen and Gergen (2004)

proposed, "Forms of negotiated understanding are of critical significance in social life, as

they are integrally connected with many other activities in which people engage" (p. 16).

Through *communication* we construct the world we live in, and "nothing is real unless

people agree that it is" (p. 10). Social construction theory posits that the language of

dialogue within the context of relationship has the ability to create a shared reality (Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

Linguistics, which is the scientific study of language, can be used along with other disciplines to explain how use of language can construct social meaning. For example, linguists might examine the telling of stories (or narratives), exploring what linguistic choices reveal about the speaker's perspective and ways of perceiving, understanding, and organizing the world. A primary function of the language of coaching is to help clients architect and access an awareness of their interpersonal and intrapersonal resources in order to construct and achieve their goals. With life coaching being both a goal-oriented and solution-focused learning process, constructing a practice of dialogue and inquiry within a "skillful use of language" (Grant, 2003, p. 157) is indispensable to facilitate a shift of the views and actions of the client. Daloz (1999) proposed, "the words we use and the way we use them are powerful indicators of how we see, of our particular vision of reality" (p. 227).

While fostering a holistic process, dialogue and inquiry that "highlights exceptions, acknowledges possibilities, clarifies goals, moves them forward and creates options, [and] rolls with resistance" (Grant, 2003, p. 158) facilitates a shift in the language and perspective of the client. Acknowledging that language has the ability to discover the positive potential of each individual, Binkert et al. (2007) suggested inquiry that is designed "for discovering, understanding and fostering innovation…should begin with appreciation" (p. 25). Open-ended provocative inquiry creates a space for the client to consider and construct new ways of interpreting information.

Flaherty (2005) suggested that through providing new language there is an opportunity for the practice of language to facilitate new perspectives, observations and actions. Heidegger (1962), a profound German philosopher, suggested that it is through language in relationship with one another. Encounters that facilitate transformative learning in life coaching require being in relationship, and collaboration within language to create new understanding for the client. Developing shared understanding has the potential to be constructed through a process of dialogue and inquiry.

Coaching Through Dialogue and Inquiry

Dialogue comes from the Greek word dialogos. Dia means "through [and] logos [means] meaning of the word" (Bohm, 1996, p. 3). Within dialogue, the objective is not to make common specific information but to create something new together. Kimsey-House et al. (1998) defined inquiry as "an open-ended, powerful question that is given to clients to help them explore an important area of their life" (p. 77). Tang (2006), author of *Synergic Inquiry,* suggested "By developing a clear focus and formulating specific and relevant questions at the beginning of an inquiry, trust, and confidence are built among the participants" (p. 91).

"Since the intent of dialogue is inquiry and learning" (Southern, 2005, p. 54), a dialogue in a life coaching arena can provide an opportunity to better understand the client's ways of knowing and interpreting information. A practice of dialogue and inquiry focused on revealing an individual's frames of reference has the potential to help an individual to recognize the origins of their assumptions and to begin the construction of new frames of reference (Moore, 2005).

Stimulating a person's curiosity to investigate the cognitive and affective dimensions relative to his or her patterns of thinking can support a generative process of dialogue, inquiry, and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990). Within the life-coaching relationship, through a framework of open communication, an individual is invited to consider his or her meaning schemes and perspectives to develop an integrated adult transformative learning experience. The coach has an opportunity to engage the client's new learning in the context of understanding his or her ways of knowing relative to constructing new ways of communicating.

Bohm (1996) proposed that the meaning of the phrase *to communicate* is, "to make something common, i.e., to convey information from one person to another in as accurate a way as possible" (p. 2). Southern (1997) suggested that, "people must communicate in a way that allows them to share their thoughts and ideas openly and create opportunities for new individual thought as well as collective creativity and informed action" (p. 42). Bohm and Southern agree with Mezirow (1990) regarding the interpretation of communication and dialogue. Like these authors, I suggest it makes sense to examine the relevance of language, dialogue and inquiry to co-construct a collaborative and transformative learning experience.

As conceived by Bohm (1996), both dialogue and inquiry are multi-faceted processes, which reach beyond a conversational exchange, and call into question "deeply held assumptions regarding culture, meaning, and identity" (p. xvi). Bohm maintained that dialogue was an invitation to test traditional ideas about being human, and "collectively to explore the prospect of an enhanced humanity" (p. xvi). Influenced by Bohm's work (1996), Crane (2007), author of *The Heart of Coaching*, proposed that

dialogue is essential to transformational coaching in that "dialogue is to inquire and learn about others to discover the shared meaning that makes human connection and aligned action possible. It is heuristic in that new information and perspective merge as the process unfolds" (p. 103).

Binkert et al. (2007) emphasized the importance of the language of dialogue and inquiry as being fundamental for constructing new realities. Influenced by the Gergen's (2004) theory of social construction, which refers to reality being constructed within relationship, Binkert et al. also believed that a language of appreciation is essential for helping individuals to transform old beliefs into new learning. Fundamental benefits of an appreciative approach to the language of inquiry include the potential of developing new knowledge and understanding. A powerful inquiry promotes the client's learning, and allows the client to experience a process to discover the answer. Questions crafted to solicit new ideas and thinking processes encourage contemplation that supports new learning. Gallwey (2000), author of *The Inner Game,* suggested the valuable practice of engaging a client in dialogue is multiple. A coach assists clients in gaining awareness of their current reality and supports them to expand choices in the construction of a future outcome. The coach also assists clients in building trust to connect internal resources with external resources for the development of a desired future.

Through a practice of dialogue and inquiry within the scope of the coaching relationship, the outcomes of coaching practice are intended to be new learning and results. Coaching within the spirit of collaboration is "an advanced form of relating" (Leonard, 1999, p. 49) and requires a coach's awareness of the client's learning process. Carter-Scott (2007), author of *Transformational Life Coaching,* has acknowledged the

important outcomes of the collaborative partnership, but has noted the importance of being able to evaluate both verbal and non-verbal clues in the context of the dialogue. These clues suggest whether or not the client is engaged in the learning process. Clues such as interrupting can indicate a lack of listening; or, body language might indicate the client is not open to responding to the current flow of inquiry, dialogue, and opportunity for self-reflection.

A coach's active and committed listening skills are an integral part of all of these processes to facilitate the client's feedback, insight, and self-reflection. The process of dialogue and inquiry is not to discover the *right* answer, but rather, it is intended to provoke introspection and self-reflection. "Indeed, reflection is generally used in contrast to non-direction – it is a very directed form of thought" (Jarvis, 2006, p. 99). Self-reflection is necessary to access multi-dimensions of awareness including, cognitions, emotions, and behaviors.

Effective life coaches know how to engender reflection through an ability to probe, inquire, highlight connections, foster alternative opportunities, sustain evaluation, and facilitate action (Hudson, 1999). A client's practice of self-reflection can be a powerful component of his or her learning process. In many cases as a result of a disorienting event, an individual will experience the sting of disappointment, which stimulate a desire for improvement or a sense of urgency to discover new ways of navigating his or her current life circumstances. To facilitate new learning, a life coaching practice would be to encourage the client to "ask the better questions," such as "Who am I, and what do I want to do with the rest of my life" (Kaplan, 1991, p. 195), or "How are my beliefs and assumptions limiting my thinking and ability to take action?"

Through a practice of dialogue and inquiry, the coach has the potential to facilitate conditions that support self-reflection, which can translate fresh insights into productive actions for the client.

Conditions That Facilitate Adult Transformative Learning

Mezirow (1997) encouraged graduate programs to prepare educators to work with individuals who are negotiating perspective and life transformations by examining their old assumptions and perceptions. It was relevant to the objectives of this study to further explore the ways a practice of dialogue and inquiry constructs conditions that facilitate adult transformative learning. Mezirow (1991) suggested adult learners need to experience an equal opportunity to participate and be critically reflective about information and arguments. He cited this equality within relationship as being fundamental to adult learning. Mezirow (2000) elaborated,

> More research is needed with particular emphasis on identifying the inherent components of the transformative process. This means not only identifying what learning strategies are essential but what conditions need to be present internally as well as externally for the process to unfold. (p. 292)

To further support the research objectives of understanding the relationship between practice and conditions for learning it is relevant to include Taylor's (1997, 2007) critical review of Mezirow's model applied to practice. Taylor's review of Mezirow's theory relative to practice included a review of transformative learning conditions.

Taylor's Critical Review

In his inquiry into necessary conditions for adult transformative learning, Taylor (1997) critiqued 30 dissertations and 9 other studies published between 1981 and 1996, which relied on adult transformative learning theory and, specifically, those that referred

directly to Mezirow's perspective of transformative learning. Half of the studies included other theoretical models, as well as Mezirow's theory. Research topics ranged from individual and organizational change to lifestyle and career changes among adults.

Taylor's (1997) initial critique revealed that establishing relationships and engagement in dialogue were foundational conditions for the transformative learning experience, and, that many of the 10 phases articulated in Mezirow's (1991) model provide the arena for shift in an individual's meaning-making process and way of knowing. Although the phases are not always experienced in a sequential order, a non-sequential experience of the cycle of phases is often due to the unique dimensions of each individual's learning processes. Taylor concluded that there are unexplored personal, social, and cultural variables associated with adult transformative learning. Although his initial critique revealed a lack of in-depth research specifically investigating the conditions that facilitate adult transformative learning, Taylor's (2007) second critique did provide a richer academic review and background for investigating these conditions.

Taylor's (2007) second critique of Mezirow's work reviewed 40 studies published in peer-reviewed journals from 1999 to 2005. This more recent critique suggested the application of Mezirow's (1990) model historically has not addressed the role of context in transformative learning. Taylor's review suggested that within dialogue and inquiry resides the performative action potential to facilitate adult transformative learning. The review of research topics indicated a trend of research investigating purpose, relationships, context, and conditions. Consistent with the exploratory objectives of this study, Taylor (2007) noted the significance of dialogue and relationship as conditions facilitating adult transformative learning. Also revealed were adult transformative

learning conditions, such as careful listening, accessing alternative beliefs, and self-disclosure (Taylor 1997, 2007). Conditions identified in research—empowerment, connection, collaboration, recognition, and support—are a result of communication processes, which analyze and probe multiple dimensions of old ways of knowing and learning (Taylor, 1997, 2007).

The Condition of Relationship

Gergen and McNamee (1999), authors of *Relational Responsibility,* and Cranton (2006), author of *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning*, agreed that transformative learning occurs within relationships between learners. Gergen and McNamee added another aspect that they identify as relational responsibility involving the details of "concerns, questions, deliberations and other actions…[moving and expanding within the learners to create a] domain of relatedness" (p. 19).

Daloz (1986, 1999) suggested conditions that facilitate adult transformative learning include being in relationship and a supportive community. Dirkx (2006) and O'Sullivan (2002) each highlighted relationship and communication as relevant to the adult transformative learning process. Bateson (1972) suggested shared participation and a sense of connection as characteristic of a transformational relationship. How the life coach approaches the relationship and engages in language is connected to establishing conditions of trust, support, safety, and a state of connection.

Language Constructs Conditions

I suggest there is truth within Olalla's (2004) statement that, "language…plays a vital role in cognition by allowing us to differentiate phenomena in our experience" (p. 117). Gunnlaugson (2005), author of *Toward Integrally Informed Theories of*

Transformative Learning, encouraged an investigation of words or expressions within language to determine which better facilitates adult learners' transformative learning experience. Words can hold encoded meaning unique to a client, and for this reason the selection of words may well have special significance or potentially transformative meaning for that person. When the coach listens to words the client uses or reacts to in a dialogue, he or she can gain insight into the client's language patterns and meaning-making processes.

The ability to make distinctions about what words hold significance for each person can facilitate understanding of the client's frames of reference. When the client's perspective is revealed, the life coach can more easily facilitate meaningful dialogue and inquiry. Mirroring the language of an individual can fosters a condition of trust (Daloz, 1999). Within a trusting and supportive coaching relationship, a client can have new insights and risk critical reflection of foundational assumptions. Menendez and Williams (2007) affirmed, "coaching is, above all, a conversation…designed to further the clients' growth, learning, and action" (p. 18). Through dialogue, inquiry, and reflection, a client has an opportunity to identify self-limiting perspectives that are primary obstacles blocking the way to transformational experience.

Gunnlaugson (2007) proposed that within the practice of generative dialogue, an individual has the potential to reflect and "become more attentive to the life conditions, beliefs, and worldviews in which they are embedded" (p. 144). Gunnlaugson acknowledged that generative dialogue promotes "the potential of feelings and emotions to prompt reflective learning and insights" (p. 140). Trust and confidence are conditions that support the process of critically reflecting on fundamental assumptions that, in turn,

support the client's method of questioning paradigms, developing new frames of reference, and constructing meaning perspectives.

Mezirow (1991) suggested within the construction of new frames of reference, "the central process of adult development…[includes developing]…a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable and integrated perspective" (p. 155). The development of new meaning perspectives requires the acquisition of new ways of knowing. Rather than giving advice or answers, inviting the client through a practice of dialogue and inquiry to reflect upon experience can reveal new ways of knowing and learning connections. The life coach's approach to dialogue and inquiry has the potential to create conditions that construct a relational structure and shared understanding of non-judgment, appropriate self-disclosure, trust, and recognition of the client's positive potential.

Understanding that the language of dialogue and inquiry is foundational to a practice that facilitates conditions for the clients to access the resources within themselves and acquire self-insight. There are a number of models currently informing processes and guiding practices of life coaching. In order to build a foundation of understanding for the practice of dialogue and inquiry the next section reviewed the current models, which are informing and guiding general coaching practices.

Coaching Models That Guide Practice

A variety of models currently influence processes and practices within the coaching relationship. I selected 19 models to construct a foundation for understanding the diversity of frameworks, which guide general coaching practices. Each model provides a different methodology to facilitate learning and development. Orientations that guide practices include the following: positive psychology, appreciative inquiry,

organizational development and business management learning theory, adult learning theory, humanistic, and cognitive behavioral psychology.

Although each of these models contributes to the professional development of knowledge-based practices within the field of coaching, only a few, such as those developed by Carter-Scott (2007), Ellis (1998), Menendez and Williams (2007), and Thomas and Williams (2005) have been designed specifically to guide life coaching practice; these models are theoretically founded in psychology.

The key differences are the philosophies that inform the process and the connection to coaching practice. For example, Kimsey-House et al. (1998) developed the "co-active coaching alliance model" which focuses on the basic concepts of fulfillment, balance, and process. Coaching competencies of listening, curiosity, intuition, and self-management are emphasized to "forward the action and to deepen the learning" (p. 11). This well-respected coaching model uses a framework of exercises and questionnaires to guide practice, rather than a philosophically informed intervention (e.g., Appreciative Inquiry) to facilitate a theoretically researched outcome, such as adult transformative learning. This is one example of the opportunity to research a methodology and its application and relevance to a designated practice and outcome.

Flaherty (2005), founder of Integral Coach Training, proposed a model with philosophical foundations influenced by adult development theory and integral theory, among others. Flaherty's (2005) five principles to design excellence in coaching include "relationship, pragmatism, two-tracks, always/already, and techniques don't work" (p. 10). Flaherty's work, specializes in organizational coaching, and is influenced by a constructionist perspective. He highlighted language and relationship as central to

coaching, and proposed shared commitment, mutual trust, and other elements to facilitate the client's enrollment in the process. He suggested that beginners might require structure, and his model provides preliminary steps to build upon for a coach to develop his or her own steps.

Flaherty (2005) proposed that focusing on outcome is important, such as the client achieving long-term excellence through competence and fulfillment. He indicated a practice guided simultaneously by language, observation, and assessment as an intervention to facilitate these outcomes. Flaherty believed that language creates a foundation for observation, and observation is necessary for a process of assessment. In agreement with Bohm's (1996) perspective of the generative quality of a practice of dialogue and inquiry, Flaherty stated that language allows an individual to construct his or her world. "Provide new language, plus the chance by practice to have the language become part of us, and new observation, new actions, and a new world will inevitably follow. That's the importance of language to coaching" (p. 32).

Expanding upon Flaherty's contribution to the field of coaching, it would make sense to explore a theoretical framework to guide the practice of dialogue and inquiry. With the focus of this research on exploring an intervention that is appreciative by design, it is relevant to recognize Biswas-Diener and Dean's (2007) translation of Seligman's (2002) Authentic Happiness Coaching model. Based in a constructivist model, the authors proposed a positive approach to coaching practice. Empirically validated interventions and assessments are proposed to facilitate the discovery of the client's strengths and personal happiness goals. Although several authors acknowledged the role of dialogue and inquiry to facilitate learning being essential to coaching practice

(Binkert et. al., 2007; Crane, 2007; Menendez & Williams, 2007; Thomas & Williams, 2005), absent from these models is any theoretical framework of language connected to facilitating the phases and dimensions of learning.

Of primary importance to other authors was the relevance of facilitating awareness through connecting with one's personal meaning (Kaufmann, 2007) or developing a structured practice of self-reflection to construct new learning (Cox, 2006). Only half of the coaching models outlined in Table 1 such as Binkert et al. (2007), Cox (2006), Dryden and Neenan (2002), Flaherty (2005), Hargrove (2003), Kaufmann (2007), and Stober (2006) are representative of theoretical research and investigation. Table 1 consists of 19 models listed in chronological order to represent the evolution of the philosophy and theory, which has influenced the practice of coaching.

Table 1

Coaching Models

Models	Descriptions
The goal, reality, option and will (GROW)Model Whitmore, 1992	• Influenced by Whitmore's philosophy of performance enhancement through *learning and behavior change.* • Belief that people change only what they are aware of. • Questions raise awareness and position responsibility to that of the client. • Format of four stages in coaching: Goal, Reality, Option, Will.
Co-Active Coaching Kimsey-House, Sandahl, and Whitworth, 1998	• Grounded in *learning and action* within the relationship. • Power is granted not to the coach but to the coaching relationship. • Five points of context and contact for client's fulfillment, balance and process: listening, curiosity, intuition, self-management, and action/learning.
The 3 Step and 5-S Model Leonard, 1999	• Influenced by Leonard's personal and business philosophy of *human interaction and personal growth.* • Three steps: 1. Discover and understand client 2. Identify and clarify what client wants 3. Create and develop strategies to achieve goals. • 5-S Model: 1. Recognize symptoms 2. Size and label situation 3. Discern source of symptoms 4. Provide solution 5. Focus client on shift while solution is occurring.
A Conceptual Eight Stage Model: Life Chapters/ Life Transitions Hudson, 1999	• Influenced by *adult learning and developmental psychology*, proposes a conceptual model of life chapters and transitions. • Each chapter has a phase of success and stability, and a phase of boredom and restlessness. • Life transitions unfold phases of a deep level of introspection combined with a search for new resources, and getting prepared for investigating options to deal with challenges. • This model implies a need for a reconstruction knowing, new learning and experimentation.
Coaching With Backbone and Heart	• Influenced by Senge's *organizational development research.* • Four phases of an action research approach:

Models	*Descriptions*

O'Neil, 2000	contracting, planning, live action intervention and debriefing.
	• Emphasizes two guiding principles of
	   ○ signature (authentic) presence
	   ○ using a systems (social interaction) approach.

Connection, Assessment, Articulation, Action, Commitment and Support (CAAACS) model Auerbach (2001)	• Influenced by a *psychology orientation.* • A holistic, value-based action CAAACS model organizing the coaching process into six stages to guide the coaching process: connection, assessment, articulation, action, commitment and support. • Makes a distinction between performance and transformational coaching through the level of learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974) experienced by the client. • Suggests the importance of the model being based in values and action is the connection of an individual's "beliefs" in relationship to their patterns of behavior and life outcomes.
Specific To Life Coaching *The Investigate, current, aims, number date, outcome (I-CAN-DO) Model* Martin, 2001	• Influenced by *various sources* including Whitmore's GROW model. • Focuses on results attainment. • Positions client to be responsible for results • Six phase matrix identifies the following: 1. Investigate what is important 2. Current situation 3. Aims of coaching 4. Number of options 5. Date to achieve results 6. Outcome indicators.
Specific to Life Coaching *Cognitive-Behavioral Model* Dryden & Neenan, 2002	• Influenced by *multiple cognitive behavior theorists.* • Proposes that goals be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. • Investigates values and goals.
Single-double-triple-loop Model Hargrove, 2003	• Influenced by Argyris and Schon's (1974) *theory of triple loop learning,* proposed a three-point model to engage the learning systems of individuals. • Proposes coaches use the learning loops in the following way; single loop – offers tips and techniques to make incremental improvement; double loop – guides the alteration of an individual's mental model and therefore his actions; and triple loop – facilitates the alteration of the person's way of being.

Models	Descriptions
Language and Practice Model Flaherty, 2005	• Influenced by the modern *philosophy of phenomenology*, and multiple theories. • Proposes a concept of coaching founded on three basic principles; language, observation and assessment, with language being what allows coordination of actions with others. • In agreement with Appreciative Inquiry's philosophy about the power of language. • Stages are: establishing the relationship, recognizing openings, observation and assessment, enrollment or making visible the intended outcome, and determining the scope of the coaching process.
Awareness, choice and execution (ACE Model) Stober, 2006	• Influenced by *humanistic psychology*. • Cycles of awareness, choice and execution. • Focus to teach clients how to engage in a process of change.
Executive Coaching With Transformative Learning Processes Gray, 2006	• Highlights Mezirow's perspective as a viable alternative and approach to the action oriented process of executive coaching. • Analyzed the role of psychotherapy upon the practice of executive coaching and proposed adult learning theory as an alternative approach.
Identify, plan, act consider and track (IMPACT) Model Cox, 2006	• Influenced by *adult learning* processes. • Process consists of six core elements: Identify life chapters, makes sense of transitions, plan, act, consider and track. • Essential to the foundation of the process is a structured reflective practice.
Specific to Life Coaching *Life Balance Wheel Coaching Mandala* Menendez & Williams, 2007	• Influenced by a *psychology orientation* • Proposes the "Life Balance Wheel" with the core being the individual's core values. • Model represents whole life perspective of a client's life and addresses: environment development, social, health, romance, finances, community and career.
Authentic Happiness Coaching Model Kaufmann, 2007	• Influenced by *positive psychology*. • Model directly informed by Seligman's (2002) Authentic Happiness Model. • Foundation to coach happiness is through the emotions, connecting to one's internal and external activity through awareness of personal meaning. • Seligman refers to these as the pleasant life, the good life and the meaningful life.

Models	*Descriptions*
Specific To Life Coaching *Relationship-Process-Conversation Coaching Model* Menendez & Williams, 2007	• Influenced by *humanistic psychology and research in positive psychology* (Seligman, 1990). • Model proposes three aspects of coaching: the *relationship* with the clients, the overall *process* of coaching (its goals, framework, and expectations), and the coaching *conversations* that occur. • Context of dialogue follows 5-steps: 1. Identify the situation and desire; 2. Listen and clarify to guide a process of reframing to develop new perspectives and possibilities; 3. Offer clear, honest feedback, observation and assessment; 4. Listen more to create a reflective space for the new insights; 5. Discern commitment and create accountability through a request for action.
Solid Happiness Interventions and Strength-Based Coaching Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007	• Influenced by Seligman's *positive psychology.* • Model proposes happiness related interventions and discovery of an individuals core strengths as a framework to guide coaching practice.
Three Stage Model Mumford, 2007	• Influenced by NLP and author's perspective of learning and psychology. • Suggests coaching occurs within a three stage process: Discover what's working to develop a frame of mind for taking action; Explore options to create flexibility and creativity; Identify a specific goal and take action. • Practice needs to develop empowering questions, focus on increasing positive beliefs discovering the values of what motivates the client.
Theory C: Transformational Coaching Crane, 2007	• Influenced by *McGregor's theory of X and Y* (Bennis, Heil, & Stevens, 2000). • Theory X presumes people are basically lazy and need direction and penalties to support effective outcomes. • Theory Y, a more humanistic perspective, proposes people are creative, capable, and internally motivated to achieve. • Process occurs within three phases: (a) the foundation phase is where the relationship is established; (b) the learning loop phase engages a process of asking questions, listening, dialogue and exploration of outcomes; and (c) the forwarding-the-action phase which promotes action.

The review of coaching models and literature suggested there exists an opportunity to investigate how a theoretically informed framework of practice such as Appreciative Inquiry, might facilitate a process outcome of adult transformative learning. Investigating an integrative Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning framework is in no way a suggestion that any of these models are inferior to any other. Rather, within the context of the life coaching relationship, the exploration of an Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning theoretically informed framework would potentially offer new knowledge and understanding about the connection between practice and outcome beyond what is offered within the scope of current coaching models. Because psychotherapy as noted in Table 1, is a primary theoretical influence specific to life coaching practice, the following section reviewed the practice of psychotherapy in relationship to the research of major theorists influencing coaching practice.

The Influence of Psychotherapy on Life Coaching Practice

There are over 250 different systems of psychotherapy "intended to change people: to make them think differently (cognition), to make them feel differently (affection), and to make them act differently (behavior)" (Corsini & Wedding, 2000, p. 6). Within this plethora of theoretically informed practices, there are a number of theorists that have influenced coaching practices. Although multiple theories have shaped coaching practice the most systemic influence is based on cognitive behavior and humanistic theory.

Cognitive Behavior Theory

Beck's (1976) cognitive therapy and Meichenbaum's (1994) cognitive behavior modification both contributed to cognitive and behavioral theory. Cognitive behavior therapy and techniques are based upon a theory of personality, which maintains that people respond to life events through a combination of cognitive, affective, motivational, and behavioral responses. The theory can be regarded as a system of strategies and series of techniques (Corsini & Wedding, 2000) informing coaching practices. Davis and Williams (2007), authors of *Therapist as Life Coach*, suggested that the differentiation between "solution-focused therapies [based in cognitive/behavior theory] and coaching are not as simple to delineate, because they blend more than coaching does with traditional, more analytical models of therapy" (p. 44).

A life coach, whose practice is influenced by cognitive therapy, focuses on identifying a client's general and specific way of thinking along with identifying specific thought patterns to foster new learning. The coach gathers information to develop and understand the client's cognitive patterns. The next step is to replace old cognitive patterns with new ones and construct a plan to support and reward the new ways of thinking. One of the strengths of this approach in life coaching is that it has the potential to work over a short period of time, and the client notices a beneficial outcome.

The limitation or caution associated with using this approach in life coaching is that not all clients can readily identify their thinking, and feedback that is improperly presented to the client might be received as an insult rather than a constructive challenge. For example, a client might not understand how he is "thinking irrationally," "over-generalizing" or "personalizing" a situation. If a coach is not able to provide examples

and help the client understand how to change his thinking patterns, the client may terminate the relationship with the life coach.

Psychotherapists often use cognitive therapy in combination with behavior therapy. The basic principles of behavior therapy include, (a) reinforcement which contains "anything that increases the likelihood or strength of a response or tends to produce repetition of the response" (Peltier, 2001, p. 48) and is only recognized through systematic observation; and (b) differentiation that must be made between behaviors and outcomes so that the desired results can be achieved (Peltier, 2001). To facilitate the desired behavior, it would be important for a life coach to understand if the client is motivated by internal or external reinforcement. Intrinsic reinforcement comes from within the cognitive or emotional systems. An example of internal motivation is a client being motivated by *learning for the sake of learning* or the feeling of accomplishment when completing a task. External reinforcement is externally driven, with a classic example being a financial reward for a change in behavior.

Humanistic Theory

Though life coaching has been strongly influenced by behavioral psychology, it has, also, been significantly influenced by humanistic psychology. Two of the most noted are Maslow (1970) and C. Rogers (1961). Theoretical underpinnings of these models of therapy influence approaches, techniques, and practices used in current life coaching practice. Maslow's (1970) concept of self-actualization proposes that individuals have the ability to effectuate their own ideas, try new roles, and make choices to seek healthy, personal growth. As a significant contributor to the field of humanistic psychology, Maslow's theory supports a guiding belief within the field of coaching that the client is

capable of change and has the ability to take action. Maslow proposed a theory of motivation within the concept of a hierarchy of needs. The bottom level of this famous pyramid is physiological need, such as hunger or thirst, which must be achieved prior to the next level, which includes safety concerns. After achieving security and protection, the other needs – social belonging, and self-esteem – must be achieved prior to attaining self-actualization. At this level, an individual is motivated to live into his or her full human potential, and achieves Maslow's goal of learning.

C. Rogers (1961), a defining contributor to humanistic psychology, is the recognized founding father of the person-centered approach. Roger's approach emphasizes methods of reflecting feelings, with techniques including listening, understanding, respecting, accepting, and responding. Contributing to the development of humanistic psychology, Rogers is also recognized for his contribution to the field of adult education. He maintained that all human beings have an innate desire to learn. Rogers believed that individuals have the ability to create goals and monitor the progress of these goals. Asking insightful provocative questions to facilitate the individual achieving his or her full potential is central to implementing Rogerian style of practice. Identifying the needs and wants of the client is central to Rogers' person-centered and experiential learning goals.

Peltier (2001), psychologist, professor, and author of *The Psychology of Executive Coaching,* defined the core premise of a person-centered approach is to highlight the phenomenal world of the client, and "to comprehend the client's internal frame of reference and focus on the client's perception of self and the world" (p. 70). Rather than a set of techniques, a person-centered approach is more about the attitude of the life coach

in participating with the client in the life-coaching relationship. A life coach would hold unconditional regard and empathetic understanding to establish conditions of non-judgment, trust, respect, and acceptance within the life coaching relationship. These conditions support a process to discover "how people view the world and what they care about" (p. 72). Based on an understanding of the client's internal frame of reference, the coach has the potential to construct a foundation for new learning.

For learning to occur, understanding and implementation of the following Rogerian principles allows the coach to: (a) develop an authentic one-to-one relationship; (b) create essential unconditional regard and acceptance for the client; (c) engage active listening to construct an environment of acceptance; and (d) initiate reflection of the client's words to show appreciation and regard for the client's perspective. In the person-centered approach, modeling active listening is a process central to engender critical reflection. Reflecting the client's words through restatement, paraphrasing, and summarizing allow the coach to construct a dialogic platform for the client to be more aware of his or her thinking, and the correlation to actions.

Peltier (2001) suggested that the "Rogerian approach is not a good 'stand alone'" (p. 76) process for life coaching. He elaborated that although Roger's theory is an excellent place to begin a relationship, as the process develops, other theoretical insights and skills, particularly cognitive-behavioral techniques have an important role in coaching. The strengths of Roger's approach are providing a structure for how to forge a relationship with the client and construct conditions for new learning. Consequently, a combination of cognitive behavior theoretical interventions, and Roger's humanistic

philosophical framework, would be important for contextualizing intention and outcomes of the work within the life coaching relationship.

Critique of Psychotherapy's Influence on Coaching

One might ask to what extent the principles and practices used within psychotherapy should inform life-coaching practice. Auerbach (2001), founder of the College of Executive Coaching, maintained that psychotherapy is a predominant theory influencing the field of coaching. He differentiated psychotherapy from coaching by suggesting, "most personal coaching clients are focused on the development of an ideal future self, an ideal career, or an improved family life" (p. 10). Auerbach further suggested that personal and professional coaching deals more with the present life situation of a person and his or her desire to experience personal or professional improvement.

Individuals transitioning into the field of life coaching can come from all sorts of fields, including former business owners, executive consultants, career counselors, motivational speakers, or psychotherapists. Grant and Stober (2006), authors of the *Evidence Based Coaching Handbook*, proposed the background of the coach will influence the life coaching practice. Psychotherapists, with their professional training and skills, are a predominant sector of professionals entering the coaching field (Auerbach, 2001; Davis & Williams, 2007); therefore, influencing life coaching practices of other coaches, as well.

For coaching practitioners, other than licensed psychologists, to use psychotherapeutic techniques might be inappropriate. For example, a client's low effectiveness or inability to take action might be systemically linked to more than lack of

motivation and goal-setting skills. Some coaches might lack the expertise to identify circumstances in which depression, anxiety, and alcohol or drug abuse are indicators of psychological dysfunctions or personality disorders. The coaching industry acknowledges the difference between the professional work of a psychotherapist and a coach.

Davis and Williams (2007) stated, "Life coaching is a powerful human relationship where trained coaches assist people to design their future rather than get over their past" (p. 32). Thomas and Williams (2007), co-authors of *Total Life Coaching,* acknowledged the influence of psychotherapy in the field of coaching, stating, "knowledge now lends itself to this new field of life coaching, without the medical model stigma and diagnosis labeling that often comes with psychological counseling or therapy" (p. xxvi). Although there are distinctions between the goals of psychotherapy and coaching, there are similarities between the two practices.

Stober (2006) proposed a similarity between humanistic therapies and coaching, which includes the client's intention and search for new learning and change; however, a translation is required when "applying therapeutic theories and practices to coaching" (p. 17). For example, therapists are specifically trained in five unique skills that are helpful in life coaching: "skillful listening, gift of reframing, ability to suspend judgment, experience with confidentiality and ethics, and an ability to seek solutions and think of possibilities" (Davis & Williams, 2007, p. 5). While all of these characteristics are important in a life-coach practice, there remains the importance of a clear differentiation between the goals of psychotherapy and life coaching. Therefore, it makes sense to understand that the context for life-coaching practice is set in a "whole and healthy person" (p. 12) perspective.

Adults engage in life coaching for new learning and the development of new opportunities. Potentially in the future there will be professionals, whose practice will be founded in grounded coaching research, and whose clients will benefit from ongoing examination of the connection between practice and outcomes. The discipline of coaching has a potential to flourish through the research and development of theoretically based practices and ongoing research to determine the effectiveness of interventions in relationship to outcomes. In the last section of this chapter, Appreciative Inquiry is explored and examined as a practice of dialogue and inquiry that can potentially facilitate a process of transformative learning. Because the context of this research is grounded in the exploration of Appreciative Inquiry as an intervention to facilitate adult transformative learning, the next section explores (a) the history and evolution of Appreciative Inquiry, including theories influencing Appreciative Inquiry development and alternative positive based theories, (b) discover what prior research acknowledges as the transformational properties of Appreciative Inquiry language, and (c) review the evolution of practices currently using Appreciative Inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry as a Practice to Facilitate Adult Transformative Learning

Philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a practical philosophy of being in the world at a day-to day level…. AI invites us to choose consciously to seek out and inquire into that which is generative and life enriching, both in our own lives and in the lives of others, and to explore our hopes and dreams for the future. (Mohr & Watkins, 2001, p. 58)

One of the questions posed by Cooperrider (1986) was, "How is it that theory achieves its capacity to affect social practice?" (p. 33). The proposition of investigating possibilities of how an inquiry-based intervention would affect life-coaching practice motivated my curiosity to explore ways Appreciative Inquiry might facilitate an

integrated process of adult transformative learning. As a result of my anecdotally based experience, I am motivated to examine if a practice of dialogue and inquiry, embedded in the language of Appreciative Inquiry, could potentially act as an intervention to construct conditions that facilitate adult transformative learning.

Appreciative Inquiry, grounded in the theory of social construction, is a perspective, a way of seeking and understanding the best in a living system. "It is a theory, a mind-set, and an approach to analysis that leads to organizational learning, and creativity" (Cooperrider, Magruder, & Watkins, 2000, p. 6). Appreciative Inquiry is an affirmative, inquiry-based, improvisational method and practice that originated as a formal system in the context of large-scale organizational change.

As an inquiry-based intervention, individuals who use Appreciative Inquiry seek to develop new learning within the tradition of action research methods, and invite positive, powerful, rapid change in those participating in the inquiry. The process of adult transformative learning requires a connection between learning and action to occur through a practice of inquiry, dialogue, and reflection (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 2000). Patton (2002), author of *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods,* suggested that Appreciative Inquiry's has the *performative* ability to connect inquiry with action for a viable and generative approach (p. 182). Trosten-Bloom and Whitney (2003) acknowledged that through the work of Senge (1990) and other colleagues of organizational learning the practice of dialogue was valued as an intervention to construct a course of communal meaning making and enhanced learning. The exploration of Appreciative Inquiry to determine if it can facilitate adult transformative learning within

the context of life coaching might prove to be another influence in the evolution of Appreciative Inquiry.

At a fundamental level, the practice of dialogue and inquiry – within the life coaching relationship – is to prepare the client for a shift in understanding and an embrace of new ways of knowing. As a process of qualitative questioning that includes participants interviewing one another in generative dialogue, the Appreciative Inquiry framework has the potential to be transported to the life coaching dyad. Although Appreciative Inquiry has never claimed to be an intervention for individual learning and development, in *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination,* Mohr and Watkins (2001) maintained that Appreciative Inquiry is a "useful approach to change any human system on any scale" (p. 23). The basic beliefs serving as a foundation for Appreciative Inquiry are:

- Individuals have unique gifts, skills and contributions to bring to life.

- Organizations are human social systems, sources of unlimited relational capacity, created and lived in language.

- Images we hold of the future are socially created and, once articulated, serve to guide individual and collective actions.

- Through human communication (inquiry and dialogue) people can shift their attention and action away from problem analysis to lift up worthy ideals and productive possibilities for the future. (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003, p. 2)

These beliefs are informed by the original philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry developed by Cooperrider (1986), as an outcome of his doctoral research, and have the potential to be translated two decades later to inform practices that facilitate adult transformative learning within the context of life coaching. This next section is a review how the original philosophy and principles of Cooperrider influenced

the evolution of Appreciative Inquiry to become a provocative intervention for change and learning.

History and Framework of Appreciative Inquiry

The term appreciative inquiry was originally used in 1986 as an analytic footnote in the Cleveland Clinic Project report by doctoral student Cooperrider (1986). The purpose of his report was to outline emergent themes of what was working well at the Cleveland Clinic. The Cleveland Clinic report, prepared by Cooperrider and his advisor Srivastva, provided the foundation for a practical philosophy and theory-building process that gave rise to Appreciative Inquiry as an agent of positive organizational transformation and development (Mohr & Watkins, 2001).

The conceptual origin of Appreciative Inquiry, social constructionist meta-theory called for a need to go beyond a deficit-based inquiry that focuses on a problem, to ask the unconditional positive question (Mohr & Watkins, 2001; Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003). The quest of the unconditional positive question was to shift attention away from a problem to the positive and affirmative potential. In 1986, at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management, Cooperrider and Srivastva (Cooperrider, 1986) focused on understanding the variables and conditions facilitating the effectiveness of an organization. Cooperrider's interest in exploring the conditions, which facilitated organizational effectiveness, motivated my initial focus on analyzing and interpreting the conditions that facilitate adult transformative learning.

Cooperriders' 1986 dissertation outlined a paradigm shift for large-scale organizations creating the 4-D phases—*discovery, dream, design, destiny*—that he identified as the affirmative principles and provocative philosophy of Appreciative

Inquiry. The process of Appreciative Inquiry's 4-D practice cycle ignites life-giving empowerment of individuals and organizations (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, 2005). Discovery reveals positive capacity; dream inspires best hopes; design challenge crafts provocative possibilities; and destiny realizes the vision. From Cooperrider's original curiosity of understanding variables of organizational effectiveness, he constructed an alternative process beyond the traditional problem-solving model to facilitate large-scale group learning and change.

The ongoing development of Appreciative Inquiry was influenced by the strengths of prior research and practice specific to the field of organization development. These influences included work by Senge (1990) of the Society of the Organizational Learning, about practicing dialogue for meaning making and learning. Additional research into stakeholder collaboration and shared focus was explored by Weisbord and Janoff of Future Search (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003). All of this research highlighted the relevance of inquiry and dialogue as an intervention to facilitate change. Influenced by this work, Cooperrider (1986) maintained that Appreciative Inquiry is more than a method or technique, but is a way of being and participating with another within an appreciative mode of inquiry.

A review of the literature suggested that the Appreciative Inquiry interview shapes a life-giving process to evoke storytelling, and is a life-giving process of critical importance to the generative process of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1986; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). "Appreciative Inquiry is a narrative-based process of positive change" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 15) and guides the participants to shift their thinking to experience generative learning. The Appreciative Inquiry questions

are specifically crafted to engage people to think about themselves and their whole

system in an extraordinary and positive framework (Faure, 2006). Appreciative interview

questions create a provocative connection between diverse groups of people and agendas

to realize one shared vision (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003).

The framework of the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Model of *discover, dream, design*

and destiny was implemented with the unconditional positive question for provocative

whole system transformation. Provocative propositions were crafted to create a bridge

between the best of every individual within an organization and their provocative

potential as a whole system. By the early 1990s, Appreciative Inquiry was recognized as

a positive organizational development intervention to construct large-scale visions for

rapid positive change. Appreciative Inquiry grew to be a developmental tool for non-

government organizations, and an intervention for innovation. In 1990, Srivastva, Fry,

and Cooperrider engaged the SIGMA Center for Global Change to develop a large-scale

healthcare system for Romania (Mohr & Watkins, 2001). Cooperrider's philosophy was

that

> Appreciative inquiry accepts the notion that possibility and practice are, in fact,
> complementary and seeks, therefore, not the negation of problems but the
> actualization of possibility, that is, clear realization of possibilities embedded in
> practice and can be illuminated through imagination. (p. 129)

The transformative learning attributes of Appreciative Inquiry philosophy and

practice are based on the belief in the life-giving power of positive inquiry and the

process of evoking generative stories to take action, or fulfill one's destiny. Facilitating

the discovery, the leader of Appreciative Inquiry allows dream and design to occur within

the art of dialogue and inquiry through creating the unconditional positive question as a

positive provocative life intervention to evoke imagination and innovation in a whole

system process (Mohr & Watkins, 2001). Although Appreciative Inquiry is recognized as a systematic process of discovery of what gives life in large-scale whole system change, it would seem probable that generative inquiry, within the practice of life coaching, could also facilitate the client's phases of constructing an integrated whole system process of learning.

An integrated learning process requires a life coach to explore the client's relationships relative to his or her entire system. Sloan (2007), author of *Social Construction in Appreciative Inquiry Coaching,* stated, "While an individual may be the focus of coaching, real and meaningful change can be more fully realized when the coach recognizes that every individual in a system is an integral part of the whole" (p. 9).

With a belief in the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry and the conviction that there were no limits to cooperation and change, Whitney, Gerne, McNamee, Anderson, Cooperrider, and Srivastva (Mohr & Watkins, 2001) created *The Taos Institute* in 1990, a center for social constructionist practice that became a world-class training center for Appreciative Inquiry. Cooperrider's original principles of Appreciative Inquiry are the constructionist principle, the principle of simultaneity, the anticipatory principle, the poetic principle, and the positive principle:

- Constructionist principle: Founded on a constructionist perspective, holding an appreciation for the power of language to create a sense of a good and possible reality.

- Simultaneity principle: Inquiry and change are inseparable from inquiry used as an intervention to facilitate the seeds of change.

- Anticipatory principle: Positive images lead positive actions.

- Poetic principle: Links the means and ends of inquiry as a source of learning and inspiration.

- Positivist principle: The more positive questions, the more sustainable and successful the change.

These five scholarly streams of thought are known as the principles of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1986; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999).

According to Mohr and Watkins (2001), these core principles are the "DNA of AI" (p. 37) practice, and with the addition of the principles of wholeness, enactment, and free choice represent the values and beliefs giving life to the process of Appreciative Inquiry. These Appreciative Inquiry principles would become the future foundation for other theoretically informed appreciative constructs such as Appreciative Intelligence (Metzker & Thatchenkery, 2006) and Appreciative Coaching (Binkert et al., 2007).

As interpretive action research, the use of Appreciative Inquiry principles and practices was proven to be a positive intervention for discovering what gives 'life' when an individual or system is most effective (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). The innovative results and rapid change of Appreciative Inquiry prompted the United States Agency for International Development to create the Global Excellence in Management, a multimillion dollar grant for Case Western University to fund teaching of Appreciative Inquiry to international teams. Appreciative Inquiry was internationally established as a positive intervention for training, customer satisfaction, and leadership transitions (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003).

In 1995, Whitney and Cooperrider introduced Appreciative Inquiry to GTE (Mohr & Watkins, 2001). The impact sparked a provocative positive revolution. The organization's recognition and implementation of Appreciative Inquiry philosophy resulted in the creation of an award called the American Society for Training and Development Excellence in Practice. In that same year, the first international

Appreciative Inquiry conference convened in Cambridge, England. This conference

brought business leaders from Europe, the United States, and Africa together to form

partnerships with non-governmental organizations, governments, foundations, and

corporations. This created a global platform to engage leadership collaboration for

Appreciative Inquiry's whole system learning and development.

The development of the *Appreciative Inquiry Summit* formally recognized

Appreciative Inquiry as both a philosophy and a methodology for large-scale positive

organizational change (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003). The Appreciative Inquiry

Summit, a 3 to 4-day Appreciative Inquiry intervention, gathers the whole system of an

organization to collaboratively engage in the 4-D cycle. The first Appreciative Inquiry

Summit was launched in 1995 as *A Call to Action* in California. The United Religions

Initiative (URI) was another early example of Appreciative Inquiry Summit in action on a

large-scale whole system global change initiative.

The significance of the Appreciative Inquiry Summit demonstrated the generative

and collaborative power of creating a shared image and vision for innovation and

transformation. Nutrimental Foods, located in Curitiba, Brazil, is a significant example of

Appreciative Inquiry being globally recognized as a catalyst for rapid positive large-scale

organizational change. In 2000, CEO Rodrigo Loures convened the first Appreciative

Inquiry Summit for the Nutrimental Foods organization. Positive results of the

Appreciative Inquiry methodology included generating concrete triple-line outcomes of

positive profits, an improved working environment and people initiating a positive

approach. The power of the event, and the 4-D Model of discovery, dream, design, and

destiny delivered a "400% increase in profitability" (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003, p. 91).

Appreciative Inquiry invites a large-scale focus on the life-giving aspects of an organization. In the summer of 2000, Whitney, author, global visionary, and president of the Corporation for Positive Change, reversed years of significant and costly excessive baggage loss for British Airways. Whitney guided the organization to focus on best of class arrival experiences, which was what they wanted. Since its theoretical debut less than 5 years earlier, the practical use of Appreciative Inquiry had been proven as a "whole-system based way of approaching positive change in the individual and the system for the benefit of both" (Sloan, 2007, p. 10)

In 2000, the Appreciative Inquiry revolution resulted in the creation of an international Appreciative Inquiry consultant network. Cooperrider and Whitney (1999) engaged 70 European consultants to create the European Appreciative Inquiry network. Executive management consultant Faure (2006), in collaboration with Ludema and other Appreciative Inquiry colleagues, designed Appreciative Inquiry Summits for Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden with the *initiate, inquire, imagine, and innovate* model. Post summit feedback from 40 to 50 participants highlighted the transformational conditions created by Appreciative Inquiry:

> What I like most was that I was able to share my point of view with others with whom I rarely communicate, and that everybody's aspirations, opinions, and uniqueness were taken into account. The richness and diversity of ideas meant that, for the first time, concrete, realistic projects came of the meeting. (Faure, 2006, p. 26)

The power of Appreciative Inquiry as a large-scale positive change intervention was demonstrated in the framework the Appreciative Inquiry Summit. The experience of having the whole system in the room encourages richness and diversity in creating

concrete provocative strategies that yield positive outcomes for the entire organizational system. Faure (2006) maintained that Appreciative Inquiry is successful in "generating 'transformation' change, i.e., a change that leaves the organization demonstrably different" (p. 48). Also, highlighting the transformational properties of Appreciative Inquiry, Canine (2007), author of *An Inquiry Into AI Coaching*, has stated, "AI is grounded in the assumption that every living system has a core of strengths – the positive core – that when identified and unleashed provides the direction and energy for transformation" (p. 15).

This research contributes to knowledge regarding how the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry could guide language in shaping dialogue and inquiry to construct openness and readiness for transformational learning with individuals in the life-coaching setting. The review of Appreciative Inquiry history indicated the positive power of Appreciative Inquiry's 4-D cycle and its ability as an intervention to transport whole systems to trade problem solving and deficit perspectives for generative learning and powerful transformational change. The theoretical underpinnings that shape Appreciative Inquiry language and philosophy are reviewed in the next section to better understand how the Appreciative Inquiry framework works as an inquiry based intervention to facilitate adult transformative learning.

Philosophical Connection to Social Construction

The life-centric approach of Appreciative Inquiry is both pragmatic and hopeful, and invites the construction of a powerful positive future. "Human action depends on the world as constructed rather than the world as it is," said Cooperrider, Stavros, and Whitney (2008, p. xi). The roots of Appreciative Inquiry philosophy and principles are

founded in the theoretical framework of social construction. A central Appreciative

Inquiry tenant is that the organization is a human construct. Organizations are viewed as

"creative centers of human relatedness, alive with emergent and unlimited capacity"

(Cooperrider et al., 2003, p. 16). The idea that human constructs have the ability to create

or determine their own reality is the theme of social construction (Cooperrider et al.,

2003). Appreciative Inquiry and social construction are both based upon the

understanding that (a) reality is created through social agreement, (b) social patterns and

actions have infinite variation, (c) observed social action can have multiple

interpretations, (d) narratives direct what is deemed to be true, and (e) observations are

filtered through this theoretical lens (Cooperrider et al., 2003).

Prior to Appreciative Inquiry practice, the discipline of organizational

development, especially as it relates to action research, had generally centered on

problem solving or problem-solving activities. Gergen (1994) in *Realities and*

Relationships, Soundings in Social Construction wrote,

> What I am advocating is that we shift our attention to the larger system of
> interdependencies in which evaluations are generated, and reconsider the place of
> the therapist in this network. For if the spiral of deficit is itself a result of
> relationships between the professional and the culture, then its curtailment may
> properly issue from the same matrix. (p. 164)

Those holding the problem-solving model, focus on rooting out the problems in

order to develop solutions. According to this perspective, rooting out problems requires

inquiry into what is perceived as a problem and the very inquiry contains the potential of

constructing a new perspective that gives the concern new meaning. However, Gergen

and Gergen (2004) call for a *new form of discourse* where people press past their separate

barriers to collaboratively co-create promising futures. They argued that there are other

more productive *forms of talk* and acknowledge Appreciative Inquiry is offering a powerful alternative to problem-based language and dialogue.

The Language of Appreciative Inquiry

Inherently, language is core to the foundation of Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry could be viewed as a form of linguistic shading (Gergen, 1999), substituting deficit terminology, vocabulary, and phrases for the affirmative language. Rather than a language that frames an issue as a problem, Appreciative Inquiry models an appreciative approach to language for the client to construct new meaning. Through dialogue and inquiry informed by Appreciative Inquiry, an individual has the potential to develop expectations and to identify the provocative potential using a "language of possibility" (Cooperrider, 1986, p. 178).

The Appreciative Inquiry interview is a transformative process in which the participants discover new horizons of understanding and constructing new realities. One might liken the role of the interviewer to that of a detective looking for clues of what gives life to the positive core of a system. The Appreciative Inquiry interview creates a process to engage in a meaning-making construction offering the potential for a collaborative interpretation. Appreciative Inquiry seeks out generative themes to craft provocative life giving propositions. A positive outcome of the interpretive process is to identify and expand areas of knowledge for creating a preferred future. Appreciative Inquiry crafts the provocative proposition to imply action, transferring learning to build a bridge between "the best of what is and the best of what might be" (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003, p. 205). In a global way, both social construction and Appreciative

Inquiry are interconnected because they embrace the generative characteristic of crafting a future through language.

The language of Appreciative Inquiry can create a relational conversation to make visible the internal discourse within an external dialogue. Through the mechanism of language, internal thoughts of the mind are shared from one individual to another. Within the generative language of Appreciative Inquiry, internal imagination and expression have the performative potential to become external life-giving action (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003). Ultimately appreciative language has the potential to synthesize insights and amplify the positive for *provocative positive* ways to carry on in the world. The characteristics of the language of Appreciative Inquiry include non-verbal attributes such as eye contact, tone-of-voice, and active listening (Binkert et al., 2007). Within the context of the life-coaching practice, I was interested to discover how of the language of Appreciative Inquiry, consisting of vocabulary, terminology, narratives, and metaphors, has the potential ability to shift attention and reframe an existing perspective.

Through the use of language, people can reframe their current experience to create possible solutions (Metzker & Thatchenkery, 2006). Given that an individual constructs meaning through the stories he or she tells, rich narratives have the potential to reframe past perspectives and construct positive possibilities for the future. Appreciative Inquiry extends beyond the use of positive words to engage life-giving terminology, vocabulary, metaphors, narratives, analogy, and inquiry (Binkert et al., 2007). The generative life-giving power in stories and metaphors has the potential to evoke reflection on old habits of mind and to shift the client's interpretation of a life event. My intention for this research study was to inquire how this takes place.

Under the Appreciative Inquiry model, language is viewed as a provocative catalyst for constructing social reality instead of something that merely describes it. By adopting this constructionist view of language, Appreciative Inquiry demonstrates the synchronicity of change and inquiry (Mohr & Watkins, 2001). Cooperrider (1986) expressed his trust in this logic and spirit of constructionist thought with two key points of learning:

> First, not only do the organization we work with move in the direction of what we study and ask questions about, but also so do *we* as human beings…. The second insight, or refreshed learning, is about primacy of relationships. Organizations are, first and foremost, centers of human relatedness, and relationships thrive where there is an appreciative eye—when people see the best in one another, when they share their dreams and ultimate concerns without filters or censorship, and when they are connected in full voice to create not just new futures, but better ones. (Mohr & Watkins, 2001, p. xxviii)

Translated into the context of life coaching, Cooperrider's perspective might imply that using appreciative language within the life coaching relationship has the potential to facilitate transformative learning and the construction of a new and better future for the client. When life coaches acknowledge that there has been preliminary exploration of concepts such as "the language of coaching" (Menendez & Williams, 2007, p. 17) and "appreciative language" (Binkert et al., 2007, p. 56), they become aware of an opportunity to develop a practice framework of language embedded in dialogue and inquiry, which can potentially construct conditions that facilitate a process of adult transformative learning.

In a meta-case analysis of the transformational qualities of Appreciative Inquiry, Bushe (2005) supported the generative potential of inquiry by stating:

> The words and topics that we choose to talk about have an impact far beyond just the words themselves. They invoke sentiments, understandings, and worlds of meaning. In practice this means that the language of the inquiry has important outcomes in and of itself. (p. 16)

The rich narratives, metaphors, and storytelling process of Appreciative Inquiry has the potential to model appreciative positive language, rather than a language focused on problems to construct positive change.

Positive Change Movements

Other positive change movements were occurring during the first decade of the development of Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry colleagues were not alone in researching better ways to engage in positive change; the revolution for positive change was not limited to the field of organizational development. The positive revolution within the field of organization development paralleled a positive psychology movement that engineered a new way of thinking about individuals' mental health and well-being. In many ways, the theoretical roots of Appreciative Inquiry and Positive Psychology were both influenced by and a reaction to the deficit-based language within the field of business and medicine.

Positive Psychology

Although there are different approaches to positive psychology, Seligman (1990) is recognized as the foremost advocate of positive psychology and noted authority on learned helplessness. Seligman met with Richard Pine, a literary agent, to discuss Seligman's work on learned optimism. They discussed the paucity of research on well-being in contrast to the vast research on pathology. Pine became Seligman's advisor and encouraged his advisee to pursue the path of exploring mental health from a well-being perspective (Anderson, 2006). The outcome was positive psychology, and the publishing of Seligman's (1990, 2002) psychology-based books, such as *Learned Optimism* and *Authentic Happiness.*

There is a basic difference between mainstream psychology and Seligman's (1990) approach to positive psychology. Mainstream psychology focuses on the dysfunction of an individual; in contrast, Seligman's theory emphasized positive experience and positive character (Joseph, Linley, & Seligman, 2004). "Positive psychology is an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions" (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005, p. 410). A key element of positive psychology theory is that institutions, such as strong families or democracy, support strengths, virtues, and positive emotions (Seligman, 2002). The basic assumptions of Seligman's positive psychology are that action has its origins in character; and, within human nature, there are two forms of character evaluation, bad and good or virtuous and non-virtuous character (Joseph et al., 2004). Seligman (2002) proposed that character is basic to the idea of human behavior and an individual's capacity for good or evil. All positive psychology approaches share a basic belief that "the human being has been given potentials for a positive character or virtues" (p. 18) and is interested in discovering ways to experience positive improvement.

Positive psychology, like Appreciative Inquiry, is viewed as an alternative affirmative framework for discovering the positive aspects of human nature. Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007), authors of *Positive Psychology Coaching,* believed that helping people is a commonly shared outcome of all coaches and that the outcome will improve with "an agreed on definition for coaching and systematic sharing of the high quality interventions" (p. 3). Dean and Seligman (2003) maintained that positive psychology theory could be translated as an intervention in the field of coaching. They suggested the only difference is that a therapist, not following positive psychology principles, will focus

on finding the individual's underlying problem, while a coach seeks to enhance what is right with the individual. Although positive psychology theory shares a positive practice approach with Appreciative Inquiry, there are two fundamental differences; first, positive psychology's constructivist focus is primarily on the individual and his or her internal processes; and second, the focus of positive psychology is to facilitate happiness. In contrast, Appreciative Inquiry is founded in a constructionist perspective, with reality socially constructed in relationship; a primary focus of Appreciative Inquiry is to facilitate the discovery of the provocative positive potential within a whole system perspective. Stimulated by the positive movement, researchers continue to explore the influence and application of Appreciative Inquiry. One of the outcomes of the evolving research of Appreciative Inquiry is the construct of *Appreciative Intelligence*, which also draws upon the disciplines of positive psychology, neurosciences, and social construction.

Appreciative Intelligence

Metzker and Thatchenkery (2006) studied organizational behavior at Case Western Reserve University, and while there, he was deeply influenced by the use of Appreciative Inquiry as an alternative to the standard problem-solving model in issues related to organizational development. Thatchenkery's use of Appreciative Inquiry as a methodology stimulated his thinking to develop the concept of appreciative intelligence. Metzker and Thatchenkery (2006) defined appreciative intelligence as "the ability to perceive the positive inherent generative potential within the present…the ability to see the mighty oak in the acorn" (p. 5). Cooperrider (as cited in Metzker & Thatchenkery, 2006) wrote in the foreword of *Appreciative Intelligence* that this "daring book opens

new options for cultivating research, education and practices for developing Appreciative Intelligence" (p. xiv).

The three components of appreciative intelligence include (a) the ability of an individual to alter his or her perception or reframe an interpretation of something, (b) an ability to live in appreciation of everyday reality, and (c) an ability to envision beyond the present into a generative future. The authors proposed that language – the way an individual speaks – is central to framing the positive perspective of the future. The frames are created through analogies and metaphors and help an individual to perceive parts and relationships. "A fundamental assumption underlying Appreciative Inquiry is that the language one uses creates one's reality (Cooperrider et al., 2003, p. 17).

Language is not just words to communicate thoughts, but a way of generating relationships; and appreciative intelligence is more than a positive outlook, its use encourages others to articulate action that is both intentional and generative. Metzker and Thatchenkery (2006) suggested that language "shapes thoughts, experiences, and behaviors" (p. 98), constructing an individual's meaning, vision and value in life. It appears that the authors' perspective suggests that language holds the possibility of being a transformative attribute to influence the process of learning. Applying the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry appears not to be limited to the individual competency of intelligence but has evolved to potentially influence the practice of facilitating the process of learning.

Appreciative Learning

Appreciative Inquiry has motivated scholars and practitioners to inquire about the ways human systems organize change within the cycle of learning and development

(Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003). Adult educators and learners have used *appreciative*

learning to identify positive learning experiences and to create positive learning

environments (Preziosi & Gooden; Yballe & O'Connor, as cited in Kerka, 2003, p. 3). In

the article, *Appreciative Learning Cultures*, Barrett and Peterson (2000) wrote:

> Generative learning is different from adaptive learning that relies on traditional
> skills of problem solving. Generative, second order learning involves an
> *appreciative approach,* an ability to see radical possibilities beyond the
> boundaries of problems as they present themselves in conventional terms. (p. 11)

According to Trosten-Bloom and Whitney (2003), "human systems move in the

direction of what they study" (p. 85). Studies such as the one conducted by Bushe and

Khamisa (2004) can be seen as making significant contributions to the movement of

human consciousness related to Appreciative Inquiry in relationship to an integrated

process of learning. Bushe and Khamisa conducted a meta-analysis of theoretical

literature defining the transformational outcomes of Appreciative Inquiry. Bushe and

Khamisa suggested that the key qualities of Appreciative Inquiry include a focus on

shifting the way an individual thinks, rather than only his or her actions. Fundamental to

adult transformative learning theory is the connection between new awareness and action

for the learning to be transformative. The exploration of Appreciative Inquiry in

relationship to the learning competencies of an individual has the potential to construct

new knowledge to guide coaching.

Appreciative Inquiry Applied to Coaching

In the book, *Appreciative Coaching*, Binkert et al. (2007) pointed out that the

appreciative coaching model is based upon Appreciative Inquiry, positive psychology,

and other psychological theories. Appreciative coaching methodology and vocabulary has

a foundation in Appreciative Inquiry and leverages advances in organizational behavior, psychology, and psychotherapy (Binkert et al., 2007).

The appreciative coaching approach uses the five core principles underlying Appreciative Inquiry – constructionist principle, simultaneity principle, poetic principle, anticipatory principle, and positive principle. Using these five core principles and this appreciative approach develops a foundation for constructing positive transformative change in people. These principles of Appreciative Inquiry guide a transition from deficit-oriented thinking and language to appreciative thinking and language. The research inquired into how Appreciative Inquiry develops this foundation for positive transformative learning and how the transition from deficit-oriented thinking to appreciative thinking occurs in the life-coaching process.

In a special edition of *AI Practitioner*, Canine and Sloan (2007), co-authors of the article *Appreciative Inquiry in Coaching: Exploration and Learnings,* defined Appreciative Inquiry coaching as the application of the philosophy and practice to the process of coaching, and proposed to introduce Appreciative Inquiry coaching "as a full application of AI in its own right" (p. 4). Tschannenn-Moran (2007), founder and President of Life Trek Coaching, stated, "By appreciating the syntax of the five Appreciative Inquiry principles, coaches know what to listen for and how to coach people for transformational change" (p. 19). He suggested that five principles coaching (5-PC) can guide practice, and each principle can "build on each other to generate positive actions and outcomes" (p. 22).

In 2007, Canine conducted appreciative interviews with 35 coaching practitioners, who have assimilated Appreciative Inquiry into their coaching practice. The purpose of

the interviews was to identify how Appreciative Inquiry influenced their coaching, how they used Appreciative Inquiry principles and practices in their work, and "how AI helps their clients achieve better outcomes" (p. 14). Kelm (2005), author of *Appreciative Living,* suggested that each positive unconditional question has the potential to take an individual to a place of wonder that can transform his or her life.

One coach told a story about how her client has lost his job, and through a practice of meaningful dialogue and inquiry the client experienced a process of self-discovery and renewed self-confidence. Canine (2007) proposed that the Appreciative Inquiry's assumption that everyone has a core foundation of strengths, and the generative coaching framework, "provides the direction and energy for transformation" (p. 15). Canine found that coaches who integrating Appreciative Inquiry concepts and phases into their practice reported better outcomes including the client's ability to reframe negative situations and images and broaden their choices. The results of Canine's interviews suggest that a practice of dialogue and inquiry shaped by the language of Appreciative Inquiry has the ability to guide the client's process of change and development.

Binkert et al. (2007) proposed that an appreciative language, igniting generative dialogue, has the potential to facilitate and support a discovery of learning and understanding. The work of Binkert et al. (2007) suggested that within the framework of a relational life-giving conversation, creative possibilities are constructed and interpreted collaboratively. Similar to the perspective represented by appreciative coaching, language, relational understanding, and constructing reality, are central concepts within social construction.

The large-scale transformative benefits of Appreciative Inquiry's language of dialogue and inquiry could be translated within relationship through the universal practice of Appreciative Inquiry principles to approach the multiple dimensions of an individual, and his or her social interconnectedness (Canine & Sloan, 2007). Binkert et al. (2007) consolidated language samples within their work as *appreciative questions* posed within the coaching relationship. For example, the core questions of appreciative coaching focus on the client's core values and personal strengths using language that is "intentionally positive, or at the very least neutral" (p. 17). The authors suggested the importance of the following principles because: (a) the constructionist principle shapes appreciative questions, (b) the positive principle shapes affirmative comments, (c) the simultaneity principle shapes exploratory inquiry, and (d) the anticipatory principle shapes positive expectation, comments, and questions. Practical compassion exists within all aspects of the coaching inquiry, focusing the client on the positive present and possible future.

Appreciative Inquiry principles construct an appreciative perspective and potentially have a practical application to influence the client's adult transformative learning experience. Binkert's et al. (2007) research and experience with clients indicate that appreciative learning used in the coaching relationship encourages the client to experience positive self-reinforcement.

Within the context of life coaching, the applied practice of dialogue and inquiry informed by Appreciative Inquiry has the potential to develop the client's ongoing use of an appreciative language. One of the objectives of this study was to explore how a practice of dialogue and inquiry can potentially facilitate an integrated adult

transformative learning experience. The review of the literature provided valuable information and revealed clues related to the significance of the language of dialogue and inquiry in constructing conditions for learning (Taylor, 1997, 2007). The life coach's ability to foster an empowering process of learning is influenced by the language that formulates the dialogue and inquiry (Canine, 2007; Metzker & Thatchenkery, 2006). A central characteristic of adult learning is a process of dialogue, inquiry, reflection, and action to discover new ways of knowing and understanding. Empowering a dynamic exchange of dialogue and inquiry can encourage the client's process of self-reflection and an ability to take generative action.

Mohr and Watkins (2001) suggested that Appreciative Inquiry is a process of learning and reinforcement that guides people to reflect and focus upon their values, strengths, and vision to create a holistic framework and generative learning, which is a "useful approach to change any human system on any scale" (p. 23). The proposed research has the potential to provide the data necessary to further support this conclusion. In this context, Appreciative Inquiry has the potential to create a domain of relatedness that invites new conversation, create alternative dialogues, challenge old assumptions, and construct new ways of learning and understanding. There is a potential connection between the practice of Appreciative Inquiry and the process of adult transformative learning. An objective of the study was also to examine if an inquiry-based practice, which shapes the language of dialogue, has the potential to shift perspectives and develop new understanding. This research is intended to discover if and how this might be an accurate assessment. As a result of this literature review, I was further motivated to examine if the transformative attributes of appreciative inquiry as a large-scale change

agent have the potential to construct a theoretical framework of life coaching practice. The application of Appreciative Inquiry in relationship to individual competency supports further research of the potential translation of Appreciative Inquiry into other arenas, including life coaching.

Summary

In this chapter I began with a review of coaching research and presented the purpose of the relational framework of life coaching, which included the role of both the client and the coach. Then, I examined the relevance of learning theory, the language of dialogue and inquiry, and the current models influencing practice and psychotherapy in relationship to life coaching. Finally, I investigated Appreciative Inquiry as a practice to facilitate adult transformative learning.

The scholarly literature indicated that there are multiple models that influence the overall field of coaching; however, this research provides an opportunity, specific to the context of the life coaching relationship, to advance knowledge about connecting alternative practices, specifically the Appreciative Inquiry method, to facilitate learning process outcomes. This research called for an exploration of the ways a practice of dialogue and inquiry, guided by the philosophical underpinnings of Appreciative Inquiry fosters a theoretically informed process of adult transformative learning as a way to expand an understanding of the practices and processes currently available within the field of life coaching.

This study investigated the possibilities of how an appreciative inquiry-based intervention affects life coaching practice, and potentially facilitates an integrated process of adult transformative learning. The purpose of the next chapter is to move beyond the

information contained in the literature review to explore from the coach and client's

perspective the question, "Can the practice of life coaching, informed by the philosophy

and principles of Appreciative Inquiry, foster an integrated process of adult

transformative learning?"

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

This study explored the substantive area of how the two systems of Appreciative

Inquiry and adult transformative learning work as an integrative model and guide life

coaching practice. A central objective of this research was to investigate the relationship

of a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry to a process outcome of adult

transformative learning within the context of the life coaching relationship. This study

was motivated by the gap in research of a framework connecting a philosophically

informed practice to a theoretically informed process of learning. In order to advance a

theoretical proposition about this phenomenon the research design was based on

grounded theory. Creswell (1998) suggested that outlining the method of grounded theory

"early in a study poses difficulties because it evolves during the course of the study" (p.

179). For this reason, this chapter outlined ideas that were used in this research, including

the design and rational, data collection, interview protocol, data analysis, and data

reporting.

Research Design

In undertaking a qualitative study, it is important to consider the approach that

best formulates and explores the research objectives. Five traditions of qualitative inquiry

are: biography, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory. The

focus of each tradition is as follows: biography explores the life of a person;

phenomenology seeks to understand the essence of an experience; ethnography describes

and interprets a social or cultural group; case study develops an in-depth investigation of

a single or multiple case; and, grounded theory develops a theory grounded in field data (Creswell, 1998).

Method Defined

This study used the grounded theory design, a method that contains interview data collection procedures, which focus on a narrative format. Grounded theory, a research design originally constructed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and further developed by Corbin and Strauss (1990), is most effectively applied in studies, when the researcher determines that a theory needs to be grounded in fieldwork to explain what has occurred and been observed (Creswell, 1998). The focus of grounded theory is to advance a theoretical proposition about the phenomenon. Because the focus of this research was to explore whether the practice of life coaching, informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry, can foster an integrated process of adult transformative learning, the study has a phenomenological direction. In order to investigate how this phenomenon occurs, grounded theory is an appropriate method to explore the coach and client's perspective of merging Appreciative Inquiry and adult transformative learning within the context of the life coaching relationship and construct a theory that can support life coaching practice.

This method uses a combination of inductive and deductive processes applied by the researcher to a body of information that has been collected during a qualitative inquiry. Inductive designs allow the relevant dimensions of the data to emerge into the awareness of the researcher from the comparison of themes and patterns within the narrative without presupposing conclusions in advance (Patton, 2002). Inductive analysis identifies categories and their properties from the text through a process of specific

observations to construct general patterns and define their relationships. For example, if a researcher uses inductive analysis he or she might review the text of the interviews and observe that in response to the disorienting dilemma most participants emphasized their wanting to investigate a productive solution. The researcher might then deduce that a condition that supports adult transformative learning is a readiness for change.

Grounded in fieldwork, an objective of the research was to explore, explain and define emerging theory from noting the interrelationships of categories through systematic comparative analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1998).

> Theory denotes a set of well-developed categories (e.g., themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing, or other phenomenon. The statements of relationships explain who, what, when, where, why, how, and with what consequences an event occurs. (p. 22)

Glaser and Strauss (1967) described grounded theory as a "general method of comparative analysis" (p. 1), emphasizing that the process is key to generating theory. A process of constant comparison of the similarities and differences between and among the categories will help the researcher separate, sort, and synthesize a higher order of descriptions and conceptual themes to describe those categories (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardly, 2003). Robson (2002) defined a category as, "a unit of information made up of events, happenings and instances" (p. 192). Boyatzis (1998) stated that to support utility a label should be "conceptually meaningful…clear and concise…and close to the data" (p. 31). To present an initial impression of emerging theory, analysis procedures focused on identifying categories through open coding. Codes portray meanings and actions, which constructed an analytical foundation for theoretical insights, data analysis, and the development of categories.

Kvale (1996) suggested, "meaning condensation entails an abridgement of the meaning expressed by the interviewees in to shorter formulations" (p. 192). Codes have been tagged with a number and phrase of keywords to most efficiently sort the data. Creating a code tag requires theoretical sensitivity, or "the ability to recognize what is important in data and give it meaning" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 46), to distinguish between a personal sense of data or what Wengraf (2001) defined as a "codable moment or thematic field" (p. 275).

Selective coding is a system of selecting core categories. This process of coding serves to generate a hypothesis that is tested using axial coding, which identifies the relationships between categories and their subcategories, and was used to identify the properties that influence the category. Glaser and Strauss (1967) described a property as an attribute or characteristic of a phenomenon (category), which reveals "a conceptual aspect or element of a category" (p. 36). Properties are important to identify and "systematically develop because they form the basis for making relationships between categories and *subcategories*" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 70). Through a process of acquiring new information relative to the research objectives of this study, the process of segmenting, interpreting, labeling, and analyzing the data, revealed insight about what occurred within the life coaching relationship. Grounded theory suits the objectives of this study, because it affords enough plasticity to allow the design to emerge, to develop, and to be interpreted as additional data is revealed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Credibility of Method and Limitations

Compared to quantitative research methods, credibility of qualitative research strategies is clearly different in research design. Quantitative methods based in the

positivistic tradition, require objectivity in research and scientific propositions based on demonstrating empirical fact to test theory, whereas qualitative methods "emphasizes the emergence of concepts from data rather than their imposition in terms of priori theory" (Robson, 2002, p. 25). The method of grounded theory offers a framework and structural level of "credibility, plausibility, and trustworthiness" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 223) required to generate theory. Creswell (1998) maintained that despite the inductive nature, grounded theory research leaves nothing to chance, but is systematic "with specific steps in data analysis" (p. 58). Patton (2002) suggested that there is no simple formula for conducting high-quality credible analysis and that grounded theory provides researchers with a framework to interpret "masses of raw data" (p. 489). Patton stated,

> The task is to do one's best to make sense of things. A qualitative analyst returns to the data over and over again to see if the constructs, categories explanations and interpretations make sense, if they really reflect the nature of the phenomena. Creativity, intellectual rigor, perseverance, insight – these are the intangibles that go beyond the routine application of scientific procedures. (p. 570)

If other researchers were given the same data from this study, the criteria for credibility of method would need to demonstrate (a) an intimate familiarity with the context of life coaching; (b) data sufficient to merit a depth of observation; (c) systematic comparisons between categories and observations; (d) strong logical links between the data, the argument, and the analysis; and (e) evidence that allows other researchers to construct an independent assessment – and concur with the results (Charmaz, 2006)

The intention of selecting grounded theory for this dissertation was not solely for determining the viability of a theoretically informed Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning framework, but rather, utilization of a formal set of methods with stages, steps, and rules to guide the credibility of the research process. Patton (2002) described the process as having a "systematic rigor and thoroughness from initial design

through data collection and analysis, culminating in theory generation" (p. 489). For example, to support the credibility of the coach sample selection, I collaborated with Dr. Whitney, Appreciative Inquiry theorist, to insure the research criteria to select coach-participants was appropriate and relevant to achieve the objectives of the study. A preliminary draft of the data analysis was reviewed and discussed with dissertation chairperson, Dr. Southern. In addition, Dr. Jaffe and Dr. Whitney reviewed the research. Creswell (1998) defined the reviewer's roles as "an individual who keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations, and provides the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis" (p. 202). The minimum size to achieve detail in theory and demonstrate knowledge relevant to theory for a study of this type is 20 participants (Creswell, 1998). I interviewed a total of 10 coaches and 10 clients after 2 participant pairs dropped out of the study.

There is the potential of ethnic, geographic, and demographic limitations within the selection of the participants. The 20 interviews did not capture and represent all ethnic, gender, demographic, and geographic categories. Although this study met the grounded theory criteria of a minimum of 20 participants, there were limitations in the participant sample. The coach participants were all Caucasians, which is not an accurate representation of the coaching population. The client-participant population was primarily female with only one male client-participant, which is not an accurate representation of the client population. The findings of this study are the result of one grounded theory carried out by one researcher. The concepts explored in this study warrant future research; however, this study provided an initial perspective about how the

two systems of Appreciative Inquiry and Adult Transformative Learning can provide a framework and structure to facilitate an integrated process of transformative learning.

A diverse group is desired, however, given the challenge of recruiting participants it is not practical to specifically seek participants from diverse ethnic, gender, or age groups. I acknowledge that the results of this study cannot be generalized to all coach and client relationships. The coach-participants' interviewed in this study were highly trained in Appreciative Inquiry, and most likely selected a client who was his or her best example of an individual who had experienced a transformative learning outcome. For these reasons every effort has been made to document these factors in the results section of this dissertation.

Participant Sample

Participant Access

Within the dyad of the life coaching relationship, the coach and client each holds a perspective of experiencing an Appreciative Inquiry practice, which facilitates an adult transformative learning process. Although coach- and client-participants were geographically and demographically diverse, selection was guided by criteria relevant to evolving theory. A purposive selection or "theoretical sample" (Creswell, 1998) of 20 participants consisting of 10 life coaches and 10 of their clients has been recruited to participate in this research. Robson (2002) defined the principle of purposive selection as "the researcher's judgment as to typicality or interest" (p. 265) representative of the population to best develop the theory. A purposive selection of participants enables research of the distinctive criteria to be analyzed for the specific objectives of the study. "Theoretical sampling is sampling on the basis of concepts that have proven theoretical

relevance to the evolving theory" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 176). For example, each coach-participant was required to have practiced for a minimum of 1 year using a process informed by Appreciative Inquiry. The client-participants had experienced a disorienting dilemma, had engaged in life coaching with a coach trained in Appreciative Inquiry, and related to the life coaching process as facilitating his or her adult transformative learning process.

Coach-participants have been recruited from multiple organizations such as the Corporation for Positive Change, Institute for Life Coach Training, and Taos Institute. A contact strategy was developed and implemented to identify a primary contact within each organization (e.g., Dr. Whitney, Corporation for Positive Change). An organization solicitation letter (Appendix A) was sent by email to the primary contact of each organization, was followed with a telephone call requesting the organizations participation in the research study. Upon each organizations agreement to participate, a letter of invitation (Appendix B), coach-participant criteria (Appendix C), an explanation of Adult Transformative Learning theory (Appendix D), and a coach demographic profile (Appendix E) was distributed through the organization's website and email distribution list. All coaches who responded received a telephone call to answer any questions. Each coach-participant received an informed consent (Appendix F). Participants who responded to the letter of invitation were contacted by email and telephone.

A total of 38 coaches from North America, Europe, and India responded to the invitation to participate in the research, and 10 of these coaches were identified as suitable for this study. All final participants were located in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Through the pre-interview process 12 coaches had been

identified to have suitable qualifications to participate in the study, although 2 of them withdrew at a later stage.

The pattern of themes that disqualified potential coach-participants were identified as: (a) If the coach responded to the invitation distributed within an Appreciative Inquiry community organization, and believed his or her client had experienced a process of transformative learning, he or she was disqualified due to a lack of any experience in personal/life coaching; (b) If the coach responded to the invitation distributed within a coaching community, and believed his or her client had experienced a process of transformative learning, the coach was disqualified because his or her practice was not informed by Appreciative Inquiry. The criteria for participation was constructed to include coach-participants who considered themselves to be executive or organizational coaches, and had engaged their clients in a process of life coaching as outlined in this study; (c) If the coach responded to the invitation and met both the Appreciative Inquiry and life coaching criteria, he or she did not have a client who had experienced a process of transformative learning and would agree to participate in the study.

Participant Criteria and Communication

Coach-Participants

There was an established criteria for both coach and client participation in this study. The coach criteria (Appendix C) required that each participant be a minimum of 21 years of age. Each coach confirmed the use of Appreciative Inquiry in his or her coaching practice for a minimum of 1 year. Each coach-applicant received through email a number of items, which included a letter of invitation (Appendix B), an explanation of Adult

Transformative Learning theory (Appendix D), informed consent (Appendix F), and a coach/client demographic profile (Appendix E & G).

As part of the research criteria, each coach was required to invite one client to participate in the study. To allow for a client not fulfilling the research criteria or dropping out, I asked each coach to recommend one client. The potential client-participant had to have experienced a process of adult transformative learning while participating in life coaching. I acknowledged the likelihood of multiple interpretations of an adult transformative learning. For this reason an explanation of research theory with a description of Adult Transformative Learning and Appreciative Inquiry was provided for the coach's review.

As participants responded to the letter of invitation, I scheduled a 15-minute telephone call to review the informed consent, the participant criteria, and answer any questions. The client-participant had to have experienced a disorienting dilemma or an experience that has caused him or her to question what previously was unquestionable (Mezirow, 1990). A transformative learning experience requires that an individual engage in a process of challenging old assumptions, critical reflection upon alternative perspectives, and taking action on the new insights. The preliminary telephone conversation also evaluated the coach's interpretation of the connection between the client's experience of transformative learning process and a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry.

Upon completion of each preliminary telephone conversation, I confirmed the coach's participation in the study. I also emailed the coach-participant a coach demographic form, and scheduled his or her interview. I requested that the demographic

and informed consent be completed and returned by mail within 3 days. I asked each coach to initiate a preliminary invitation to participate to one of his or her clients. The coach-participant contacted me to confirm the client's agreement to receive information about the study. After I had received the client's email and telephone number, I sent an email invitation to each potential client-participant to participate in the study (Appendix H), informed consent (Appendix F) and client-participant criteria (Appendix I). I sent a copy of the client information to each coach.

To introduce myself in person and answer any questions, I contacted each potential client-participant by telephone to review the informed consent, the research process, and the participation criteria. If the client met the research criteria, I also emailed the client-participant a client demographic form, and scheduled his or her interview. I requested that the demographic form and informed consent be completed and returned by mail within 3 days. After confirming the participation of 10 coaches and 10 clients, I contacted each individual and scheduled time for the 90-minute interview regarding his or her life coaching experience relative to the research objectives.

The coach-participant population was reduced from 12 to 10 because 2 of the coaches were unable to secure client-participants. The coach-participant population consisted of 3 males and 7 females, which closely represents the gender distribution of the coaching industry. The International Coach Federation Global Coaching Study (2007) report indicated,

> Coaching is currently a predominantly female profession. Globally over two thirds of all survey respondents were female (68.7%), rising to almost three quarters in the North American region. The survey results indicate that 39.2 % of respondents are full-time coaches. Looking specifically at the gender profile of full time coaches, it largely mirrors that of the industry: 63.3% female, 36.5% male. (p. 4)

Prior to my contacting their clients, two of the coaches notified me that their clients had decided not to participate in the study. Arranged in alphabetical order, the following is a list of the coaches who agreed to participate, and to lend their name to the study.

1. Jacqueline Binkert, Ph.D., coach, author of *Appreciative Coaching* (2007).
2. Karen Bierderman, M.Ed., coach
3. Ann Clancy, Ph.D., coach, author of *Appreciative Coaching* (2007).
4. Paul Hilt, coach, author, speaker.
5. Roz Kay, MSOD, coach, contributing author of *AI Practitioner* (2007).
6. Robyn McCulloch, M.S., coach, contributing author of *AI Practitioner* (2007).
7. David Nelson, D.Min., coach, speaker.
8. Anne Radford, M.Sc., coach, editor and publisher of *AI Practitioner*.
9. Jen Hetzel Silbert, MSOD, coach, author of *Positive Family Dynamics* (2007).
10. Patrick Williams, Ed.D., coach, author of *Becoming A Professional Life Coach* (2007); CEO of Life Coaching Institute, Inc.

Although each of the coaches has given consent for his or her name to be used in this study, to insure the client's confidentiality, and eliminate any possible identifiers, I have assigned a code to each coach. The numbered code assigned to each coach *does not correlate* to the alphabetical order of the above list.

Each coach-participant and his or her client completed a demographic profile. The age of the 10 coach-participants ranged from 35 to 64, with an average age of 54.8 years. All coaches had a minimum of a bachelor's degree, 4 had earned a master's degree, 4 possessed an Ed.D or Ph.D. Additionally, all coach-participants were Caucasian, 9 were Americans, and one coach was from the United Kingdom. Table 2 lists each coach by professional background, years coaching, Appreciative Inquiry training, and coach training.

Table 2

Summary of Coach Demographics

Coach	Years of Coaching	Background	Coach Certification	AI Training
1A	10	Ministry	Yes	Yes
2A	10	Educator	Yes	Yes
3A	20	Psychology	Yes	Yes
4A	16	Business	No	Yes
5A	10	Business	No	Yes
6A	4	Educator	Yes	Yes
7A	10	Business	Yes	Yes
8A	12	Business	No	Yes
9A	7	Business	Yes	Yes
10A	8	Business	No	Yes

Client-Participants

Selection criteria for the client included the stipulation that he or she is a minimum of 21 years of age, has experienced a disorienting dilemma, received life coaching that incorporated Appreciative Inquiry, and attributed one of the outcomes of coaching as an adult transformative learning process. Client-participants had to have met both the disorienting dilemma and the adult transformative learning criteria as defined by Daloz (1986), Dirkx (2006), Mezirow (1990), and O'Sullivan (2002) (see Appendix D).

All participants were advised that the total time for their involvement in the research project would be less than 2 hours. Applicants not chosen for research were sent a thank you note. Every effort was made to interview a total of 20 participants to qualify the data for developing grounded theory (Creswell, 1998).

The selected client population consisted of 9 female participants, and 1 male participant. The age of the participants ranged from 33 to 74 years of age. The average

age of the client-participant was 45.1 years. It needs to be noted that although the age of

the client-participants is representative of the general client population, the gender

representation is weighted more to the female gender than what is indicated in the

International Coach Federation Global Coaching Study (2007). The report indicated that,

> Closely mirroring the known demographics of the coach, the majority of coaching clients were also female (56.5%) and represented a more mature age group. This age profile for clients was predominantly between 38 and 45 years (35%); with a further one-fourth (27.2%) of coaches indicated that they had clients aged 46-55 years. (p. 95)

The length of the coaching engagement ranged between 6 and 18 months. The

average length of a client's coaching engagement was 10.2 months. Additionally, all

client-participants were Caucasian; 8 were Americans, one client was from Canada, and

one client was from the United Kingdom. Each client-participant completed a

demographic profile. Table 3 lists the age, gender, and length of coaching engagement of

each client-participant.

Table 3

Summary of Client Demographics

Coach	Age	Gender	Length of Coaching Engagement
1B	39	Female	14 months
2B	74	Female	10 months
3B	46	Male	6 months
4B	37	Female	12 months
5B	48	Female	6 months
6B	33	Female	6 months
7B	56	Female	12 months
8B	46	Female	18 months
9B	37	Female	12 months
10B	35	Female	6 months

Data Collection

A grounded theory design contains interview data collection procedures that focus on a narrative format (Creswell, 1998). The data collection included: interview guides (Appendix J & K) and participant summary sheets (Appendix L). The focus of the data collection process addressed and unpacked the central and subresearch questions. A timeline of the data collection protocol was created upon approval of the research proposal (Appendix M).

As previously outlined, the first step of data collection was to contact applicants to answer any questions that might have arisen and to clarify answers as needed. The initial telephone call established a baseline of each participant's experience in relationship to the research criteria and to schedule an interview time.

Within each group of participants, the coach and client demographic profile established and evaluated the similarities and differences relative to participant criteria. Other variables that were noted in both coach and client-participant criteria, but not included as primary factors for the research objectives of this study, were based on an assessment of their purpose of coaching, length of coaching, gender, and age.

Interview Protocol

Creswell (1998) recommended an interview protocol to log information, which enables the researcher to record notes and organize his or her thoughts about the interviewee's responses during the interview process. Integrating Creswell's suggestions the documentation for this study included both an interview guide and a summary sheet outlining the central research question and three subquestions to record memo notes. A summary sheet is a first step in analysis of the sequence of events of an interview. While

audio-taping the interviews, I wrote memo notes on the summary sheet to access short

term memory reflection and record any clarification of the participant's story about each

interview (Cooperrider et al., 2003). Memo writing is the discovery phase of research,

serves analytical purposes, and explores ideas about research concepts (Charmaz, 2006).

The interview guides was based on one central and two subresearch questions:

1. *Can the practice of life coaching, informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry, foster an integrated process of adult transformative learning*?

2. *In what ways can Appreciative Inquiry principles be incorporated into life coaching practice*?

3. *What conditions of the coaching practice, informed by Appreciative Inquiry, best support adult transformative learning*?

These three questions shaped the research interview protocol to evoke narrative

responses about the experiences, beliefs, and feelings of each participant (Wengraf,

2001). Through qualitative semi-structured, in-depth research interviews, open-ended

questions were constructed to discover a deeper understanding of the central and sub-

questions of this dissertation.

The coach and client semi-structured interview guides were constructed to explore

and describe both the coach and the client's perspective of each of the research questions.

Although the language of each question was modified to evoke the perspective of either

the coach or the client, the primary inquiry and intention of the questions remained the

same for both the coach and the client. Kvale (1996) and Robson (2002) stressed the

importance of interviewer skill in gathering reliable interview data. I encouraged all

participants to share their experiences in their own words, thus, yielding a richer, more authentic interview. The outcome was that categories, subcategories, and thematic characteristics emerged that revealed if an Appreciative Inquiry practice could facilitate the adult transformative learning process.

Interviews were conducted by telephone. This method of data collection is proposed to be effective due to the geographic disbursement of the 20 participants. Diversity of location in a grounded theory research is not unusual, and in fact, can provide a foundation to support contextual information relevant to the axial coding phase of the study (Creswell, 1998). An introduction to each interview reviewed the purpose of the research, data collection procedures, timelines, and potential benefits of the research. Each interview was no longer than 90 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participant's written consent. Each participant understood that names are not used in the audio-recorded interview to protect his or her anonymity. The interviews were audiotaped using freeconference.com, in the privacy of a home office. Each interview was transcribed by productiontranscripts.com.

The text of each interview was transcribed with a line-by-line identification number to sort the data by participant code, question code, and any relevant notes. In the process of transcribing, individual anonymity was protected by assigning a participant code. Project documentation is included in the Appendixes A through M: organization solicitation letter, letter to participants, explanation of Adult Transformative Learning theory, demographic participant profile, letters of consent, interview guides, summary sheets, and data collection timelines. The data collected in its raw and transcribed forms will be kept anonymous, stored in a locked container accessible only to

the principal researcher for 10 years, after which it shall be destroyed. Transcribed data in the form of computer disks will be kept indefinitely for future research.

Ethical Considerations and Guidelines

Each participant engaged in the following three activities: (a) a 15-minute telephone call to answer any questions and confirm participation; (b) a 90-minute telephone interview; and (c) a telephone call to confirm the completion of the research project. The research with participants began after the letter of understanding and Saybrook Institutional Review Board application was completed and approved. An informed consent was reviewed and signed by all participants prior to conducting the research. Confidentiality measures, benefits of research, and all protocols and standards of ethical research were reviewed with each coach and client-participant. In a letter of consent, each participant was notified of the following three areas prior to beginning research: (a) potential risks to human participants and safeguards, (b) potential benefits, and (c) risk to benefits.

Potential Risks

This research incurs minimal physical, psychological, and social risks to the participants. There was a low risk of physical harm, because the interviews were based on reporting of issues that have been resolved in life coaching. The researcher proposed the client-participant's experience of working with a life coach to work through the disorienting event has minimized any potential emotional disturbance, which might occur as a result of the interview-conversation process. Questions in the pre-selection telephone interview evaluated if the coach or client believed the issue has been resolved in coaching and if during the 90-minute interview there would be any risk in reviewing the

disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1990). Any risk noted by the coach or the client would have excluded his or her participation in the research. If that were the case, I would ask the coach to recommend another participant.

Prior to the interview each participant was encouraged to participate only if he or she felt comfortable and safe with the process. However, should an upset have occurred and become sufficiently serious to warrant professional attention, as a condition of participation in this study, a licensed professional would have been made available to the participant if the life coach, with whom they have been working, is not sufficiently qualified to alleviate the upset. If the participant did not have such a person, the participant would have been referred to a licensed professional, and reasonable costs would have been paid for two visits, if necessary.

The social risk was minimal because there was a high probability that none of the client-participants knew one another. The pre-selection telephone interview accessed any potential risk to the coach and client's relationship by addressing the maintenance of client-coach terms of confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. In any case, names, and other identifiers have been altered on all reports for all participants to maintain anonymity. Each participant was familiar through his or her coaching experience with how an interview process works. The benefit of tape recording for the purpose of clarity was reviewed with each participant. Further, potential social risks were minimized by keeping tape recordings confidential and in a locked file box for a period of 10 years. The transcribed text from the interviews excluded any identifying names and identifying information was altered to protect the identity of each participant.

Potential Benefits

The potential benefit to participants was the opportunity to contribute to a body of knowledge about the ways Appreciative Inquiry could facilitate transformative learning in the coach-client relationship. In the process of reflecting upon the coaching experience, additional benefits potentially included increased self-awareness, insight, and perspective about themselves and how they show up in their relationships. Participants understanding of the ways in which an appreciative practice of inquiry, dialogue, and reflection facilitates, expands and deepens their adult transformative learning process could have emerged. Exploring if the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate an adult transformative learning experience provided potentially new practical knowledge for each participant. Participants may request by telephone or email to receive a summary copy of the research findings and have access to the final report.

Risks to Benefits

The minimal risks were balanced against the substantial potential benefits to the awareness of each participant and the contribution to the field of life coaching. The benefits did not only accrue for these participants, but serve to inform a population of coaches about alternative frameworks to facilitate the client's learning process. Despite the minimal potential risks, the potential benefits to the participants, and potential benefit to the field of life coaching – an Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning framework to guide practice – are adequate to allow this research.

Data Analysis

Using a grounded theory approach established by Glaser and Strauss (1967), through analysis of the data I have developed a theoretical interpretation of each

interview. Kvale (1996) suggested that the theoretical context of the research constructs how the interviews will be analyzed. As the basis for an inductive development of a meaning making process, I have built a collection of thick descriptions, which are "detailed records concerning context, people, actions, and the perceptions of participants" (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2000). Robson (2002) described grounded theory as "both a strategy for doing research and a particular style of analyzing the data arising from the research" (p. 191). The data from this research were analyzed in relationship to the central and subresearch questions to construct an interpretation and discussion of the results. In my role as a researcher, it was important to critically interpret the data, recognize personal bias, think abstractly, be open to evaluation, and to immerse myself into the analysis process.

The steps in the analysis of data included:

1. Read one interview.

2. Noted and recorded reflections of the primary idea, experience, themes, words, or phrases that make sense or hold meaning that appear in relationship to each question.

3. Wrote reflections in phrases or quotes on the summary sheet.

4. Repeated this process (1-3) until I had completed reading all 20 interviews.

5. After reading and taking memo notes on all interviews, I wrote a brief final summary of what I have interpreted are primary themes in each interview.

6. Reviewed each interview and began the formal data analysis procedures.

Data analysis procedures included: memo notes, open coding, axial coding, constant comparisons, the development of relational statements, and a review of the literature (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Additionally, to support the rigor of the data analysis process, I used NVivo8, a qualitative software data analysis program developed by QSR

International. This software program provided a systematic method to code, compare, query, organize, and explore relationships between clusters of data.

A control of analysis was achieved through explicitly detailing the steps of the analysis procedure (Kvale, 1996). The first step in analysis is to conceptualize the data through asking questions such as "What is this? What does it represent?" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 63). Prior to reviewing each transcribed interview, with these two questions in mind, I listened to the audiotape. Using a summary sheet, I took memo notes to record my first impression of any primary themes or concepts. For example, as I listened to the audiotape I made notations about the intensity of the participant's tone of voice or any extended pause in his or her response, which might indicate additional information that I would otherwise miss if I only read the transcribed interview. The next step was to review the transcribed interviews and construct memo notes to analyze the sequence of events in each interview. Memo notes as an informal analysis were incorporated to record, investigate, and code emerging concepts. Constructing memo notes was the discovery phase of research and served an analytical purpose to explore ideas about theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2006).

Each of the 20 transcribed interviews was analyzed for the structural segments to identify the detail, variation, and relationship within the concepts. Grouping of concepts "that seem to pertain to the same phenomena is called *categorizing*" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 65). A category represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, and instances (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The categories arose from the data and were validated with phrases or quotes within the explanation of each participant's experience.

The analysis revealed category details to identify the relationships and complexities of the qualitative data (Wengraf, 2001). Coding to investigate similarities and differences is central to constructing a method of constant comparison (Camic et al., 2003) and is a strategy to communicate credibility of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Analysis procedures included open and axial coding to identify details, variations, and the complexity of the interviews.

Open coding began with the first paragraph of the each interview to generate an "indexing system" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 139) to identify, access, compare, and label categories that are potentially significant aspects in the data (Camic et al., 2003). Corbin and Strauss (1990) stated that the construction of categories is essential to developing theory. Within the emergent process of developing categories, initial codes were "provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 48).

In the initial phase of constructing codes, categorization provided a reduction and structure to interpret the larger text. I constructed brief statements to reveal the primary sense of what was said by the interviewee. A descriptive label was attached to each group of statements to ensure an understanding of the qualification and exclusion in constructing each category.

The procedure to learn how participants make sense of their Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning experience was developed through connecting and comparing categories and subcategories of the qualitative data. The text of each question was subjected to axial-coding, which is a structure of investigating and identifying an integrative framework of emerging categories and subcategories. To achieve a level of accuracy of data, Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested, "comparative analysis and

different slices of data correct the inaccuracies of data" (p. 223). Within this process of

comparison, each category and its subcategories were revealed, which indicated the

relationship and variance between categories, and a distinction between different

elements of theory.

According to Robson (2002), through a process of selective coding, there is an

integration of categories in a logic diagram of codes and relationships. "In this phase,

conditional propositions (or hypothesis) are typically presented" (p. 194). As an

integrative process selective coding is a procedure, which identifies a core category, and

relates it in relationship to other categories to achieve further validation and development.

In essence, selective coding develops the storyline to integrate categories within a

diagram (Creswell, 1998).

Using a process of inductive analysis (Patton, 2002), I investigated the plausibility

of patterns, similarities, and differences in the data. Variations in the data were revealed

through constant comparison of thematic concepts under different circumstances. The

method of constant comparison facilitated a meaning-making process and tracked my

process of analysis to increase the "the probability that the theory will be well integrated

and clear" (p. 230). Glaser and Strauss (1967) maintained that the constant comparison of

incidents has the potential to "facilitate the generation of theories of process, sequence,

and change pertaining to organizations, positions, and social interaction" (p. 114).

Linking two or more concepts from the interview data developed relational

statements about the social interaction that facilitates the Appreciative Inquiry and adult

transformative learning experience. Rather than describing the experience, the recording

of concepts is primary, with the description of categories kept secondary. A key operation

of interpreting the interview is a multi-tiered meaning making and data reporting process. The reporting of the data described any relevant connection between the categories identified in response to each question.

Grounded theory does not always include a review of literature as part of the research analysis. The objective of the literature review was to build upon the work of others in the area and attempt to further the development of theory related to achieving adult transformative learning within life coaching. The review of literature and participant interviews contributed to constructing new knowledge and understanding of the connections between the two systems of Appreciative Inquiry and adult transformative learning. The literature review supported an ability to evaluate connections relevant to the research findings of this study (Patton, 2002). The review and synthesis of literature will construct a theoretical framework to facilitate the comprehension of the data.

Data Reporting

In the final phase of reporting the data, the central research question, and three subquestions provided the framework for reporting the collective results of the 20 interviews. The relationships discovered among the categories found in axial coding revealed a rich narrative and advanced the theoretical propositions in response to each question. Integrating categories, ongoing coding, and constant comparisons was conducted until saturation of categories, or theoretical saturation, was achieved. Chapter 4 is the presentation of the data.

After outlining the presentation of the data, I constructed a visual framework to further delimit features of the constant comparison method and identified theoretical

relationships (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The development of a visual map is a strategy to illustrate clusters of relationships within the emerging theory. The goal of this reduction process is to clarify the logic, delete irrelevant thematic characteristics, and outline the important interrelated categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At this exploratory stage of theory development, data reporting presents a propositional theory, including a review and discussion of the thematic characteristics of each category and subcategory. In Chapter 5, a review of findings specific to the research questions is discussed with an explanation of the coding and the relationship between categories, which emerged through the collection, analysis, and reporting process.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research design, participant sample, data collection, data analysis and reporting used in this grounded theory study. The rational was presented for why grounded theory was chosen to explore the potential relationship between a life coaching practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry and facilitating an adult transformative learning process. The data collection, data analysis, and reporting methods were reviewed as being informed by the theoretical literature. In summation, grounded theory is designed to construct rather than test theory, create a rigorous research process, guide the researcher to break away from biases and assumptions, and provide the grounding to generate a rich and "explanatory theory that closely approximates the reality it represents" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 57). The presentation of the data follows in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION

Introduction

Grounded theory research designs generate significant amounts of data (Robson, 2002; Kvale, 1996). The researcher's task in data analysis is to apply coding techniques that reduce this data into meaningful central themes relevant to the research questions. Important to the process is the researcher's ability to discriminate what should and should not be included in the findings (Cone & Foster, 1997). Having finished the interpretive process of translating the raw data, the following chapter presents the themes and categories discovered within the coach-client interviews. The data have been extracted and analyzed to help answer the research questions and construct the groundwork for the actual interpretation and discussion outlined in Chapter 5.

The process of obtaining 10 coaches and 10 of their clients who qualified to participate in the study took 3 months. As it turned out, a complication of the research was finding participants that met the three elements of the criteria essential for participation. Locating, qualifying, and interviewing coaches proved to require more time than expected. Although a number of coaches responded to the invitation to participate and expressed interest, I discovered during the telephone pre-interview that one or more of the three essential elements for participation were absent. Specifically, I looked for coaches who (a) engaged in a process of personal or life coaching, (b) a practice influenced by Appreciative Inquiry, and (c) clients that experienced a process of transformative learning.

During the prescreening, I explained my understanding of transformation as applied to this study and clearly asked each interviewee if they believed they fulfilled these criteria:

> Transformation is a significant change from one form to another, similar to how a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. Learning that is transformative, involves an experience in which deep learning occurs, identified by a basic change in beliefs, values, ways of thinking and being in relationship. Do you believe that you meet the criteria for participation?

The dialogue that followed identified those coaches that did not qualify for participation for either of the following reasons: (a) They had engaged in personal coaching, but their practice was not informed by Appreciative Inquiry; or (b) their practice was informed by Appreciative Inquiry, but the coach had not engaged a client in personal coaching. The 10 coaches and 10 clients who were selected and participated in this research met all of the essential requirements of the study. Although the coaches agreed to lend their name to the study, to insure privacy for the clients, I coded coach and client pair with a number and a letter. Upon completion of transcribing the 20 interviews and prior to beginning the process of coding, I listened to each of the 10 interview story pairs and reviewed the original interview memo notes. The meaning-making process is presented in the next section.

Coding for Understanding and Meaning

The coding of data was initiated with a review of transcripts and memo notes. The following is a brief outline of the analysis and interpretation that occurred during this study:

First, the open coding of the text began with 403 pages of text and resulted in 608 codes of text. This process was to reveal a "flurry of ideas produced by the data" (Bazeley, 2007, p. 111). Emerging concepts were extracted paragraph-by-paragraph

using the grounded theory method of coding. Every condition, strategy, and consequence was identified and coded. Underlying meanings were recorded in memo notes. The Coach responses were identified with an the letter A and Client responses were identified with the letter B to be able to sort and review the coach interviews as Group A codes and client interviews as Group B codes. Second, I created tree nodes of coach-client pairs, and separated the codes into coach and client pairs. Each pair was assigned a number to differentiate the 10 pairs, (e.g., 1A-1B, 2A-2B). The coding of the text was guided by the questions asked in the interview and the corresponding response from each participant.

Guided by the process of developing cluster concepts, the category "provocative partnership" emerged from the text. This substantive cluster of concepts revealed information about conditions that support the process of transformative learning. When I asked Coach 5A, for example, to describe what she valued most about her approach to practice she responded, "I'm a believer anybody can transform and change. Now, they have to be willing to do it." This text revealed the concepts of *I'm a believer* and *willing to do it,* which I coded into the cluster concept *of intention and willingness.* This information also constructed the concept of *purposeful engagement.* The following quote emerged in response to asking Client 5B to describe the approach of Coach 5A. "I always *had a sense* from the day I met Coach A, that, you know, she was very intelligent and competent and *I trusted* her." This quote yielded the concepts of *a perception and feeling about coach,* which I coded into the thematic or cluster concept of *coaching presence*.

Guided by the analysis procedures of grounded theory, I used a process of axial coding by highlighting the words or phrases that reappeared to suggest a preliminary theme or pattern of relationship between the experience of the coach and the client. I

engaged in a higher level of abstraction beyond description and into theorizing codes that showed meaningful relationships. Within the context of the coach-client pair, I reassemble fractured data to discover and interpret themes and relationships (Bazeley, 2007). Substantive cluster concepts such as experience of process, perception of outcome, relational space, characteristics of language, intentionality, and shared power emerged from the process.

Third, I uploaded the 20 transcripts to the NVivo 8 analysis software. This program helped to organize the codes, sort cluster concepts, and engage a rigorous process of comparison between coach-client pairs. To check my interpretations of the saturation and frequency, I used the NVivo8 word and phrase query option. I compared the cluster concepts of each coach-client pair to the nine other pairs for frequency, penetration, and saturation. Using the natural language of the participants, the core categories and subcategories emerged from these comparisons. Ambiguous material was noted and organized together for further analysis. Theoretical coding was used to highlight the relationship between the categories and to construct the theoretical concepts that emerged from the analysis.

After the primary concepts emerged from the text, to check my interpretation, I referred to key informant interviews I had conducted with Barbara Sloane, Jackie Kelm, Dr. Jacqueline Stavros, and Dr. Susan Kelm. Although these individuals did not qualify for the study criteria, each agreed to be interviewed as a respected contributor to the field of Appreciative Inquiry and adult transformative learning. The experience of interviewing each of these individuals helped to guide my data collection and construct an analysis process grounded in curiosity, interpretation, and understanding of the text.

Fourth, I engaged in another cycle of constant comparison and analyzed the relationship of core categories and subcategories to the literature. The categories of provocative partnership, generative and performative language, and whole person learning emerged from the text in each of the 20 interviews. Language and learning appeared as being grounded within the partnership context of relationship. The predominant subcategories or characteristics of the provocative partnership emerged as: both the client and the coach were purposeful in his or her engagement in the relationship; each held an intention for learning; and, of primary importance was the client's interpretation of the coach's presence within the partnership. Fifth, the core categories, and subcategories were interpreted relative to the three research questions to develop the theoretical constructs. The findings of the fourth and fifth step are presented in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 4, I present the process of how the themes and categories emerged from the interview text of each coach-client pair. This section examined the participant's experience in relationship to the phenomenon being investigated in this study – which is, "*Can the practice of life coaching, informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry, foster an integrated process of adult transformative learning?*" In addition, the analysis of each participant's story sought to understand "*In what ways can Appreciative Inquiry principles be incorporated into life coaching practice?*" and, *"What conditions of the coaching practice, informed by Appreciative Inquiry, best support adult transformative learning?"*

In the next section, the text is presented through quotes and interpretation. The interviews were open-ended to extract the rich narratives of each participant's experience

of the coaching process. The chapter is organized to represent the process of how the information was revealed and unfolded relative to the research questions.

Identifying Textural Themes

Through an inductive and deductive process of interpretation, the subcategories were verified and clarified within each coach-client pair. The following section describes the category and subcategory. As previously noted in Chapter 3, inductive analysis allows categories and their properties to emerge from the text through a process of specific observations to construct general patterns and define their relationships. In the deductive process the connection between the categories in relationship to the research question is analyzed.

Overview of Categories and Subcategories

The analysis of the 10 coach-client pairs revealed three core categories: provocative partnership, generative and performative language, and whole person learning. The following description will create a substantive description of each of these three concepts that is relevant to the meaning making process of this study.

Provocative partnership is the creation of a relationship between the coach and client, which serves as the foundation for facilitating the transformative learning process. The concept of relationship building as fundamental to transformative learning is explored in the first subsection of this chapter. Provocative partnership involves purposeful engagement. The coach believes in the ability of the client to reach his or her full potential. The client has an open mind, a willingness to challenge old patterns, and an intention to explore new choices to construct a life giving future.

The provocative partnership constructs an intention for learning. The coaching process is a co-constructive activity, a journey of exploration, where coach and client agree to engage together on a path of learning. The underlying attitude of the coach and client is to have a mutual intention for seeking new possibility and learning. Provocative partnership also engages the coach's presence, which engages the client within a whole person perspective to facilitate new learning. The coach and the client value and engage the wholeness of one another. The wholeness of the coach and the client includes body, mind, emotions, and energy. A good fit between the coach and the client creates the space for the co-constructive activity of inquiry and dialogue. Using generative and performative language, the coach engages the client in an appreciative, yet challenging process of inquiry, dialogue, and storytelling.

Generative and performative language provides a systemic and appreciative context within which ideas, principles, and agreements are constructed to form the basis for action and something intended to be more fully realized at a later stage. The second subsection of this chapter explores ways in which the language is embedded in a philosophical framework that constructs the outline of inquiry and dialogue and facilitates the context of and the conditions for learning. Generative and performative language facilitates a thought provoking level of inquiry, dialogue, reflection, and storytelling between the coach and the client, which probes the unknown and inspires action. Through the discovery of the client's story, and using a language of possibility, the breadth of the client's thinking, feeling, and actions are illuminated to fully realize his or her potential to take action. The inquiry is challenging and thought provoking. The dialogue is affirmative and strength-based and focuses on the client's expectations and

hopes for the future. The reflection is deep and stimulates awareness of choices and opportunities for positive change. The storytelling stimulates the construction of new possibilities and inspires the client to take action. Generative and performative language is guided by a philosophical foundation of the five original principles of Appreciative Inquiry. The coach embodies the Appreciative Inquiry principles to facilitate a process of learning that will integrate the whole person's life.

The *whole person learning* involves a set of circumstances and events that constructs the environment and the conditions for the integrated transformative learning experience to occur. This third subsection investigated the client's interpretation and conditions for learning, circumstances, and outcomes of his or her transformative learning process. Whole person learning of the client is revealed within his or her story. Through a collaborative process of discovery, the client's interpretation and understanding of the cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of his or her situation is revealed. In the process of discovery the client's full potential involves multiple dimensions of learning, including (a) a cognitive shift in perspective, (b) an awareness and shift of emotions and behavior, and (c) an awareness and impact on relationships. The client's process of interpretation and understanding is facilitated by conditions that are supportive of the transformative learning experience (see Appendix N). Conditions are constructed by the coach, the client, or together in relationship. The four types of conditions are: (a) preconditions with attributes that existed prior to entering relationship; (b) personal condition with attributes that exist within the coach or client; (c) environmental condition with attributes of the coaching space; and (d) relational condition with attributes constructed within the relationship.

The three categories of provocative partnership, generative and performative language, and whole person learning each support a process of transformative learning. Each category is interconnected and contains subcategories. The process of axial coding revealed specific features entitled subcategories, which denote an understanding of the relationships and causal conditions that construct each category. Table 4 presents the categories, subcategories, and examples of thematic characteristics that evolved from the data.

Table 4

Categories, Subcategories, and Thematic Characteristics

Categories	Subcategories	Characteristics
Provocative Partnership	Purposeful Engagement	• Willingness
		• Ready for change
		• Being at a crossroad
	Intention for Learning	• Self-discovery
		• Seeking possibility
		• Journey of exploration
	Coaching Presence	• Whole person perspective
		• Partnership
		• Provocative challenge
Generative and Performative Language	Context of the Inquiry	• Thought provoking
		• Probe the unknown
		• Appreciatively oriented
	Dialogue and Storytelling	• Ability to talk openly and have someone listen
		• Encourage self-reflection
		• Stimulate construction of new stories
	Philosophical Framework	• Embody AI principles
		• Construct world view
		• Structure for inquiry and dialogue
Whole Person Learning	Interpreting the Learning	• Discovering full potential
		• Life giving and collaborative
		• Integrative and multi-dimensional learning
	Conditions for Learning	• Pre-condition
		• Personal condition
		• Environmental condition
		• Relationship condition

Each of the three categories, eight subcategories, and 25 characteristics were discovered through open-ended questions constructed to encourage a generative and organic dialogue about each individual's perspective of the coaching experience. The response of both the coach and client indicated the foundation of the coaching experience to be embedded within the provocative partnership. The interview path of inquiry and interpretation began with asking questions from the coach and client interview protocol (see Appendix J and K). For example, the coach and the client were asked to tell a story about how and why he or she engaged in the coaching process, and to describe the coaching relationship. The responses from these and other questions from the interview protocol revealed the first central category: provocative partnership. The next subsection outlines the construction of the partnership with its three subcategories of (a) purposeful engagement, (b) intention for learning, and (c) coaching presence.

Provocative Partnership

The following excerpts of text are the result of an inquiry with each coach and client pair, intended to evoke a rich story about their experience of the coaching relationship. Through bringing two systems of personal historical experience together, the coach and the client co-created the coaching relationship. The text revealed that each coach and client had a presumption of purpose, which influenced what occurred between one another, and an intention for engaging together in relationship. The text of every interview revealed that the initial engagement between the coach and client began with constructing the circumstances for a shared understanding of purpose.

Purposeful Engagement

The coach and client's purpose of engagement emerged as a thematic subcategory from within the text of every coach and client pair. Conceptual themes of *purposeful engagement* were revealed to be a *desire or willingness to learn or change*. Characteristics of willingness emerged as being motivated by concepts such as *being conscious of wanting to change* to *being in crisis*. The following participant quotes were derived from an inquiry into the background story of how the coach and client began working together.

I asked each participant to describe what attracted him or her to engage in the coaching process. The quotes suggested a process of meaning making, which revealed the participants desire or purpose for engaging in relationship with one another. The response of both the coach and client in pair 1A-1B revealed the language of *desire* and *change*. Coach 1A stated, "It was the desire to really be involved in people's lives and be more instrumental in seeing them be the change that they wanted to be." Client 1B responded, "A desire to be different. It was really an attraction to changing, *being conscious of wanting to change* my path or the way I perceived things around me." Another coach-client pair, 8A-8B, also emphasized *desire* and *change* within the text of their responses. Coach 8A proposed,

> There's the change aspect in coaching…that learning…that it's a positive process for change. That what we're looking at, it's not what do you want to fix, but what is it that you want to create? And how can I help you, as a coach, create that which you want, using your strengths and your capabilities and your abilities, you know, and your heart's desire?

Client 8B explained, "I was overly emotional, I had a desire to be better. I had a desire for change and self-improvement, to become aware of my moods, my body language, and the impact upon others." Without exception, each pair held an internal

purpose of a desire for change. There were other characteristics or properties of

purposeful engagement including a willingness and desire for new learning, an ability to

reflect, a readiness for change, and an openness to exploring possibilities.

An example of the pattern of the properties of purposeful engagement emerged

when Coach 1A spontaneously shared his thoughts about what was relevant to the coach-

client relationship. He stated:

> I want my clients to be *willing*, open and *engaged* and if they felt like they have a
> sense of wanting something different in their life, that might be enough if they're
> *willing to explore* and open to really looking deeply, *really reflecting* at what's
> happening in their life and how they're living their life.

This quote from Client 1B complements her experience of Coach 1A:

> [Coach 1A] was so *completely open and generous and willing* to take me along on
> the path for as long as or short as it was going to work for both of us. He has such
> a *quiet, gentle presence*. You want to have some *different learning*.

Further analysis of purposeful engagement revealed a significant pattern of the

characteristic of *willingness* as it emerged from the text of other interviews. Coach 5A

elaborated, "It's a willingness if there is one word…you need to have clients who are

willing because they are the ones that do the work…I'm a big believer anybody can

transform and change. Now, they have to be willing to do it." Other characteristics of

purposeful engagement were revealed in the text as *being conscious of wanting to*

change, *being at a crossroad*, and *being in crisis*. Responding to the question about why

she engaged in a process of coaching Client 5B told the following story:

> *I was in crisis*…. I recognized the need for some, oh, guidance you might say….
> to envision what you want your future/career to look like and that's really where
> we started and worked from there. *I was at a bit of a crossroads on a number of*
> *levels*.

Coach 10A suggested that many times the client's purpose and story for entering into the coaching relationship was motivated by the client being at a crossroad in his or her life.

> Typically the types of people that I talk about are somebody who is *at a cross road*…a significant percentage…are going through the process with me because there's some sort *of misalignment between their work and their larger self*.

The following quote revealed that Client 10B held a story with questions about her purpose and "longed for clarity" and a new direction in her life. Client 10B expressed her purpose for engaging in the coaching relationship was to consider "*different possibilities.*" She expressed that she wanted to find someone who guided an exploration of her personal and professional future stating,

> I dove in head first knowing that it was going to be a very personal exploration. So maybe that made me different. I never distinguished the two—professional [and] personal. It always was the same person showing up. *I longed for clarity and someone who could help guide me* to that from a strength-based approach.

As the above quotes suggest, each client-participant had constructed a purpose for engaging in relationship with the coach. The text implied that the coach and the client engaged together on a course of discovery with an intention of investigating new learning. The intention for learning emerged from the text to be a thematic subcategory of provocative partnership. To describe the intention for learning, the coach and client used metaphors such as "path of relationship, path with heart, walking down a road, and, a journey.

Intention for Learning

The interviews consistently evoked a sense of being on an intended course of a particular purpose to explore unknown territory. The reflections of the following pairs

demonstrated, that the coach and client were engaged in an exploration of revealing and

discovering new learning.

> Coach 1A: The *focus of the course* is on the client, and I want to *celebrate what's right*. [I] *always assume positive intent* – the emphasis that we move in the direction that we explore – ask questions – tell stories about.

> Client 1B: [Coach 1A] creates *a space that allows* you to see what a wonderful and amazing and capable person you are. I think the essence of the process that through the coaching relationship, it's *about uncovering or discovering* – it was that real *synergistic interaction* – discovering all of this potential. I think we build something greater than the two of us in that.

> As *we walked down the road*, [Coach 2A] would ask me a variety of questions, *questions that were geared to inquiry*. It was *thought invoking*. And they were *challenging questions* that stimulated me to look deep in myself and reflect and wonder and seek a new dimension of selfhood that until that point was undiscovered. I think that the result for me personally was that *I was growing and I was aware* of that. And I was aware that *I was moving into a new dimension of self-understanding* and of connection with me.

> Perhaps, *guiding her* [Client 2B] *through the various inquiries* to *find her stories* that – actually, not just defining her stories, but in guiding her to tell – and here's what I'm trying to say. As she would tell her stories, and especially because of her maturity in life, as she told her stories, to let her know that she could *tell her stories in a different way*. She was in the moment reshaping her life, as she knew it.

In these quotes there appears to be an alignment between the coach's and the

client's interpretation of an intention for learning and how each interacts within

relationship. The conceptual subcategory of intention for learning exposed key

characteristics that were repeated in the majority of the paired interviews. The

characteristics discovered in the interview text included *exploration, discovering,*

guiding, envisioning, encouraging, thinking differently, positive intent, telling affirmative

stories, seeking possibility, evoking positive stories and *celebrating what is right.*

The text of each coach-client paired interview revealed that the coach's ability to

purposefully engage the client with an intention of learning was connected to the client's

perception of coaching presence. The relationship between the subcategories of purposeful engagement, intention for learning, and coaching presence was discovered within multiple coach-client stories. This third and final subcategory of provocative partnership will be discussed next.

Coaching Presence

Within the category of provocative partnership – *coaching presence* – and its rich characteristics emerged when I asked each client to describe what was extraordinary about his or her coach. I asked each coach to briefly describe his or her professional background. I believed it was important to understand the professional background of each coach. Although Appreciative Inquiry informed the practice of each coach, collectively the group had diverse professional backgrounds. It was relevant to the objectives of the research to investigate the influence of the coach's background in connection the client's process of transformative learning.

The background of the coaches in this study included: organizational development, sales and marketing, human resources, recreational therapist, adult learning, and psychology (see Table 2). Although each client acknowledged the professional background of the coach as relevant, the academic or business background of the coach did not emerge as an important conceptual theme or pattern in constructing the relationship. The background of the coach was a secondary consideration to the client's perception of coaching presence. Specifically, the coach's presence was most noted in each client's interview. Similarly, and relevant to this study, the interview with the coaches revealed that regardless of whether the client was motivated to engage the

coach because of a professional or personal intention, the relationship always impacted the personal and professional areas of the client's life.

The following examples illustrate a pattern within the text, which highlighted the influence of coaching presence on the client's coaching experience. Client 3B expressed his original intention for engaging with Coach 3A was to improve his leadership skills. In the following quote, Client 3B stressed the value of the way Coach 3A was present in their relationship.

> [As a] Business owner, there's sometimes no one else to talk to – to understand – your predicaments or situations. I am somewhat aware of how I generally approach life situations and my life coach has helped me try to focus more on the positive side of things instead of getting bogged down in frustration or complaining. It's comforting to know that there is a person out there who *listens neutrally* to my situation and offers objective, sometimes *challenging viewpoints* that I hadn't considered previously. Coach has a way of showing *genuine interest* in my situation that I find extraordinary. He is able to, regardless of what's going on in his life, *he's there and present* from the time we are in a coaching call with me. I sense that I'm in a *safe* area where I can be very *honest* with him and *not be judged*.

Although Client 3B's entry point to life coaching was motivated by a professional interest, the presence of Coach 3A allowed him to explore multiple areas of his life. In the interview, Coach 3A explained that Client 3B originally engaged in coaching to change how he was engaging his team at work. He was aware of the way his work was beginning to define the way he showed up in all areas of his life, which had an impact on the other relationships in his life.

> He loves a lot of his work but he was starting to be defined by his work and the role of making money for the family…the relationship with his son, some frustrating challenges there. I partnered with [Client 3B] on creating a life [he] want[s]. He got increased insight and motivation…it helped him to be more coach-like as a father…everything from improving as a manager and boss, to parent, to husband, you know, he's just been great at following through. I consider the coaching time *sacred space*, you know, and that's all about that *presence* and that sort of thing.

The excerpt of text from the interview of Coach 3A and Client 3B is representative of a pattern revealed within the text of coach-client pairs, which noted the characteristic of challenge and partnership in relationship to coaching presence.

Client 2B expressed she was "trying to escape a box." Client 2B stated that she was searching for better ways to be a leader and "needed somebody who would *challenge* me." Client 2B described her experience of coaching, "as a journey" as an "exploration," and "process of self-discovery." Relating to her coach as "a guide – as someone who facilitates a process of unfolding, of personal unfolding – helping another person discover some deep gift that needed to be uncovered." Coach 2A explained that Client 2B "came to me because she was in a major life transition looking at retirement." Coach 2A explained,

> Their *whole life* really is something that they need to look at through the coaching process because how we do anything is how we do everything. I view it as a *partnership*. I view it as a partnership where I am holding my client with dignity and that I respect that they're on a path that…. I'm there to be a *provocateur*…. I could not make any judgment of what was happening or how she was making choices. [It is an] *acceptance* of who she was and where she was at in life [with] total acceptance, *compassion*. I try to hold all my clients, as being whole and *resourceful.*

As these coach-client quotes revealed, the characteristic of provocative challenge was connected to the characteristic of partnership. Both became evident as patterns within the text of the coaching presence subcategory. *Partnership* emerged with multiple characteristics clearly illustrated as *respect, acceptance, nonjudgment, honesty, compassion, resourcefulness, challenge, and genuine interest*. The analysis of the text from other interviews indicated provocative challenge was associated with the characteristics of *patience*, *grace, sacredness, listening, neutrality, acceptance, openness,*

and freedom. In the quote below, Client 2B described what she valued most about her

coach:

> She let me introduce myself to a deeper sense of who I was through her *presence* and her being with me, her patience, and her grace. There was an element of grace in our relationship that allowed me to walk into a new kind of freedom, a new self-introduction at a deeper level. A kind of listening that enabled me to feel most free, most open, more than perhaps I had experienced in the past or at least in the past 10 or so years.

In almost every case, when pairs were asked to describe the coaching relationship,

further illustration of coaching presence and its characteristics of whole person

perspective, partnership, and provocative challenge appeared in statements from other

coach-client interviews.

> Coach 4A: The kind of words coming to me now are words around *participatory*…language around things like *connection* and partnership.

> Client 4B*: Collaboration* of taking kind of my knowledge and her knowledge and mixing them together…*equal footing* of being more of an exchange. I didn't feel like there was a power differential at all. An element was *helping kind of push things* to the next step…

> Coach9A: [it's about] helping them…from the inside out. It turned out that through the coaching around the work, conversation had come up that she started to *see patterns* in her life and the impact that was having on her life.

> Client 9B: I really think a lot of the work we did as a result of the idea of addressing relationships with the people that work for you – and – that's your *challenge* sort of seeing that and realizing how it applies to *every piece of your life*. I used to think there's your *work life and your personal life* and they are very segmented. I don't see that segmented anymore. They're different aspects of you as a person.

> Coach 10A: If you're doing, again, what I call deep discovery, which is essentially looking at them from *multiple points of view*, you have to take into account who they are – *we're looking for path with heart*. They're looking for *something that aligns with their core.*

> Client 10B: [I] wanted *to make more calculated decisions* that really put me on the *right path.*

Apparent from further analysis of the text, it became clear that the subcategories of *purposeful engagement, intention for learning,* and *coaching presence* were connected to the coach and client constructing their relationship. The following is an excerpt of text from the interview with Client 2B, and it is an example of the interconnectedness between the characteristics of purposeful engagement, intention for learning, and coaching presence.

> We *walked down a road together* and it was a wonderful experience of learning. [Coach 2A] worked with me as a partner. Together *we journeyed* into what began as an unknown. I would describe it *as an exploration*, and a *process of self-discovery*. Of helping another person *discover some deep gift* that need to be uncovered. I value her ability to be with me. Her *nonjudgmental presence* and that is very uncommon, I think, for someone to be *truly present* and *to truly listen*. And I believe that [Coach 2A] was *truly present to me in the fullness of herself*.

As demonstrated previously, time and again, the text of multiple interviews suggested that the core category of constructing relationship and its three subcategories of purposeful engagement, intention for learning, and coaching presence were grounded within a framework of language. In the following section, I examined the core category of the framework of language and the three subcategories of (a) the context of inquiry, (b) storytelling and dialogue, and (c) the philosophical foundation.

Generative and Performative Language

To investigate if the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate a process of transformative learning, participants were asked to describe a highpoint of what occurred within the coaching relationship that inspired the process of learning. A second core category – *generative and performative language* – emerged as a fundamental philosophical structure shaping the learning experience. Generative language entails the provocative origination of constructing words, phrases, inquiry, and dialogue that evaluate and challenge accepted ways of knowing and understanding to

invite new meaning. Performative language inspires self-empowerment to construct and proceed with action for the purpose of achieving and realizing one's positive potential.

The responses of all participants revealed that their process of learning was stimulated within the contextual process of inquiry, dialogue, and the opportunity for inner reflection. Indeed, the analysis of the text suggested that the language of the coach engendered and modeled an attitude, which indicated an influence upon the client's thinking, feeling, and manner of behavior.

A review of the text implied that the language of the coach informed the context of the questions that were posed to the client. Recurring patterns emerged between the type of inquiry and the direction of the dialogue. The questions appeared to serve as a catalyst for discovering the story of the client. As is shown in the next subsection, the construction of generative and performative language emerged within a structure of three subcategories: context of the inquiry, dialogue and storytelling, and the philosophical framework.

Within the text of every pair, the subcategory, *context of the inquiry*, emerged as a fundamental cornerstone of generative and performative language. A reappearing concept in the text of each pair insinuated that the language of each coach influenced his or her orientation and a way of being in relationship with the client. The following subsection examined this subcategory – the context of the inquiry.

Context of the Inquiry

Participants were asked to describe the inquiry and dialogue that occurred between the coach and client. An analysis of the text of each coach and client's story suggested that his or her experience of powerful inquiry was constructed within a

language of potential and possibility. When the coach described his or her approach to inquiry, a pattern emerged that each question was embedded in powerful thought provoking language.

Analysis and comparison of each coach's experience of the process of inquiry revealed a significant relationship between the language of the inquiry and his or her ability to be *open, curious, and willing to explore the unknown.* The following quote from Coach 3A sums up the response of each coach with regard to the relevance of inquiry in the coaching practice and process.

> The questions are the most fun about coaching – and *powerful* is one that I ask that neither one of us know the answer to. And what's great about that is that it just shows the value of not being an expert but being *curious and willing to not know.* And that's what the inquiry is about.

The text suggested that each coach engaged the client with genuine curiosity and a willingness to listen. The following are examples of participants' describing their experience of the relevance of questions to the learning process. Although only a few quotes are reproduced here, these excerpts are representative of a pattern found in all pairs demonstrating the significance of the context of the inquiry to learning. Comparing the excerpts from the text of coach-client pairs, the quotes from the following pairs are examples of a conceptual pattern, revealing that *thought provoking and probing* characteristics of inquiry fostered a process of learning. In the following quote, Coach 10A described his experience of the relevance of questions.

> The question is the tool. And the question is, and the *context of the question is vital*, and…there's two contexts. One is the context for the individual – I'm *probing deeply* in the individual – learning about things that very few other people even know about the individual, they may know it, but they know it on an unconscious level. They haven't articulated it, made it explicit. And so there's a context about *enriching the context* of the person.

The following excerpt expanded upon the connection between the probing and thought provoking properties of the questions. Client 10B shared her experience of the process of inquiry saying,

> He asked great questions. He listened well and picked up on things I completely blew off or thought trivial, see a way of *magnifying the small details in important ways*, and he captured them in *meaningful* ways. He *helped uncover things* that were always there that I was completely oblivious to and he asked some really great questions that helped me. He asked questions that focused on first of all, my *core passions, the things that really make me tick and excite me and make me really proud*…. Then he asked *questions around the things that I've done really well*…. He asked the *questions that helped make visible all* that low hanging fruit. So with minimal effort and huge passion and drive I could make it all happen and it did.

This example shows that characteristics of asking probing and thought-provoking questions were constructed to be affirmative, stimulating, and meaningful. Another coach-client pair (9A-9B) echoed the experience and offered further insight into the ways that questions stimulated the process of learning. The text of Coach 9A demonstrated a pattern of relationship between the context of the inquiry and the characteristic of an appreciative orientation.

> I [Coach 9A] ask them to think about the questions…around what some of the *achievements they've had in their life and high point in the work* that they're in or in life in some way. I try to help them organize what are kind of the central goals that they have to achieve, that is what we can do in the timeframe that we have, and then most of the rest of the conversations are *appreciatively oriented* conversations always working towards *what could you do and what if you did it* to try to keep them moving in that framework.

The text of Coach 9A further illuminated the property of constructing questions within the context of an appreciative orientation. This pattern of inquiry was discovered within the interview text of every pair. Constructing inquiry within an appreciative orientation evoked appreciation and affirmed the client's connection to his or her potential. Characteristics of the context of inquiry were revealed as facilitating the

client's feeling of comfort, trust, openness and willingness to explore the unknown. In the following quote, Client 9B suggested a highpoint in the coaching experience was her ability to be open to the process of inquiry.

> She gave me [Client 9B] a series of questions to answer, like, *big questions*, at least for me. I felt very *comfortable with her* and I was able to sort of answer those questions and they were questions that I hadn't actually asked of myself or I was starting to begin to ask of myself. So we sort of shaped it around my answers to the questions and what I was looking for and kind of where we were going she managed to put things in a way where *I didn't feel like she was judging me*.

In her interview, Client 9B explained that she was able to *share her story* because "there was something about the way she communicated with me that made me trust her…where I felt comfortable talking with her." The client acknowledged that this perception of her coach allowed her to be open, curious and willing to learn. These properties were previously noted in the category of relationship, revealing once again the pattern of connection between the construction of the provocative partnership and the client's process of learning. Review of each of the 10 coach interviews further revealed that all coach participants described their communication as "appreciative." This conceptual pattern suggested that the construction of each question was grounded within an appreciative context.

The following excerpt from pair 4A-4B offers a more complete picture of the subtle connection between the appreciative context of the question and constructing a story about possibility and potential. Coach 4A described how she engaged Client 4B:

> The questions you ask really create instantly the future you desired and they pull it into the present. She [Client 4B] was…*very open and very honest…very curious and eager to learn* and absorb everything we had to share and very willing to be go into – for us to *be able to ask questions that provoked her own understanding of things* maybe that *she didn't know she knew*. I think it fostered ability; it fostered *an appreciative eye and a belief,* an ability *to see what we want more of* as opposed to hoping it comes up.

The pattern that emerged here from within the text is representative of each participant pair. A characteristic of asking questions constructed in an appreciative context appeared to be creating future possibilities. Client 4B further implied that the inquiry stimulated a dialogue about future possibilities that influenced her to engage in a different way of thinking.

> Her appreciative nature – There were a lot of times that she could go back to an appreciative focus and ask those types of questions to kind of get at okay *where are we going and where do you want this to be going.* I mean I think it's just different – people on a regular basis don't come up and *ask you those kinds of questions.* And so in that sense it requires *thinking about things a couple of steps out* when you may not always.

The concept of the client altering or shifted their thinking to consider different opportunities and take action emerged as a pattern in multiple interviews and revealed another subcategory, the relationship of dialogue and storytelling, and the connection to a process of reflection. When clients were asked what it was about the dialogue that occurred between them and their coach that stimulated the process of learning, storytelling and dialogue emerged as a relevant pattern within the text of every interview and is discussed in the next subsection.

Dialogue and Storytelling

The concept of storytelling as an integral part of generative and performative language was present in many of the interviews. In response to asking participants to describe what they valued most about their experience of the process of inquiry and dialogue, multiple pairs highlighted the value of sharing stories and engaging in a meaning making process. From the analysis of multiple interviews the concept of storytelling emerged as a repeated pattern. The following is an example of how storytelling provided a foundation for inquiry and dialogue as well as for a process of

reflection. In the interview text Client 2B admitted that she valued the ability to share her stories with a sense of "*openness and trust.*" She felt that she was able to tell her stories with "the *ability to talk* without reservation." "I was really able to tell her my story without hesitation. There wasn't very much that I held back on." Coach 2A completed the picture of the value of Client 2B telling stories saying,

> She told her stories, even just to herself, so that she became – she *unleashed more power* for herself. Like – *self-empowerment and self-respect* – and that *she had choice.* And so it was through those stories, too, where it was *looking for the images that gave her hope*. It was looking for *how she could go back and change her stories.*

This excerpt of text implies that engaging the client in a process of inquiry and dialogue within the context of telling of stories encourages the act of self-reflection. Analyzing and comparing the connection between reflection and the client's experience, the text from other interviews suggested that through an internal process of reflection, the client is able to explore the potential and possibility of constructing new stories.

When coaches and clients were asked what they valued as extraordinary about the way they participated in the process of inquiry and dialogue, several characteristics of storytelling emerged in the text. Responding to what he valued the most about his contribution, Coach 1A elucidated to the characteristics of evoking stories as asking good questions and listening. The following quote also demonstrates the relationship between the characteristic of the coach's ability to be silent and the client's ability to experience reflection.

> I'm pretty good at asking good questions, at listening, helping a client through messages *to get deeper*. It really conveys three things to the client that I'm good at. Number one, I'm listening to you. Number two*, I believe in you* and sometimes even more than you believe in yourself. I don't always say that, but just *giving them a message about their positive core*. Number three, I'm comfortable going where you want to go, I have a very comfortable presence in terms *of letting silence be creative* and not rescuing clients because I'm uncomfortable. I'm

extremely comfortable with silence. I think I have an intuition that says this is good and *the person's creating something*. It's not something to be afraid of. So I'm comfortable with that silence. I'm comfortable with listening.

Responding to a similar question, Client 1B described what she valued most about how she responded to the process of inquiry and dialogue.

I really feel that through our conversations and all that he taught me was that *I was able to completely shift the way I thought* about things, which allowed me to shift decisions I think by. [Coach 1A] highlighting and opening up and teaching me sort of these faulty thinking patterns, I was able to really get *back to my much more true self* that didn't have all the layers of crap on it that make me interpret things in a way that sends me down the wrong path.

These comments and stories are brief illustrations from the interview text illuminating what coaches and clients valued about the experience of storytelling. The characteristics of storytelling revealed that integral to evoking the stories of clients were the coaches' ability to construct a space for listening and silence. This space emerged as being essential for clients' ability to reflect and become open to the construction of new stories. The following quote from pair 7A-7B captures the essence of how most of the coach participants invited the client into a place of thinking and reflection.

I suppose the other part of it is I've always regarded my life's mission as to ask better questions, so for me being able to work with others. And sometimes I call myself a coach and sometimes I call myself more often a *thinking partner*. So for me it's about asking questions in a way that *help the other person think* – I mean it's about asking questions that hopefully take them to a new or a different level of meaning. [I am there] with provocation and difficult questions…some meditation…which *opens up new ways to think*…to explore it from a place of learning rather than as a place where you start criticizing yourself. [Client 7B] often referred to the space as being a kind of sanctuary…it enabled [her] to surface some ideas that had been sitting latent in [her] system. [She had] the freedom and the space to be able to have a conversation around something different. [She was] able to *get clearer* about what [she] wanted to do.

Client 7B described what was most valuable about her experience of the coaching process.

[Coach 7A] creates a peaceful space…very positive. It's a bit of a sanctuary, I think. [She's] holding the space really. I mean just being very present and listening. [I] often arrive in a frenetic state, and when [I] leave her, [I] carry…a sort of calmness. There is a real shift, and I think over time that sense of calm and being present, being focused in the moment, that quality has increased, so that I'm more…able to tap into it.

The above excerpts of text show that the process of constructing new stories involves: (a) asking provocative questions to evoke the client's story, (b) being present and listening to open up new ways of thinking, (c) creating a space for reflection, and (d) exploring it from a place of learning through conversation. Upon further review of the text of additional interviews, a conceptual pattern of time for meditation or inner reflection emerged as an essential part of the coaching process.

In discussing what the participants valued most about the process of coaching, an opportunity for reflection appeared as a characteristic and conceptual pattern of dialogue and storytelling. An analysis and comparison of the text of each interview revealed that the cycle and connection between inquiry, dialogue, storytelling and reflection, was continuous throughout the coaching process. Upon further comparison of subcategories and their characteristic an emerging pattern was revealed. Although this pattern was clearly not present in every pair, the relationship of action and change to reflection was strongly revealed in several pairs to be mentioned in this section. The following two quotes demonstrate how the concept emerged. Coach 7A stated,

Whatever you *think or say change is happening* at that time and so whereas for some people they say, "Well I'll go ahead and do it, do these changes, make these changes." And what I say to them is, "Well *the change has already begun because you've been thinking differently*."

The text suggests that the process of change has already begun with the client thinking differently, and also implies that the coach is supporting the client to take action.

Coach 2A highlighted another interpretation of the connection between reflection and action in the following quote:

> I want my clients to be willing, open and engaged and if they feel like they have a sense of wanting something different in their life, that might be enough if they're willing to explore and open to really looking deeply, really reflecting at what's happening in their life and how they're living their life. I want to say that *action can even be reflection.* It doesn't have to be doing; it could be about how they're being.

An interpretation of the above excerpt might suggest that engaging in reflection is a form of taking action to construct a new story. These two quotes suggest the potential and possibilities of engaging in a process of reflection. Highlighting the connection between clients' experience of reflection, is best illustrated in the following quotes. Client 4B noted what she valued as most unique about her experience was her coach's "appreciative way of coaching" and stated that Coach 4A's approach created "the real difference in terms of how I responded to things – reflecting more – probably because [outside of coaching] there's usually not a huge amount of dedicated time to reflection." This quote suggested the relevance of investigating what informed the coach's appreciative way of engaging the client.

Coach 9A acknowledged that her practice and process are grounded within an appreciative orientation, and described in the following quote how she constructed a reflective space for Client 9B saying, "you can ask [a] question that would elicit or illuminate a little bit of that [the client's issues] but without making people go down the rabbit hole." Her response implies that engaging the client with an appreciative approach provided a dimension of safety for the client to engage in a process of reflection. Further analysis and review of the text of each interview confirmed a connection between the coach defining his or her approach as being "appreciative" and the client's experience of

the process of inquiry, dialogue and reflection. The next subsection examines the text to explore the philosophical framework of an appreciative approach, as the third subcategory of generative and performative language.

Philosophical Framework

During the interview, each coach was asked to describe in what ways the five principles of Appreciative Inquiry informed his or her practice with the client. As previously noted in the literature review, the constructionist principle emphasizes the power of language creating a good and possible reality; the positivist principle proposes the more positive questions, the more sustainable and successful the change; the poetic principle links the means and ends of inquiry as a source of learning and inspiration; the anticipatory principle suggests that positive images lead to positive actions; and the principle of simultaneity states that inquiry is an intervention to facilitate the seeds for change.

The following subsection is dedicated to the presentation of coach participants' thoughts. Excerpts included in this section were selected because they represented a pattern of responses discovered in nearly every coach interview. As noted in the coach-participant profile (see Chapter 3), every coach had been actively coaching for over 4 years, had attended or taught workshops or courses in the field of Appreciative Inquiry, and his or her practice is informed by the five principles of Appreciative Inquiry. In the interview, I asked each coach to describe in what ways the principles informed his or her practice, and to consider if one principle was more influential in facilitating the transformative learning process. The following text represents an abbreviated response from each coach.

All of the coaches agreed that the philosophical underpinnings of Appreciative Inquiry worked collaboratively, with the principles weaving throughout their process of inquiry and dialogue. The following text shows a repetition of several conceptual patterns. First, that the principles provide a framework, which informs the language of the coach. Second, as the coach integrates the principles into his or her practice, the process is less about techniques or exercises, but rather, more of an organic and philosophical way of being in relationship with the client. Third, that the five principles work together as an integrated framework to guide inquiry and dialogue emerged from the text as having equal strength to facilitate a process of transformative learning. The following text is representative of the integrative ways that the principles work together. Every coach agreed that multiple principles worked together to guide his or her coaching practice.

In reviewing all of the 10 coaches interviews, the response of Coach 5A offered the most succinct and comprehensive excerpt of text describing the influence of the principles upon her practice. Coach 5A believed that it is essential to "really get into the principles – to really grasp AI, and then once you've got those principles, then you can apply them in any which way." She continued,

> With the simultaneity principle that – from the very first question you asked – what kind of inquiry you use. The anticipatory one, the whole idea that we are constantly walking around projecting our anticipated future – like a projector on a screen – but if we don't consciously take the time to identify what it is, clarify our desires and move toward what we really want, then we tend to just recreate the present or, God forbid, the past, as well. So you can be mixed up in that and so the old patterns, etc. …The poetic principle, that pivotal moment they see something, like turning the kaleidoscope; suddenly they see things in a different way, they see the new pattern, or a different pattern. This is all language I've taken from AI.

This pattern suggests that all of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry influence the coach's framework of language and the way he or she shows up in relationship with the client. In response to asking how the principles influenced the coaching practice, a

recurring pattern discovered within the text of each coach's response was to speak to the collective influence of the principles in relationship to his or her practice, rather than to articulate a specific question with a specific principle. The constructionist principle was the only principle that was highlighted in each interview.

The text of Coach 5A serves as an example, which is representative of a conceptual pattern that emerged within the review and comparison of multiple coach interviews. For example, and similar to the response of all the other coaches, Coach 5A acknowledged that the foundation of facilitating the transformative learning process is grounded in the constructionist principle, but stated as equally important that "I use all five and it just is a weaving. It's a weaving in and out. I absolutely use all five." She explained that the constructionist principle and all the principles, "just guide in the sense of my belief that people create their own reality." There was a characteristic pattern and consensus among all of the coach participants that when you learn the principles, the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry becomes part of one's human nature. This nature and way of being with others becomes a natural part of who you are, and how you show up in relationship. The response of Coach 5A emphasizes the importance of embodying the principles to construct a new reality, which was a pattern discovered in all of the other interviews.

The constructionist principle. Coach 1A stated that he consciously applies the principles in his life and in his coaching. He said as he worked with Client 1B, he emphasized that the past does not dictate the future saying, "I think the constructionist principle…is one that I'm using all the time. We create our lives. We are free each day to create the futures that we want to live in." Similar to the response of many other coaches,

Coach 2A indicated that her practice was "influenced by all of the principles" but emphasized the foundation of the principles as being grounded in the constructionist principle. Coach 2A elaborated on this comment saying that she introduced the principles to Client 2B as a "way to construct a different view of her world."

As also indicated by the majority of the coaches, Coach 3A described his coaching practice as being essentially grounded in the constructionist principle. Coach 3A emphasized that he holds a belief "that my client's life is sacred." He suggested that the principles guide the construction of a space so that the conversation is experienced as focused, purposeful, and positive. The perspective that the principles of Appreciative Inquiry provide a framework, which constructs a space for a process of inquiry and dialogue through storytelling, was discovered as a conceptual pattern within the text of each coach-participant.

The following excerpt of text illustrates an example of the storytelling characteristic of the principle of construction. Coach 9A stated that the process of storytelling was an important part of her coaching process with Client 9B. When asked, how the principles of Appreciative Inquiry influenced her storytelling process, she emphasized the constructionist principle.

> Constructionism is a really big one for me because you learn about story and how people create stories. Half of our stories we make up aren't necessarily true because we've never checked them out. We don't really know, so really being willing to keep peeling that back to find out if the person has actually checked it out. Helping people understand their own story and how it influences the stories they tell – that helps in the present.

Clearly the principle of construction emerged as a significant influence upon the practice of each coach. Although the analysis of all the coach interviews emphasized the

integration of all the principles into practice, the following excerpts will highlight the specific influence of the positive and poetic principles.

The positive and poetic principle. When I asked coach 3A to elaborate about any other principle that influenced his practice he said, "I'd have to say intuitively they're probably embedded in my coaching soul. Certainly the positive principle informs it all the time. I mean, it's about appreciation." Coach 3A suggested that the more positive the question, the healthier the outcome would be for the client. He explained that in working with client 3B, he guided his attention to a positive focus saying, "We don't need to focus on the negative. We don't need to mirror what happened before, how would you like it to be? Let's think about this together. What other resources do you have?"

The text of the interview of Coach 10A highlights how the positive principle influenced his coaching process with Client 10B.

> I'm looking at…everything that's perceived of value. It's like looking for a treasure; we're looking for gold and things, but looking for other stuff. Something could be totally encrusted and look like a throw away, but when you probe a little deeper and you get some of that stuff off you find gems in there and all sorts of stuff.

Coach 1A emphasized the influence of the positive principle upon his practice in shaping the questions he asked Client 1B: "The more positive the stories, the more positive the outcomes." Coach 4A highlighted the influence of the positive principle upon her approach to the coaching process saying, "There's something to be said for all of us holding an unconditional focus on the affirmative and really being affirmative with one another when really affirming and acknowledging and appreciating each other's gifts along the way." Coach 4A noted that when she worked with Client 4B that the positive principle influenced her practice. Similar to the responses of other coaches, she stated her belief as, "The more positive the questions we ask the more positive the outcomes."

Coach 4A suggested that together with Client 4B they collaboratively focused on what was good in order to construct more good. "We socially constructed together a sense of self-determination and empowerment and strength." Coach 4A stated that there were times in the coaching process, "when things got really tough and…we still focused on the good, the better, on what was happening that was working." Coach 4A acknowledged that it was important for Client 4B to understand that what she focused on would grow. Coach 4A explained that the influence of the poetic principle "came to light in how [Client 4B] reframed her relationships, I think it fostered…an appreciative eye and a belief, an ability to see what we want more of as opposed to hope it comes up."

Coach 2A suggested the power of the poetic principle is embedded in the opportunity to improve anything. She acknowledged that specific to her coaching relationship with Client 2B, "The poetic principle might have been the strongest influence or guide with her. She was in the moment reshaping her life as she knew it – she told her stories – she unleashed more power for herself – she had choice." Coach 2A indicated that inquiry and dialogue guided by the poetic principle gave Client 2B images of hope and the ability to reconstruct her stories. The text suggests that as the client was guided through various inquiries to evoke her stories she discovered she could construct her stories in a different way.

Coach 2A highlighted the influence of the poetic principle to facilitate a process of transformative learning. She explained that she initiated a process of inquiry through "an appreciative lens." Coach 2A noted that through a process of inquiry and dialogue she and Client 2B discovered her life affirming stories. "Life affirming…that's the one that I'll ask them to hold onto…to really reflect deeply in the questions that either I

would provoke her with or that we would co-create." The excerpt implies that the poetic

principle can inspire the client to reinterpret and reconstruct a challenging perspective to

one of possibility and potential.

Coach 6A specializes in working with parents who have children with challenging

behaviors. Coach 6A emphasized the importance of facilitating Client 6B to reinterpret

the situation and to seek what was working in the parent-child relationship. She

explained,

> With parenting, there's so much angst sometimes, and so many cultural things
> competing for a parent's attention. That helping them to slow down and focus on
> the good that's there and the good that is yet to be – is transformative.

She explained that if a coach shows up in relationship with a client "with the

agenda of doing AI, it fails miserably, and people don't feel seen and heard." She

suggested that integrating and interpreting the principles of Appreciative Inquiry into her

practice is "where the art comes in." Like all of the other coach-participants, Coach 6A

emphasized the importance of embodying the principles and assimilating the philosophy

and principles of Appreciative Inquiry in her daily life.

The next excerpt is representative of another recurring pattern discovered within

the response of each coach. The text of Coach 7A accentuated the ways that the

philosophical foundation and principles of Appreciative Inquiry constructed an organic

process and a space for the client to experience a process of transformative learning.

Coach 7A summarized how the principles of Appreciative Inquiry influenced her practice

with Client 7B.

> I think the principles of appreciative inquiry really open up the space between me
> and the person. I will work to a set of principles, rather than to necessarily
> particular exercises or activities. It will sort of evolve as I get a sense of what I
> think might work with them. It's not a standard program ever. It's something that
> is iterative – it evolves.

Coach 7A noted that the constructionist principle "opens up discussion around what we choose to focus on," and the poetic principle guides the client's "sense that whatever is in front of us, we have an experience that is relevant." Coach 7A noted that the principles are incorporated to explore multiple dimensions of a person highlighting the poetic principles' influence upon how she approached Client 7B. She stated,

> The poetic principle allows us to explore all those different dimensions of ourselves whether it is emotional, spiritual, physical, working for money, working without money…the sense that whatever is in front of us we have an experience that is relevant.

> The excerpt of text from the interview with Coach 8A suggested a similar conceptual pattern of how the principles of Appreciative Inquiry are more interconnected and less separate in how they influence the coach's practice. This conceptual pattern resonated closely with many of excerpts noted in this section.

The anticipatory and simultaneity principles. Upon completing an explanation of the ways that the principles influenced her practice, Coach 8A stated that there is a connection between each of the principles and the process of shifting a person's perspective.

> Behaviors are always coming from and are in alignment with the way we think. Part of coaching is to help looking at other ways and possibilities to think. So that's why I try to help people shift their thinking. What really surprises me when people are new learners, and even myself, I guess, with Appreciative Inquiry, is thinking that you don't look at the dark side or the hard stuff. And that's not it, at all. It's just – you pay attention to growth – it's accepting it so you can grow all the other stuff. And by accepting it, it actually grows smaller, because you're not feeding it – you can feed all of the other wonderful stuff.

Coach 8A stated that Client 8B's transformative learning process was facilitated by shifting her perspective of the challenge. Together they engaged in a process of inquiry to investigate positive solutions. Although Coach 8A did not point to the anticipatory principle or the principle of simultaneity, the influence of both principles is suggested in the text. The anticipatory principle guides the client to think about what he

or she wants in the moment, and to pay attention to the possibility of his or her dream. The principle of simultaneity inspires the realization that within the process of asking generative questions the shift in thinking and feeling is beginning to occur. The excerpt revealed the powerful outcome of acknowledging what is occurring in the moment and the value of shifting the focus of attention to the possibility of positive potential.

Examples that illustrated the influence of the anticipatory principle and the principle of simultaneity upon the practice of each coach were less pronounced than the other principles. However, as stated in the first section of this chapter, all coach-client pairs agreed that the process of transformative learning is grounded within the context of inquiry. Each coach and client agreed that the process of transformative learning began within a foundation of powerful questions. Coach 7A articulated the influence of the simultaneity principle saying inquiry and dialogue, "is for me the thing where it's whatever you think or say change is happening at that time." This is a clear example of the influence of the principle of simultaneity.

Also illustrated earlier in the chapter, was the value of dialogue and storytelling in relationship to facilitate transformative learning. Through constructing images of the future, clients were able to discover a more hopeful and positive perspective, and felt empowered to take action. This process outcome would illustrate the influence of a practice informed by the anticipatory principle.

Coach 5A stated that this process begins "from the very first question you asked…what kind of inquiry you used, [that's the] anticipatory principle, the whole idea that we are constantly walking around projecting our anticipated future like a projector on a screen.

The above section has outlined the category of the framework of language and demonstrated the emergence of the three subcategories: the context of language, dialogue and storytelling, and the philosophical framework. In the final section, I examined the category of the whole person learning, and the two subcategories, interpreting the learning and conditions for learning, which emerged through analysis of the client's learning experience.

Whole Person Learning

As demonstrated through the presentation of the text, the circumstances and events of learning emerge throughout all aspects of the coach-client relationship. The actual experience of learning and the conditions that lead to the transformative learning needed to be analyzed and interpreted. First, the clients' interpretation and integration of the transformative learning process is examined. Second, the conditions that emerged as supporting the learning process are outlined (see Appendix N). The comments of each coach have been inserted when the text is relevant to complete the picture of clients' learning process. As noted in the client-participant profile (see Chapter 3), each client had engaged in coaching to explore a personal and professional life transition. The coaching relationship for each client lasted for an average of 6 months to 1 year.

In the interview process, I asked each client to describe what occurred within the coaching relationship that facilitated his or her transformative learning outcome. To present an understanding and connection between the conceptual patterns discovered within the text, I have included a brief illustration of each client's story.

Interpreting the Learning

Client 1B works in emergency services, and was seeking a way to integrate an appreciative perspective into her work and life. She explained that in working with Coach 1B she experienced, "being able to have the discussions and giving me a clearer language brought me back closer to myself. You get back to that clarity…in depth you return and you're like, 'Oh that's the wholeness of me.'" Client 1B stated that her path to learning outcome,

> Is shaped around language, like the powerful use of words and the words he says and how they affect how you think about things. I mean really a lot of the big accomplishments I have made in the last couple of years have been—they are completely linked to our conversations. It was that real synergistic interaction that when we were speaking and when we had these ideas and were sort of dreaming, I think we built something greater than the two of us in that.

Client 1B described the essence of the learning experience was discovering her full potential, which was a thematic pattern discovered in the text of multiple client interviews. "I had a new way of looking at things and a new language within which to frame it to go places that [I] never knew [I] could even gotten to before." She expanded further upon the learning experience saying,

> Coach 1A has an extraordinary gift with language in how he speaks and the words he chooses and how that communicates things. I think what really enabled it was his sharing a way to use language, giving different words like care versus worry. I was able to really get back to my much more true self that didn't have all the layers of [stuff] on it that make me interpret things in a way that sends me down the wrong path.

Coach 1A agreed with Client 1B about the connection of language to her experience of the learning process,

> I didn't give her anything that wasn't there before, but I gave her the language. I gave her the questions. I gave her some resources. I gave her some encouragement to really step up a notch in terms of the appreciative nature.

The above excerpts are representative of a reoccurring conceptual pattern highlighting the relationship between the role of language and the multiple dimensions of whole person learning. Client 2B engaged in coaching for approximately 1 year and was looking to initiate a career and life transition.

> I knew I needed somebody who would challenge me. My transformative learning was enabled by an openness and a freedom to introduce myself to a deeper sense of who I was through [Coach 2A's] presence and her being with me, her patience, her grace. [I] feel most free, most open, more than perhaps I had experienced in the past or at least in the past 10 or so years. As we journeyed, I think, both of us were changed. There's a kind of co-creation going on, a co-creation that's life-giving.

Coach 2A noted that Client 2B had an extraordinary ability to dedicate herself to the learning process. "In the midst of really major life pieces, whether it was about relationships with adult children or her own elderly mother. That she really stayed with that to persevere and to go into that wilderness." He continued,

> She had a huge shift in her mood…more generative, more of looking forward, more of anticipating – excited of what might be possibilities in life, that she even had possibilities. She began to notice shifts in her relationships, as well, with family members too. Her view of the world, she said, "My view of the world is larger."

Coach 2A noted that as he guided her to find and tell her stories that she was "in the moment reshaping her life as she knew it – she unleashed more power for herself." He said that as Client 2B reflected upon her stories "she could go back and change her stories – she really did take herself to the depth of who she is." The analysis of the two excerpts presented thus far, indicate that the response of Client 1B and Client 2B referred to a characteristic of learning to be life giving and collaborative. This emerged from the text of several interviews as integral to the multiple dimensions of the client's learning.

Client 3B engaged in coaching for a period of 1 year to become a better leader, spouse, and parent. When asked to describe his experience of engaging in the coaching

process, he indicated that he was seeking someone who would engage him in a conversation, listen neutrally to his situation, and engage him in conversation and challenge his viewpoint. He mentioned that sometimes he has a tendency to get frustrated and was seeking a better way to approach multiple life areas.

> I am somewhat aware of how I generally approach life situations and my life coach has helped me try to focus more on the positive side of things. So the learning is there's other ways of looking at situations than what I had been raised or taught myself. It's someone offering a new perspective on situations that I wouldn't have considered otherwise – on how to deal with my personal relationships that have been quite helpful in a family situation. The learning is having a new perspective.

When asked to describe Client 3B's learning process, Coach 3A replied, "Transformative is the word, transformative change of perspective on how he fathers, how he husbands, how he manages his other...[professional responsibilities]." Coach 3A suggested that "the magic of coaching is that it's a conversation that happened that otherwise wouldn't have, and that's what makes it magical." The last sentence points to the relevance or "magic" of what occurs within the context of the dialogue between the coach and client. Thus far, each excerpt of text has indicated that through a process of inquiry and dialogue a reflective process is engaged and a shift of perspective occurs for the client. The following story continues this pattern between language and reflection; however, this story offers also a clear example of action.

Client 4B engaged in the coaching process for 10 months. She had experienced a move from another country to the United States, and was questioning her current personal and professional life direction. Client 4B expressed her appreciation for Coach 4A's ability to balance "both the organic nature of appreciative inquiry and also making it very practical. It made me spend more time thinking about certain aspects that I hadn't maybe spent as much time consciously having an opinion on or thinking about." She began

learning about Appreciative Inquiry in the context of her business practice, and as she continued to work with Coach 4A, appreciative language began to influence her family relationships, specifically, "as it applies to kind of my personal life is probably in raising my daughter." She said that Coach 4A "kind of pushed things to the next step, helping think through things completely – that kind of space and reflection in conversations – to think, to really develop that in a more conscious way." She described the outcome of her learning experience saying, "I guess, becoming more aware of AI and the philosophy has its trickle effect across different areas in terms of seeing another way of sort of seeing situations or approaching potential issues."

I asked Coach 4A why she believed Client 4B's learning experienced occurred. "She was very curious, eager to learn and absorb everything we had to share and very willing for us to be able to ask questions that provoked her own understanding of things maybe that she didn't know she knew." Coach 4A described the outcome of the learning to be that "she had mentioned it had changed her role as a mom [and] she reframed her relationship with the CEO – which was initially challenging." Coach 4A emphasized that the most significant outcome was that Client 4B made a significant shift in her life. She "is fulfilling her passion for serving others – a woman who never thought she'd stay in [the United States] but for a few months – she's now bought a home and really rooted herself to these communities."

Motivated by experiencing a personal and professional crossroad in life, Client 5B engaged in the coaching process for about 8 months. When I asked Client 5B to describe the outcome of her learning process she said,

> Probably the most profound outcome of the whole coaching experience, I think showed me ways to integrate those things that I mentioned earlier [conscious

choice, attracting the positive, and envisioning what I want] into my personal life, my professional life.

Client 5B stated that as a result of her coaching experience she began seeing in different ways and became aware that "I actually really had a quite a bit of power in determining the outcome of my experience both personally and professionally." She continued,

> The learning occurred on a number of levels. How would I describe the learning? [one example] Difference in the body language…I think maybe more relaxed, maybe more confident, happier, certainly my facial expressions. I have the ability to choose other modes or personas if I need to and help me to recognize the situations where I might choose different modes or personas and that I might realize a better outcome from that.

When asked to describe Client 5B's learning outcome Coach 5A said,

> I think she saw it as being able to have a much more balanced view of who she was in her life and her possibilities, more freedom, more choice, an opening of her life, which would feel a sense of liberation.

As noted in the above text, each client's learning experience impacted the context of his or her social relationships. From the text of the statement, a conceptual pattern reveals another connection between the process of learning and a shift in the emotional dimensions of the client.

> I really try to seek to figure out what the emotions and the language [are]….She was just soaking things in and you could see as time went by, it began to clarify within her, I think she could view her life with slightly different eyes, like "I get it, I feel liberated," liberated from negative or restricting ways that she viewed herself. So she was able to think differently about herself and her situation. I could see she certainly went through a period of having to be very introspective, then, she would feel differently about it, and then she could act differently about it.

The text from multiple interviews insinuated that there was a connection between the client's change of perspective and a change in the client's feelings and ability to take action.

Moving her family and career across the United States, Client 6B engaged in coaching for a period of 6 months to learn better ways to balance the demands of her career and family. Coach 6A specializes in working with parents who are experiencing challenges with strong willed children. Client 6B described, "applying the principles of AI into her own life…gives context." She said that her learning outcome is her awareness of "how the consequences of words impact other things and people."

She described her process as being was "really thought invoking. What enabled my process of transformative learning was wanting to learn, and the kinder, gentler way of talking through life experiences with someone where it's much more positive spin on things, much more reassuring coaching." Coach 6A described Client 6B's coaching being motivated by "psychic pain, and she wanted it to go away. She's very introspective and willing to reflect. She was highly motivated." When I asked Coach 6A to describe what was the highpoint of Client 6B's learning outcome, Coach 6A noted that her client "saw herself as truly competent, and able to handle challenges…the way she saw herself as a mother – it helped her have a stronger marriage. She got clear on what was really important, and started focusing on those things." The text of Client 6B and Coach 6A further implies a pattern of relationship between language, an appreciative approach to coaching, and the client's learning outcomes.

Client 7B engaged in coaching for 1 year. The following is a brief excerpt of her transition from a frenetic quality of life and work, to a life of more focus and sense of calm. Client 7B described the outcome of her coaching process:

> It feels like being able to breathe again in a different way. It's that – it's the sense of a really breathing deeply process that…stimulate emotional responses, which you can get better in touch with through those things than necessarily, as you say, in the head, the cognitive.

When I asked how she would describe her learning outcome, Client 7B responded:

> I think you would see a shift in us in terms of our sense of ourselves probably by the end of it, you know, just sort of being more present in ourselves, more relaxed, sort of refreshed and released, a willingness to change pace, to slow the process down. I'd say a willingness to experiment. To trust in the possibility of the future as it opens up rather than hold on desperately to the past and how things should be and have been, to kind of trust the possibility of what might emerge.

Coach 7A suggested that engaging in the coaching process enabled Client 7B "to surface some ideas that had been sitting latent in [her] system." Coach 7A noted Client 7B's willingness to learn and creatively explore as the unknown revealed new ideas,

> and in some cases [she] had been able to get clearer about what [she] wanted to do – the last time [she] came to see me, [she] suddenly got quite clear about a particular action that [she] wanted to take.

The concept of the client's learning outcome having a relationship between exploring the unknown, identifying new ideas, and getting clear about action, emerged from this text. The conceptual pattern was also discovered in other interview pairs.

Client 8B originally engaged in coaching because she wanted to improve her personal and professional skills. Over the course of her 1-year coaching process, Client 8B described that she experienced an improved level of skills and some unexpected learning outcomes. "It helped me to be more self-aware of my behavior and emotions – and the impact upon my relationships." Client 8B noted that Coach 8A's approach "helped me to help myself. People closest to me have noted a complete shift in my paradigm. In my relationships, I listen, I seek new understanding." The following excerpt suggests that Coach 8A agreed with Client 8B's assessment of her learning outcome:

> I'm working with clients; I really pay attention to what appears to be their learning style…. I think that one of the things that happened for her is that ability to look at things from a broader perspective. I think it would be the acceptance of whatever is. You know, and the belief that it's all good. I hope what she would say is, you know, it just gave her more freedom to be herself.

Client 9B engaged in a 6-months coaching process for personal and professional enhancement. When I asked Client 9B to describe what brought her to work with Coach 9A she said, "I was vulnerable, both in my personal life and my professional life." When I asked her to describe her learning outcome, she began by saying, "the timing was right, too, in terms of where I was in my life." She continued,

> It transformed the relationship I have with the people in my life in so many positive ways. I am in a relationship now with someone who is absolutely amazing. I'm open to things that I wasn't open to – so I'm open to this relationship with this person who's really wonderful and perhaps he and I are thinking about – talking about family and things that I had shut off in my mind before. So for me that's sort of the big thing in my personal life.

Coach 9B acknowledged that an outcome for Client 9B was experiencing "a more full life." Client 9B stated that Coach 9A

> Gave me the confidence to kind of move forward and move into a different way of being and a different way of living my life and treating the people in my life, interacting with them, the relationships in my life.

Client 10B said that she engaged in a 6-month coaching process because "[I] longed for clarity and someone who could help guide me to that from a strength-based perspective." When I asked Client 10B to describe the learning outcome, she said:

> In essence, at the end of the coaching process…instead of being distracted…I just got really focused, really clear, and really excited. I have this very vivid and compelling nexus of strengths and resources…inevitable paths to take. They're the right path, because it's what you have said you want more of and what's already out there and what you're able to get. So I not only unearthed my dream for myself…it was a willingness to make the space in my life so that those good things that I wanted more of could come.

Coach 10A completed the picture stating that a circumstance enabled Client 10B's learning experiences. "I think she just – she felt there was something more. I don't know if she could articulate it then, but it's like somebody who doesn't see over the horizon *senses there is something beyond* that."

This final quote of text implies a pattern that emerged throughout the presentation and provides a transition to the emergence of the last subcategory. Time and again, the text suggested that the context of the client's learning process involves multiple dimensions of learning, including (a) a cognitive shift in perspective, (b) an awareness and shift of emotions and behavior, and (c) an awareness and impact on relationships.

Upon examination and comparison of the categories and subcategories, the final subcategory – conditions for learning – emerged as an integration of the multiple dimensions of how the coach and client interpreted the transformative learning experience. Both the coach and the client were asked to describe the conditions for learning that facilitated the transformative learning process. Through analysis of the participant's language, his or her experience of conditions that facilitated transformative learning was revealed. In the analysis process, significant phrases and themes began to emerge within each response. The participants' natural language was extracted from the text and constructed the phrases that describe the characteristics of the transformative learning process (see Appendix N). In the process of comparing the responses of each coach and client pair, a conceptual pattern of conditions that facilitated the transformative learning process was revealed.

Conditions for Learning

Within the process of comparison and interpretation, four distinct characteristic types of conditions for learning were revealed: precondition, personal condition, environmental, and relational condition. I assigned attributes to each type of condition as follows:

1. Precondition: attributes that existed prior to entering relationship;

2. Personal condition: attributes that exist within the coach or client;

3. Environmental condition: attributes of the coaching space;

4. Relational condition: attributes constructed within the relationship.

The process of constant comparison revealed that both the coach and client came to the relationship with specific intentions, which influenced his or her experience of the transformative learning process. I assigned the label of *precondition* as the first characteristic type of learning condition. The text suggested that the preconditions engaged the multiple dimensions of thinking, feeling, and a desire to take action. The following text revealed how the precondition of willingness emerged from the text.

> Coach 5A: The timing was right and she was willing. I think, she wanted it more than anything. She was highly motivated.

> Client 5B: I was very responsive to the coaching and eager to actually implement some of the things that we talked about, because I knew that I couldn't go on any longer the other way.

> Coach 7A: I think the thing about Appreciative Inquiry and about its roots in social construction is that you need to be willing to explore and that means looking at lots of different possibilities and ideas and not getting too wedded to any one idea.

> Client 7B: My openness and willingness to learn and change. I'd say a willingness to experiment. And the other thing that I think has been key and would be important – is a willingness to change pace.

> Coach 9A: I would say it was the ability to notice that it was the right time for that conversation, to notice the energy in [Client 9B] and to notice what it is, where she was in the journey and [Client 9B] being willing to step into what would've or could've been a risky endeavor.

> Client 10B: I showed up as a learner. I came to the table and no one put me at it. I really came willingly and eagerly to learn about myself in ways that would maybe make me feel vulnerable, but that I was okay with that…it was a willingness to make the space in my life so that those good things that I wanted more of could come.

Precondition characteristics such as *willingness* emerged as being connected to the coach and client's perception of him or herself in relationship to the process of transformative learning. The analysis also revealed that both the coach and client had certain innate characteristics that influenced his or her transformative learning experience. I assigned the label of *personal conditions* to the second characteristic type of learning conditions. Analysis and comparison of the text implied that personal conditions were an internal perception of self and other. The following excerpts of text demonstrate how the properties of *presence* emerged as personal conditions.

> Client 2B: She let me introduce myself to a deeper sense of who I was through her presence and her being with me, her patience, and her grace. Her non-judgmental presence and that is very uncommon, I think, for someone to be truly present and to truly listen. And I believe that [Coach 2A] was truly present to me in the fullness of herself.

> Coach 3A: I think coaching presence as well as client presence is something.

> Client 3B: Showing genuine interest in my situation that I find extraordinary. He is able to, regardless of what's going on in his life, he's there and present from the time we are in a coaching call with me.

> Client 5B: Her attention to detail and willingness and desire to probe a little deeper.

> Client 7B: I value the most her quality of her own groundedness – and her own sensitivity. I value that a lot. I value her creative spirit, I think, and that bit of her that trusts in the power of the other-than-conscious mind and goes with it. I really value that. I also value her wisdom…a sort of wisdom about the power of the right kind of question.

The characteristic of presence emerged as being connected to influencing the coach and client's experience of the coaching environment. Further analysis of the text revealed rich descriptions of the coaching environment that supported the client's transformative learning experience. I assigned the label *environmental conditions* to the third characteristic type of learning conditions. The text suggested that the environmental

conditions were the interpretation of the coach and client's beliefs and feelings about the characteristics of the coaching space. The following excerpts reveal how both the client and the coach experienced their environment as place, space, or structure that was *organic* and *emergent*.

> Client 1B: Having that language allows you to go to a completely different place. If you don't have the language you can't get there.

> Client 2B: Perhaps is the first time that I really experienced in my own life a kind of structure that with I'm going to say like a permeable membrane. It was kind of a thing that breathes so that it doesn't tie you in or tie you down to a rules-bound kind of relationship; but this is a relationship, which has life breathed into it from both parties. And as we journeyed, I think, both of us were changed. There's a kind of co-creation going on, a co-creation that's life giving; a situation between two that makes life more vibrant, more vital, and more authentic.

> Client 3B: It first starts with an element of trust and respect, I guess, and a relaxed environment. It's open. It's casual but serious. There's some I want to say somewhat light-hearted. It's kind of joking but serious. It's not—it's a relaxed, trusting kind of caring environment, I sense that I'm in a safe area where I can be very honest with him and not be judged.

> Coach 4A: There's something to be said about a condition for a principle of being okay with the unknown, letting go, letting it be emergent.

> Client 4B: I guess it would be that with an exchange of ideas and kind of the designated time and space to be able to reflect on those things.

> Client 6B: Having that rock, like I said, that supportiveness and that—she did provide that security and safe haven to discuss things.

> Coach 7A: Having the freedom and the space to be able to have a conversation around something different. I think the principles of appreciative inquiry really open up the space between me and the person I'm sitting with, whether I'm literally sitting with them or whether I'm over the phone or through Skype or whatever else it is. So it really opens up discussions around what we choose to focus on. It opens up conversation about what we think change is.

> Client 7B: The creation by [Coach 7A] of a safe and beautiful space to work in [provides] a sense of calm amidst the storm…a sanctuary.

> Coach 8A: I think it would be the acceptance of whatever is. You know, and the belief that all is good.

The coaching space being experienced by participants as emergent and organic appeared to influence how the coach and client engaged in the transformative learning process. Within each pair, when I compared the response of the coach to the response of the client, conditions that were constructed within the relationship emerged. I assigned the label *relational conditions* to the fourth characteristic type of learning conditions. Comparing the responses of the coach and client within each pair, the text insinuated that relational conditions were constructed between the coach and client over the duration of the coaching process. The following excerpts reveal how the conditions of *appreciation, trust, respect, collaboration, challenging inquiry*, and *partnership of possibility* emerged from the text.

> Coach 1A: I held up a mirror to her, and by reflecting back her passion, her vision, she saw herself in a light that was more exciting and more appreciative than she did before. As we developed that relationship and built on it she realized that that was an even greater potential to live an even more positive life.

> Coach 2A: What comes to mind, first, is mutual trust and respect. So I would, also, feel like there'd be other conditions. But those, I would say, would be the foundational ones.

> Client 4B: I guess maybe it was kind of the comfort and the ease of the relationship. That equal footing of being more of an exchange than anything else for sharing of ideas.

> Client 6B: Safety and supportiveness…. She worked with me very openly and very supportively. She was my rock on a lot of days as far as being a steady point to go to and discuss things with.

> Client 7B: To trust in the possibility of the future as it opens up rather than hold on desperately to the past and how things should be and have been, to kind of trust the possibility of what might emerge.

> Client 9B: Coach 9A pushes me without me feeling like I'm being forced to do something. She asks questions in a way that make me think about things differently without feeling like I'm being manipulated or that I'm supposed to think about things a certain way. A lot of times, she asks questions and, when she sees that I'm having trouble with something, she will give me an example from her own life or one of her clients, you know, without saying names, but she

understands that I really respond to that, that that sort of resonates with me, the idea of a real world or real life example. I trust her and I don't feel that she judges me.

Each of the above excerpts represents a conceptual pattern of conditions, which emerged from every participant's experience of the coaching relationship. The thematic concept of conditions illustrated in Table 5 emerged from the analysis of the text of the coach and the client (see Appendix N). The responses from the coaches or the clients did not indicate any less value or importance to a singular condition, but rather, suggested that all of the conditions work together to facilitate a process of transformative learning. As noted in Table 5 certain thematic concepts emerged from the text as a pattern more specific to either the coach (A) or the client (B). Other thematic concepts appeared as being relevant to both the coach and the client.

Table 5

Conditions Identified Within the Coaching Relationship That Facilitate Transformative Learning

Coaches (A)	Clients (B)	Precondition	Personal Condition	Environment Condition	Relational Condition
A		Embody AI belief in client potential	Construct powerful inquiry Positive intention	Grounded within relationship	Appreciative language
A		Belief that client can experience ATL, whole person perspective intuitive, empathetic, holding positive expectations	Appreciative yet challenging dialogue combined with competence, experience, skill, understanding, ability to listen, and to be comfortable with silence.	Presence of care, compassion, unconditional positive regard, and empathetic understanding, acceptance	Grounded in collaboration
	B	Right timing and awareness of a sense of something more, willingness	Seeking choices and strategies for change and personal empowerment	Perception of coach as present, caring, competent, and connected	Partnership of confidentiality and support
	B	Desire for new learning and willingness to be challenged	Willingness to challenge thinking, engage in self-reflection, and acknowledge strengths to take action	A place to be heard-a place to tell stories and create new stories. Relaxed and safe	Nonjudgment
A	B	Willingness to be in relationship	Ability to engage in provocative process of inquiry and dialogue	Energetic dialogue, reflective space, structure	Honesty, hope openness, and respect for each other's expertise and experience
A	B	Intention for new learning	Desire for positive outcome	Recognition of positive potential	Mutual respect and trust, desire to be in relationship
A	B	Willing to explore the unknown	Ability to develop a realistic perspective	Intellectually stimulating	Appreciation, self disclosure and care of one another
A	B	Ability for self-inquiry and self-evaluation	Sense of purpose Strength oriented	Organic, emergent, intuitive	Shared power, challenging inquiry, collaborative learning

Summary

As a result of reviewing and comparing the conceptual patterns within the text of each coach-client pair, conditions of learning, as a subcategory of the context of learning, is interconnected to the other subcategories and categories that emerged within the presentation of the data. As demonstrated in this section, the category of the whole person learning contains the two subcategories of (a) interpreting the learning and (b) the

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conditions for learning. Each of these subcategories influences, and is influenced by the
generative and performative language and the provocative partnership that facilitates a
process of transformative learning.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the data from 10 coach-participant and 10 client-
participant interviews. These 20 interviews yielded 403 pages of text and resulted in 608
codes of text. The transcripts were reviewed using a grounded theory method. Based on
the results provided in this chapter, and the density of the excerpts taken from each
coach-client pair, I believe there is an adequate amount of information to present the data
as being meaningful. Within the presentation of data, I identified three categories:

1. Provocative partnership,

2. Generative and performative language, and

3. Whole person learning.

The three categories revealed eight subcategories: (a) purposeful engagement, (b)
intention for learning (c) coaching presence (d) context of the inquiry, (e) dialogue and
storytelling, (f) philosophical framework, (g) interpreting the learning, and (h) conditions
for learning. Completing the presentation of the research data from the interviews of the
10 coach-participants and 10 client-participants, Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings
in relationship to the literature and the research questions, and presents implications for
future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The motivation to engage in this research was initiated by a desire to understand the ways a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry could facilitate a process of transformative learning within the context of the life coaching relationship. From the perspective of both the coach and the client, I expected the answers to the three research questions would offer new knowledge about the interface between Appreciative Inquiry and adult transformative learning. The research discovered how the combination of these two systems worked as an integrative framework to guide life coaching practice.

I believe this study makes a substantial contribution of knowledge to understanding the connection between a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry and the process of facilitating a transformative learning process for the client. Ultimately, this study will provoke other research into the theoretical framework, which guides the life coach.

As part of the grounded theory process, Chapter 5 includes the storyline of the three central categories and brings the concepts together to develop the theoretical construct for the Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning framework. Eight subcategories and 25 characteristic themes (see Table 4) contributed additional substance and meaning to the theoretical construct. The theoretical constructs in the central categories are interdependent and related to one another as required by criteria set forth by Corbin and Strauss (1998). This concluding chapter synthesizes and summarizes the findings to directly answer the three research questions, to connect the findings to the literature, and to assess the implications of the research for coaches, clients, Appreciative

Inquiry practitioners, and future research. Each of the categories is summarized relative to the applicability to the three research questions.

<div align="center">Discussion of Findings</div>

The central research question of this study was: *Can the practice of life coaching, informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry, foster an integrated process of adult transformative learning*? The subquestions of this study were: *In what ways can Appreciative Inquiry principles be incorporated into life coaching practice*? *What condition of the coaching practice, informed by Appreciative Inquiry, best support adult transformative learning*? The following sections provide answers to each of the three research questions. The central research and subquestions were answered through the emergence of the three central categories: provocative partnership, generative and performative language, and whole person learning. There is an interconnectedness between each of the three categories and their relevance to each of the three research questions. Therefore, for compactness and clarity, I have discussed each of the categories in relationship to their relevance to each research questions. The central research question answers and discusses the category of provocative partnership. The answer to the two subquestions discusses the categories of generative and performative language and whole person learning. As a summary and synthesis of the research, the questions are answered and compared to the literature, beginning with the central research question.

<div align="center">*Research Question 1*</div>

Can the practice of life coaching, informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry, foster an integrated process of adult transformative learning? The construction of the provocative partnership over the course of the coaching process was a

foundational theme that emerged as integral to a practice informed by Appreciative

Inquiry, which facilitated transformative learning. The primary themes of this central

category were revealed as purposeful engagement, intention for learning, and coaching

presence.

Purposeful Engagement

Purposeful engagement, with characteristics of willingness, readiness for change,

and experiencing a crossroad in life were revealed as the essence of what brought the

client to the relationship. Characteristics such as embodying the philosophy of

Appreciative Inquiry and a belief in the client's ability to experience transformative

learning were the essential themes that brought the coach into relationship with the client.

As noted in the presentation of the data, both the coach and the client expressed *a*

willingness to engage in relationship and *to explore the unknown*.

As previously noted in the literature review, Hudson (1999) expressed, "Coaching

is establishing a vital relationship over a period of time with clients who are searching for

the clarity and skills needed for making changes in their lives" (p. 25). As described in

Chapter 4, participants' comments agreed that the foundation for experiencing a process

of transformative learning and initiating positive change in their lives was initially

embedded within the co-construction of the relationship. Gergen and McNamee (1999)

suggested that the forms of how we relate to one another are constructed within

relationship, "Relationships, like personal identity are not things in themselves. They are

by-products of particular forms of talk" (p. 22). Through conversations there is an

opportunity "to generate a new sense of reality and thus of possible actions" (p. 22). The

authors emphasized that through conversation "the construction of selves and

relationships are interdependent" (p. 22). Inherently, as the process of learning occurs within the context of the coaching dyad, it makes sense that the construction of a provocative partnership would be essential to the meaning making processes required for transformative learning. Stavros and Torres (2005), authors of *Dynamic Relationships*, suggested,

> We are relational beings, integrally connected to one another and our environment. Our relationships deeply inform who we are and how we act, which in turn impacts others at "this moment" – impacting the "next instant" in the relationship. Our actions and their impact on others are inseparable. We are interconnected. (pp. 43-44)

The authors also noted the connection between relationship and dialogue suggesting that through the "words we choose to use, the questions we decide to ask, and the ways we hear and understand the answers informs our thinking and knowing" (Stavros & Torres, 2005, p. 44). A comparison of the characteristic of purposeful engagement to the literature review of Appreciative Inquiry revealed each coach related to the client with an intention of discovering new learning. A fundamental of Appreciative Inquiry is engaging in a process of discovery – to identify what is and then to imagine what could be – for the client. The text revealed that both the coach and client engaged together with an intention of discovery and new learning.

Intention for Learning

Intention for learning revealed the influence of the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry in shaping the relationship. "Appreciative Inquiry is an invitation to shift from a deficit-based approach to change to positive change" (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003, p. 16). The client's ability to seek possibility, and engage on a journey of self-discovery and exploration was facilitated by the coach's ability to hold positive expectations and believe in the client's potential. The data presented in the previous

chapter confirmed that each coach embodied the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry and engaged in the partnership with an affirmative intention for discovering the client's capacity and possibility for potential new learning and positive change. Comparing this finding to the literature indicated the influence of the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry. Within an intention for learning, the coach engaged the client's imagination to create a new future. Through experiencing a relationship grounded in creativity, collaboration, and shared power, the client had a sense of possibility and partnership, was willing to be challenged, and agreed to engage in a provocative process of inquiry and dialogue.

The text revealed that the coach's intention for the client's learning was to construct an environment of appreciation, care, compassion, hope, openness, unconditional positive regard, confidentiality, and support. The coach and client's intention for learning is best summarized by Kegan's (1982) perspective that environments provide the potential to confirm, to contradict, and to provide a sense of continuity. Within the relational environment of the coach-client partnership, the intention of each of the coach-participants was similar to the role of a mentor as described by Daloz (1986), "They *support*, they *challenge*, and they *provide vision*" (p. 212).

Coaching Presence

The participants' responses indicated that clients' intention for learning and interpretation of the relational environment was directly connected to coaching presence. As revealed in the text, the sense of support, challenge, and vision were significant themes revealed within clients' interpretation of the coaches' presence. The connection

between coaching presence and constructing the relational environment is most appropriately illustrated by Daloz's (1986) interpretation of support, challenge, and vision. Daloz described support as "an activity of holding" (p. 215), where an individual can connect with his or her need for trust, which is the basis for growth. He proposed that challenge opens "a distance in the relationship" which encourages the individual to "fill the gap, straining him to move, to accommodate his inner structures to the new environment" (p. 223). Daloz connected vision with transformation. "Vision, in its broadest sense, is the field on which the dialectical game between the old self and the new can be played; it is the context that hosts both support and challenge in the service of transformation" (p. 230).

In review of the literature about learning and relationships, there is a connection between Daloz's interpretation of learning, the role of a mentor, and the characteristic themes experienced by client-participants. A mentor provides vision by modeling the person whom the individual wants to become (Daloz, 1986). In comparing the data to the literature, Daloz's interpretation of a mentor is closely related to the participants' interpretation of coaching presence. As suggested in the data presentation, the clients' sense of being supported, experiencing challenge, and constructing a vision occurred within the context of a whole person presence within the coaching relationship.

When compared to the literature, the coaching presence emerged to be best defined within the role of mentor. This coaching presence is best expressed through Southern's (2008) description of a mentor.

> They are passionate about their work, willing to take risks, and willing to
> challenge us and our thinking. They help us grow as people, discover aspects of
> our selves that were previously unknown, imagine new possibilities, and realize
> our dreams. Mentoring requires that we know the whole person; who they are in

the context of their life. Then we have a better opportunity to help them create relevancy and meaning from our teaching and their learning experiences and hold the tension that opens the possibility for transformative learning. (p. 329)

Relative to knowing the whole person and transformative learning, in the construction of relationship, the concepts of purposeful engagement, intention for learning, and coaching presence each encompassed the internal and external dimensions of the client as a whole person. Flaherty (2005) provided an appropriate perspective about relating to the whole person within the context of the relationship stating, "Human beings enter into relationships with everything that we encounter. We don't have a choice about this" (p. 25). Flaherty proposed that we bring into relationships our language, our moods, our experiences, our environments, and our other relationships. He suggested, within the context of the coaching relationship, a coach needs to take all of these human dimensions into account.

Each of the client-participant's comments indicated that the learning process incorporated multiple dimensions of his or her personal and professional life. In addition, the text presented in Chapter 4 revealed that the context of each client's transformative learning experience incorporated a shift in his or her thinking, feelings, and actions. Also, in most cases the process of learning incorporated a change in how the client engaged in other relationships. To highlight the relevance of the coach relating to the whole person, I offer the description of an integrated process of learning proposed by Illeris (2004). He stated, "All learning always includes three dimensions – the cognitive dimension of knowledge and skills, the emotional dimension of feelings and motivation, and the social dimension of communication and cooperation – all of which are embedded in a societally situated context" (p. 82).

As illuminated through the text, the coaching relationship provides the context for an integrated process of transformative learning. An important part of answering the research questions was to compare what the literature indicated about the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry to what the data (in Chapter 4) revealed about the client's integrated transformative learning experience. The analytical comparison of the literature with the data confirms a clear connection between the coach's practice being influenced by Appreciative Inquiry and the client's experience of an integrated process of transformative learning. The influence of Appreciative Inquiry emerged through the themes of the purposeful engagement between the coach and the client, and the environment for an intention of learning. The philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry shaped the coaching presence, which inspired the client to imagine new opportunities and to engage in a process of transformative learning. Within the roles of the coach and client's relationship, the possibility for co-constructing a transformative learning process emerged as being facilitated by generative and performative language. The next section discusses the role of language through addressing the second research question and compares the findings to the principles of Appreciative Inquiry.

Research Question 2

In what ways can Appreciative inquiry principles be incorporated into life coaching practice? Through the data presented in Chapter 4, the second central category of generative and performative language emerged. The primary themes of this category were: the context of the inquiry, dialogue and storytelling, and philosophical framework.

Context of Inquiry

As stated in Chapter 4, each coach acknowledged his or her context of inquiry was grounded in appreciative thought provoking language that inspired action. The presence and language of the coach modeled an attitude, which influenced the learning experience of the client. In comparing the findings of the research with the literature, it is clear that the coach's appreciative orientation of language models and magnifies the client's self-awareness of different ways to view him or herself. "The words we use and the way we use them are powerful indicators of how we see, of our particular vision of reality" (Daloz, 1986). He suggested that mentors could offer new ways to see the world. "Mentors can give us new language, 'magic words' in which are contained whole different frames of references. Thus, language can be a catalyst for change as well as an indicator of it" (p. 233).

In a comparison of the text to the literature, Appreciative Inquiry provided a new structure of language, which served as a catalyst for the client's transformative learning process. The presentation of the data revealed the participants description of the process of inquiry and dialogue included characteristic attributes such as *probing the unknown*, *reframing an old perspective*, *seeing what I want more of, provoking new understanding,* and *creating new stories.* "To see oneself in new ways, from a range of different vantage points, is the chief way we distill what we are learning from the challenges and supports of our world" (Daloz, 1986, p. 234).

Dialogue and Storytelling

The construction of dialogue and storytelling within the provocative partnership of the coach and client emerged as a significant theme in the data presented of Chapter 4.

The concept of storytelling to engage in a meaning making dialogue is central to the philosophy of Appreciative inquiry. "Stories bring AI [Appreciative Inquiry] principles and practices to life. They help people experience the shift from trying to solve problems from the past, to anticipating and focusing on the future" (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003, p. 107). The data revealed that the dialogues that occurred within the context of an appreciative inquiry inspired the *construction of new life affirming stories, stimulated self reflection,* and *encouraged the client to talk openly.* "At the heart of the practice of Appreciative Inquiry is the quest to discover what gives life" (p. 68).

As presented in the previous chapter, clients were able to connect and integrate their internal positive capacity with external resources through the construction of new stories expressed in phrases such as *I was able to get back to my much more true self* or *it was through those stories…looking for images that gave her hope.* Comparing the concepts of the context of inquiry and the process of dialogue and storytelling with the literature demonstrated the influence of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry. For example, both the principle of construction and the positive principle influenced the coach's inquiry and dialogue to evoke stories. In each coach-client pair, ultimately, the client's attention shifted "away from the problems as the motivation for change, toward unfolding gifts, capabilities, potentials, dreams, and visions" (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003, p. 68). The third conceptual theme of generative and performative language, philosophical framework, pertains to how the five original principles of Appreciative Inquiry emerged as being relevant and were incorporated into the practice of the coach-participants.

Philosophical Framework

Based on the coach-participants' statements, it became apparent how the essential values and beliefs of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry provided a structure to guide each coach's practice of inquiry and dialogue. The responses of each coach-participant revealed his or her embodiment of three central streams of thought of Appreciative Inquiry: (a) Human communication is the central process that constructs, maintains, and transforms realities; (b) the images we hold of the future inspire the decisions and actions we select in the present; (c) inquiry is a form of intervention (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003). The idea of the relationship between communication and vision inspiring action, and inquiry being a form of deliberate influence on a situation or event is a demonstration of the design phase of Appreciative Inquiry.

As revealed in Chapter 4, the responses of each of the client-participants indicated their awareness that the appreciative context of language experienced in the process dialogue and storytelling had given them a *recognition of their strengths, potential, self-empowerment,* and *willingness to explore the unknown*. Comparing the description of self-awareness articulated by each client-participant to the Appreciative Inquiry literature showed that each client-participant had connected with his or her *positive core*. The positive core is central to Appreciative Inquiry's 4-D cycle of discovery, dream, design and destiny. Although every coach participant emphasized that Appreciative Inquiry is more that the 4-D cycle, a comparison of the findings revealed that each coach agreed that "the 4-D Cycle is the approach or process that allows the practitioner to access and mobilize the positive core" and "the positive core lies at the heart of the AI process" (Cooperrider, Stavros, & Whitney, 2008, p. 34).

The presentation of the data further revealed that the 4-D cycle was not always followed in a specific order of stages, but rather, was an organic structure of cycles woven within the framework of language. As noted in the previous section, the findings uncovered that the client-participants had experienced the stages of discovery and dream within the provocative partnership. The analysis of the data demonstrated that these stages were grounded within the context of generative and performative language. With regards to the stages of design and destiny, these emerged in the text as the client's *willingness and ability to construct a new world view* and *take action on his or her new insight and learning*. Several of the client-participants connected the idea of reflection being action, and the concept that change had already begun with the self-awareness of his or her possibility and potential. More often, the majority of the client responses confirmed that the shift of perspective motivated his or her *self-determination to take action and make something new.*

A predominant theme that appeared in the majority of coaches' responses was the caveat that it is not about doing Appreciative Inquiry, but rather, when one really learns and lives the principles, Appreciative Inquiry becomes part of human nature and a way of being in relationship. There were clearly differences in how each coach articulated the influence of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry upon his or her practice. Through analyzing each response in comparison with the definition of the five principles, the principle of construction and positive principle emerged as having the predominant influence upon the practice of each coach. Each interaction within the coaching relationship is pivotal in guiding clients to discover and understand what is best about themselves (Binkert et al., 2007).

Ultimately, the data presentation in Chapter 4 revealed the coach-participants'

belief that an appreciative and positive approach within the context of the one-on-one

relationship offered an opportunity to construct a new interpretation of clients' life

circumstances. Similar to the research findings of Binkert et al. (2007), the data in this

study also uncovered an underlying conceptual pattern between the poetic, simultaneity,

and anticipatory principles. These principles informed the coach's perspective about the

role of time in relationship to his or her use of language. For example, every coach-

participant emphasized the possibilities of the present and the future, rather than focusing

on past experiences. Additionally, many of the coach-participants highlighted the

importance of positive expectations and change happening within the context of

affirmative inquiry.

The focus of the research investigated the influence of the five original principles

of Appreciative Inquiry upon the practice of the coach. The analysis of the text did not

specifically identify the other emergent principles, which include the wholeness,

enactment, free choice (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003), and the principle of awareness

(Stavros & Torres, 2005). However, the responses of the coach-participants indicated the

influence of two of these principles. In comparing the text with the literature on

Appreciative Inquiry the wholeness principle, which "posits that the experience of

wholeness brings out the best in people, relationships, communities, and organizations"

(Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2003, p. 69) influenced the conditions, which in turn

influenced the construction of relationship and the framework of language. The principle

of awareness (Stavros & Torres, 2005), which "calls us to be self-reflective and actively

engaged in our relationship" (p. 81) influenced the coaches ability to construct conditions which "elevate feelings, processes, and dynamics…and attend to the language" (p. 82).

The five principles, which shape the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry, influenced each coach to construct an appreciative approach to his or her practice. The principles shaped the context of the inquiry and the process of dialogue and storytelling. The principles also provided a philosophical framework and structure to construct a context for the client to experience a process of transformative learning. The next section discusses the context of learning through addressing the third research question, and compares the findings to several theories of transformative learning including the model proposed by Mezirow (1990).

<div align="center">*Research Question 3*</div>

What conditions of the coaching practice, informed by Appreciative Inquiry, best support adult transformative learning? This research study revealed that the whole person learning included the clients' interpretation and integration of their learning experience. A summary of the conditions supporting the client-participants adult transformative learning experience is presented in Appendix N.

Interpreting the Learning

An objective of this study was to investigate if a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate a process of transformative learning. Theoretical perspectives discussed in the review of the literature proposed that transformative learning occurs within the context of relationship. Therefore, as outlined in Chapter 4, it was relevant to investigate and analyze the interpretation of learning from the perspective of both the coach and the client (see Appendix N). This subsection reviews the client's

interpretation of his or her learning experience and compares the text to Mezirow's

(1990) model of learning. As outlined in the review of the literature, Mezirow's theory

requires that an individual needs to experience a disorienting dilemma, engages in critical

self-reflection to challenge old assumption, and takes action. Mezirow proposed the

experience of a disorienting dilemma as a prerequisite for critical self-reflection and to

engage in a process of transformative learning. The following excerpts of text are

examples of what motivated client's to enter into the coaching relationship.

> Client 5B: I was at a bit of crossroad on a number of levels. I was in crisis, it was not good, and I was pretty low. I couldn't go on any longer the other way.

> Client 6B: We had moved a very big step, probably the hardest decision I have ever made – my life just had become a little bit in disarray.

> Client 9B: I was not really prepared at all for the change in position. I was afraid a lot of the time. The timing was right, too, in terms of where I was in my life.

> Client 10B: I came with a very personal need. I longed for clarity and someone who could help guide me to that from a strength-based perspective.

The analysis and presentation of the data indicated that each participant engaged

in the coaching relationship with a question that had not been addressed in his or her life,

which is Mezirow's description for a disorienting dilemma. In alignment with Mezirow's

model, the following excerpts of text are examples of how each client engaged in a

process of essential self-reflection and challenging old assumptions.

> Client 1B: It is shaped around language like the powerful use of words and the words he says and how they effect how you think about things.

> Client 2B: I was aware that I was moving into a new dimension of self-understanding and of connection with me. I would describe it as an exploration, a journey, a process of self-discovery.

> Client 4B: Reflecting more. An appreciative way of coaching and questioning requires some reflection.

Client 6B: A lot of brainstorming. Step back away from the situation and try and look at it from different angles. She was devil's advocate at times.

As noted in Chapter 4, a result of a provocative process of inquiry, dialogue and storytelling resulted in each client's interpretation of experiencing a shift in perspective. The following are examples of the client-participant's interpretation of his or her learning experience.

Client 1B: I had a new way of looking at things and a new language within which to frame it to go places that we never knew we could even get to before.

Client 3B: The learning is having new perspective; new energy, new enthusiasm to go face situations.

Client 7B: There is a real shift. I think over time that sense of calm and being present, being focused in the moment; a shift in terms of sense of self.

Client 8B: I have completely shifted my paradigm. I listen and seek new understanding; helped me to become more aware of my behavior and emotions.

A comparison between the client-participants' experience and the literature review of Mezirow's (1990) model indicated that the client experienced 8 of the 10 phases (pp. 42-43). The two phases the clients' did not experience were self-examination of feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame, and recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared. While the data revealed that the client-participants' experienced 8 of the 10 phases of learning, similar to the findings of Taylor's (1997) critical review of Mezirow's theory of learning, the phases were experienced in a nonsequential order and were most likely due to the unique way each client-participants engaged in his or her transformative learning experience.

Conditions for Learning

Consistent with the findings of Taylor's (2007) review, a comparison with the findings of Chapter 4 indicated that relationship and dialogue were fundamental

conditions facilitating transformative learning. As noted in Chapter 4, *empowerment,*

connection, collaboration, recognition were conditions revealed and are mentioned in

Taylor's (1997, 2007) review as conditions specifically engendered through

communication processes. Both Dirkx (2006) and O'Sullivan (2002) also highlighted the

importance of relationship and communication. In comparing the data in Chapter 4 with

the literature, Daloz's (1999) learning theory most closely represented the integrated

transformative learning experience of each client-participant. Having highlighted the

connection between Illeris's (2004) integrated learning perspective and the clients'

integrated learning experience in the above subsection, I now address the relationship

between clients' experiences and Daloz's (2000) four conditions for transformative

learning theory, which became apparent in a comparison of the literature and the data.

Daloz (2000) suggested the four most salient conditions of transformation are:

"the presence of other, reflective discourse, a mentoring community, and opportunities

for committed action" (p. 112). He noted that the "presence of other" is "how we engage

with difference makes all of the difference" (p. 112) Appreciative Inquiry informed each

coach to have a presence of appreciation, potential, and possibility. Daloz (1999) also

noted the importance of the presence of others within the learning environment by saying,

"When we speak of the environment in which mentors and students work, we are

speaking of a *perceived environment*, one that includes the student's views…as well as

ideas, memoires, dreams, values, external events, old patterns, and new information" (p.

184).

Daloz (2000) suggested that transformative learning occurs within the "dialogue

with others to better understand the meaning of an experience" (p. 114). Inquiry,

dialogue, and storytelling informed by Appreciative Inquiry construct the conditions for essential reflection to challenging old ways of thinking and develop a new perspective. Daloz proposed that "transformation involves the whole person" (p. 114), including the emotional, social, and cognitive components. He emphasized that "to understand transformative learning richly we need to recognize the extraordinary power of the webs of relationships in which we are invariably held" (p. 115). Finally, Daloz proposed, "the opportunity to act on one's evolving commitments, to test and ground one's growing convictions in action, is vital" (p. 117). As demonstrated in Chapter 4, Appreciative Inquiry connected each client-participant with his or her positive core, which enabled a sense of confidence and empowerment to take action.

The text, as outlined in Chapter 4, revealed four types of conditions that are supportive of the transformative learning process: pre-condition, personal condition, environmental condition and relational condition. Daloz's emphasis on the importance of presence, relationship, reflective discourse, environment, and taking action are evident in the each of the four types of conditions for learning.

The philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry constructed a provocative partnership, generative and performative language, and a whole person learning experience for the client to engage in an integrated process of transformative learning. Ultimately, this research revealed a connection between transformative learning theory and the interpretation of the participant's transformative learning experience. Each client participant was questioning something he or she had not questioned before, and was willing to engage in a provocative and challenging process of inquiry and dialogue to overcome old beliefs and create new stories. An outcome of the client-participants

learning process was a sense of empowerment and motivation to take action (see

Appendix N). As presented in Chapter 4 and confirmed through the literature, there are

specific conditions constructed by a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry, which are

essential to the client's transformative learning experience. The data revealed that the

majority of themes outlined in Chapter 4 also constructed the four types of conditions.

These conditions were influenced by Appreciative Inquiry, and were relevant to

facilitating the client-participant's transformative learning process.

Theoretical Construct

Thus far, this chapter has discussed the three central categories: provocative

partnership, generative and performative language, and whole person learning. Figure 1 is

a visual model of the categories and subcategories that construct the Life Coaching AI-

ATL framework.

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┌─────────────────────────────┐         ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Provocative Partnership     │         │ Generative & Performative Language     │
│   • Purposeful Engagement   │         │   • Context of the Inquiry             │
│   • Intention for Learning  │         │   • Dialogue and Storytelling          │
│   • Coaching Presence       │         │   • Philosophical Framework            │
└─────────────────────────────┘         └──────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ AI-ATL* Integrated   │
│ Framework to Guide   │
│ Life Coaching Practice   │
└──────────────────────────────┘

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┌───────────────────────────────────┐
│ Whole Person Learning             │
│   • Interpreting the Learning     │
│   • Conditions for Learning       │
│       1. Pre-Condition            │
│       2. Personal Condition       │
│       3. Environmental Condition  │
│       4. Relational Condition     │
└───────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 1. Integrated Framework for Appreciative Inquiry and Adult
        Transformative Learning

Note. * AI = Appreciative Inquiry, ATL = Adult Transformative Learning

The visual model has been developed as a result of the analysis of the data and is considered a valid way within a grounded theory study to present the findings of the research. This model offers a visual illustration of the theoretical construct of the research examining if a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate a process of adult transformative learning. Part of the process of grounded theory is to reduce a large context of data into specific concepts. The use of grounded theory in analyzing the text created a more rigorous method of interpretation to support the authenticity of the

findings. The process of reducing the data is represented in the tables and figures in Chapter 4 and 5.

Ideally, as a researcher, my original desire was to contribute new knowledge and skills, which might practically be applied to guide life coaching practice. As required by grounded theory methodology, the previous section compared the results of the study to the literature. In the spirit of addressing this original vision, the conclusion of this study highlights the theoretical construct of how I view the Life Coaching Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning framework as it applies to guiding practice.

In comparing the results with the literature, each of the 10 client-participants experienced a transformative learning experience. Clearly, there were aspects in each experience that were not apparent in the same time or sequence for each client. What was revealed in the research was that each client experienced a question accompanied by a sense of emotional dissonance. This internal feeling served as a catalyst for a cognitive awareness, which revealed that each client wanted and was willing to experience change. The provocative partnership offered an external affirmation of the client's internal process. The generative and performative language of Appreciative Inquiry inspired a life-giving process of inquiry, dialogue, and storytelling to construct action. Each client interpreted the learning within the context of his or her whole life. A key learning is that an integrated process of transformative learning is an evolution, an organic process that is initiated with an internal spark, which opens the client's mind to a new perspective. This emergent understanding is integrated and manifested over time through a process of internal reflection and external actions with others.

The data show that a coaching practice informed by the Life Coaching Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning framework can facilitate a process of inquiry to reframe past perspectives and construct new possibilities for clients. If a coach's practice is informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry and guided by the 4-D cycle, the results of the research indicated that an outcome will be the client's willingness to (a) question something he or she has not questioned before, (b) challenge existing assumptions in a process of essential reflection, (c) construct a new perspective, and (d) take action.
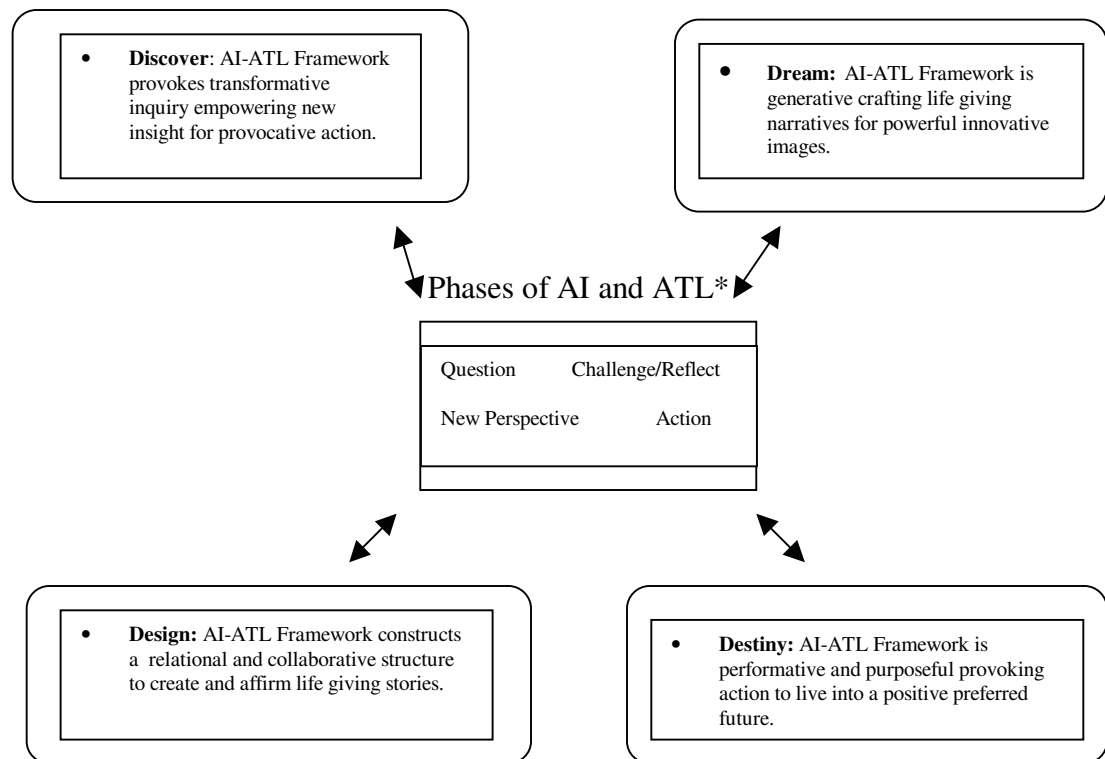

Figure 2. The Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle and Four Stages of Adult Transformative Learning

Note. * AI = Appreciative Inquiry, ATL = Adult Transformative Learning

I propose that the life coaching AI-ATL framework is relational, generative, performative, and transformative, with universal a scope as a life giving practice within the field of life coaching. As a result of my experience, research, and the review of literature, I have developed the following five provocative propositions about the life coaching AI-ATL framework:

1. AI-ATL framework has *universal scope* as a life giving structure to guide coaching practice.

2. AI-ATL framework is *relational,* building a provocative partnership to construct purposeful engagement and an intention for learning and presence.

3. AI-ATL framework is *generative* crafting life giving language for powerful inquiry, reflection, and dialogue.

4. AI-ATL framework is *performative* inspiring life giving stories, which provokes action to live into a promising future.

5. AI-ATL framework is *transformative,* constructing conditions that empower new insights for an integrated whole person process of learning and positive action.

As a result of the findings of this research, I propose that the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry can guide life coaching practice to facilitate an integrated process of adult transformative living. The following is a description of how the five original principles of AI can guide life coaching practice.

1. The Constructionist Principle:

A coach who embraces perception and reflection of lived experiences through an appreciative mental model will have the potential to construct a world reality for the client through a positive communication framework. A focus on developing relational competencies that are rooted in an appreciative mindset will potentially be translated into generative and performative life-giving language and whole person learning. It is through the relational process of the 4-D cycle that a coach can provocatively guide clients to discover the strengths and values of their positive core. The collective positive capacity within the whole and integrated system of the client can be discovered through a process of creative dreaming and designing to live and sustain a healthy holistic destiny.

2. The Simultaneity Principle:

The language of the coach constructs the context of inquiry, dialogue and storytelling, which influences the client's intention and interpretation within the learning process. The attention given to a structure of generative, performative, and appreciative language will simultaneously create conditions that facilitate a transformative learning experience. What is focused upon in the inquiry and dialogue within the coach-client relationship has the positive potential of becoming perceived as possible. Alignment of life-giving language between the coach and the client has the provocative potential and possibility of facilitating an integrated and whole person transformative learning process.

3. The Poetic Principle:

The life story of the client is made fluid and flexible through interpretation, reflection, and understanding of past experiences and present events within collaborative generative dialogue. The use of metaphors, narratives and storytelling opens the life of an individual to new perspectives and a discovery of the positive potential living within each human being. Storytelling through an appreciative lens stimulates self-reflection of old perceptions and ways of being in life. It is when the client as author of the newly crafted ideal future steps into his or her story through reflection and initiating action that the potential for an appreciative transformative learning process exists.

4. The Anticipatory Principle:

Appreciative vocabulary, phrases, and words craft powerful positive images for a life giving future. An appreciative process of inquiry, dialogue, and storytelling stimulates a purposeful engagement of self-discovery, deep reflection, and a positive shift in perspective. Generative and performative language anticipates and amplifies positive actions. Through dialogue and a process of storytelling the individual has the ability to envision and give life to an ideal future.

5. The Positive Principle:

Every human being has the transformational power of an emergent positive core. Generative and performative language connects the internal vision with the external dialogue, and can serve as a platform to construct a life giving affirmation of the client's personal experiences and individual beliefs. Appreciative vocabulary is a carrier of and representative of the hopes and dreams of the best of an individual's positive core.

A life coaching practice, guided by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative

Inquiry can facilitate a process of transformative learning, which has the potential to have

a positive influence in multiple dimensions of the client's whole life. In the next section, I propose implications of this research applied to the field of coaching and future research.

Implications

The findings of this study have practical implications for the coach community. There are new horizons to explore for new understanding and interpretation. This study indicated the ways that Appreciative Inquiry is translated from a large-scale organization change agent to an intervention for transformative learning within the context of the coaching dyad. The implications of this research opens the door for Appreciative Inquiry training organizations to create synergistic alliances with coaching organizations and academic institutions to collaboratively develop professional standards in coaching related to the development of theoretical practices and processes.

The findings of this research revealed Appreciative Inquiry to be a relational, generative, performative, and transformative influence upon the practice of the coach and client participant. The undeniable provocative influence of Appreciative Inquiry on the practice of coaches provides a basis for authors, practitioners, and trainers of Appreciative Inquiry to become more involved in the evolution and further development of constructs such as Appreciative relationships, Appreciative language and Appreciative learning, and the relevant applications to the field of coaching.

Although numerous publications examine and define the differences between executive and life coaching, the findings of this research indicated an unexpected overlap of life coaching within the practice of the executive coach. Although several of the coach-participants had thought of themselves as more of an executive coach, they acknowledged that with select clients their process of coaching involved multiple areas of

the client's life. The findings of this study offer an opportunity for coaching schools and organizations to reassess the similarities as well as the differences between specific categories of coaching.

In this time of fast-paced lifestyles with increasing interconnectedness between personal and professional life, coaches should encourage and participate in studies, which will bring an academic review of current practices. As more models are being introduced into the field of life coaching, additional knowledge is required to understand the effects and outcomes on coaches and their clients. A practical application of this research might influence coach-practitioners to construct a method of evaluation of his or her coaching practice relative to the client's experience and outcome. The documentation of practice in relationship to process outcomes would contribute to a higher degree of knowledge, and provide an opportunity to advance the professional quality of the field of life coaching.

This study also offers implications for the field of adult learning. Individuals who are seeking new learning could engage with life coaches whose practice is informed by the principles and philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry and experience a positive and provocative transformative learning process. Transformative learning facilitated by an Appreciative Inquiry approach to practice has the potential to offer those individuals who are struggling with the old assumptions and unproductive behaviors to discover a learning path of possibility, potential and action.

The implications of this research are diverse and offer new information to stimulate an internal and external review of coaching practices in relationship to the client outcomes. The refined data from future research could potentially be a foundation for developing practice-based models to benefit a larger group of coaches and their

clients. The research for this study has stretched the horizons of my learning. It has also revealed other areas for potential research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current research investigated the process and outcome of coaching that occurred in the last 6 to 12 months. Ongoing research needs to understand the connection between length of coaching, number of coaching appointments, and learning retention. Future research would benefit from a longitudinal study of the sustainability of the transformative learning experience. Understanding how the results of this study can be translated to the general coaching community would be beneficial to identify the applicability of the research. A similar study could be constructed to understand how do the categories and themes interpreted by 20 participants correlate to a larger diverse group of life coaching participants? Additionally, it would be valuable to understand how the themes and categories interpreted by the 10 coach and 10 client-participants in this study merge in a horizon of mutual understanding with a larger and more diverse group of coach and client-participants?

The method of grounded theory influenced the process of interpretation, understanding, and translation of categories and themes. A future study could investigate the categories and themes that would emerge if the research questions were posed within a method of participatory action research (PAR) or a multiple case study. A primary focus of this research was to explore and understand the perspective of both the coach and the client. Additional research using PAR could investigate how the themes would be translated when interpreted by the participants in collaboration with a researcher. In a

multiple case study the researcher would engage fewer pairs in a process of interviews to discover deeper meaning and understanding.

The context of this study was defined by the life coaching relationship. Research could further investigate how the results of this study would compare and contrast to a similar study, which focused on participants within the context of executive coaching and psychotherapeutic relationships. As noted in the literature review, there is a scarcity of academic research in the area of life coaching. Further studies are required from both the coach and client perspective to assess the practice and processes of life coaching. Applied research has the potential to develop new knowledge surrounding theory-based interventions and outcomes.

Future research also needs to examine the theoretical orientations of the life coach and the impact upon his or her practice and the client's outcome. The categories and conceptual themes discovered in this study have the potential to stimulate a discussion within the field of coaching about the interconnectedness of relationship, language, and learning as a framework to guide a theory-based outcome for clients. It is my hope that the findings of this research study will contribute to the development of future research designed to explore theoretically informed life coaching interventions.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

My intention for this dissertation study was to be open to the potential and possibility of exploring Appreciative Inquiry and Adult Transformative Learning within the context of the life coaching relationship. The richness of being immersed in the research process was in living in a new horizon of exploring the possibility and potential between the systems of Appreciative Inquiry and Adult Transformative Learning. In

reflection of the accumulative years of work and life experience that supported this process, I am amazed and in awe of all the learning that has occurred, and all the learning yet to be discovered in the future. I felt the essential tension of not knowing and the emergence of expanded horizons within the research experience. I intrinsically sensed the shift, caught the glimpse, and heard a whisper, of a new way of being with exploring the unknown. Instead of fear, there was a new curiosity, a vision of increased confidence, competence, passion, and joy experienced in the research process. The journey of constructing this dissertation facilitated a personal process of internal and external transformation. I hope this work will inspire a sense of curiosity and possibility for practitioners and researchers alike to engage within a process of inquiry and dialogue – to discover, dream, and design a provocative destiny – for the field of life coaching.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Organization Solicitation Letter (sent by e-mail)

Michelle T. Carter
Doctoral Candidate
Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center
Contact Information:
[address]

[Date]
Subject: Request for Access to Organization Members for Research Participation

Dear [contact name],

I am a doctoral candidate at Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center in the Department of Psychology with a concentration in Organizational Systems. I have been working in the field of professional and personal coaching since 1990. I transitioned from executive coaching in 2001, and for the last 7 years have specialized in life coaching.

I am currently writing my dissertation, which will explore how a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate an adult transformative learning process within the context of the life coaching relationship. Dr. Southern is the dissertation chairperson. Dr. Diana Whitney and Dr. Dennis Jaffe are committee members.

The purpose of the research is to investigate if adult transformative learning facilitated by an Appreciative inquiry approach, offers an alternative framework to guide life coaching learning practice. This research will provide a worthy opportunity for both coaches and clients to share their perspectives on how Appreciative Inquiry might facilitate transformative learning within the context of the life coaching relationship. All research has been pre-approved by the Institutional Review Board of Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center.

This grounded theory study will engage participants in semi-structured interviews informed by Appreciative Inquiry. I hope to take life-coaching research to the next level by interviewing 12 life coaches who use Appreciative Inquiry principles and processes, and 12 clients, one from each of the coaches, who have participated in the appreciative coaching process. The information revealed in these interviews has the potential to fill an existing gap of knowledge about how Appreciative Inquiry can assist adults in experiencing transformative learning.

Within the emerging field of life coaching, there are many unexplored interventions that could provide opportunities for coaches to more effectively facilitate client-learning processes. While there are promising and innovative models that serve as a framework to guide coaching practices, none offer a theoretically informed intervention

to facilitate an evidence-based outcome that has been researched from both the life coach and client perspective. There is little research that explores how Appreciative Inquiry, a theoretically informed intervention for large-scale organizational change, can be applied within the life coaching relationship to facilitate adult transformative learning. This research will seek to discover how the combination of the two systems can potentially work as an integrative model to guide life-coaching practice.

Thank you, in advance, for considering participation in this research. I will contact you this week to answer any questions, and to further discuss your organizations potential involvement in the study.

Sincerely,

Michelle T. Carter

APPENDIX B

Coach-Participant Letter of Invitation (sent by e-mail)

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate at Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center in the Department of Psychology with a concentration in Organizational Systems. I have been working in the field of professional and personal coaching since 1990. I transitioned from executive coaching in 2001, and for the last 7 years have specialized in life coaching.

I am conducting dissertation research to explore how a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate an adult transformative learning process within the context of the life coaching relationship. This research will provide an opportunity for both coaches and clients to share their perspective of how Appreciative Inquiry facilitates transformative learning within the context of the life coaching relationship.

The research methodology is grounded theory. My plan is to interview 12 life coaches, and 12 of their clients. I am interested in interviewing coaches whose practice is informed by Appreciative Inquiry that have facilitated a process of adult transformative learning for a client. I am, also, interested in interviewing the 'clients' of coaches who themselves have experienced a process of transformative learning within the context of a life coaching experience that engaged Appreciative Inquiry. All research has been pre-approved by the Institutional Review Board of Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center.

Each potential participant will engage in a 15-minute introductory telephone conversation to review the criteria for participation in the study, the research process, and to answer any questions regarding the research. The potential benefit to each participant is the opportunity to contribute to a body of knowledge about the ways Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate transformative learning in the coach-client relationship. In the process of reflecting upon the coaching experience, additional benefits will potentially include increased self-awareness, insight, and perspective about themselves and how they show up in their relationships.

Prior to engaging in a tape-recorded 90-minute telephone interview, each participant will need to have completed the informed consent form that outlines confidentiality and use of information. Participants will be asked to read and complete the informed consent form to indicate an understanding and acceptance of participating in the study. I will contact each participant to schedule the telephone interview. I will contact each participant at the prescheduled time and ask a series of open-ended questions to engage the participant in a storytelling process to recollect his or her life coaching experience.

I look forward to the response of all coach and clients who are willing to participate in this study. There is a deficit of research specific to life coaching, and especially relative to the relationship between interventions and outcomes from the perspective of both the coach and the client. Specific to the objectives of this research, your participation in this study is important based on your insights and experience of what occurs within the life coaching relationship.

If you wish to participate in this study the steps will include the following:

1- Contact Michelle T. Carter (researcher) ASAP through either:
   a. Telephone [….], or
   b. E-mail [….]
2- Please provide your name, e-mail, and the phone number where I can contact you. I will e-mail you explanation of Adult Transformative Learning theory, criteria for participation, and an informed consent.
3- I am requesting that after you read the criteria for participation that you contact me by email to confirm you want to participate in the study.
4- Upon receipt of your email, I will contact you to introduce myself, review participation criteria, review the informed consent, and answer any questions.
5- Upon review of all the forms, and confirming no risk of participation, I will ask you to contact your client. I will, also, email you all of the client-participant information for your review.
6- Prior to scheduling your interview, you will need to complete, sign, and mail to me all the forms.
7- After I have confirmed your client's participation, I will call you to schedule your 90-minute interview.
8- At the scheduled time for the telephone interview I will call you.
9- I welcome your calls and questions at any time during the research process.
10- I will inform you when the research is completed.
11- Upon request, a summary of the results will be made available to you.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this research.

Sincerely,
Michelle T. Carter
Doctoral Candidate
Psychology Major-Organizational Systems Concentration
Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center.

APPENDIX C

Coach-Participant Criteria

There is an established criteria for both coach and client participation in this study. The coach criteria requires that each participant be a minimum of 21 years of age, has practiced for 1 year, and his or her practice is informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry. Each coach-applicant will receive through e-mail, a number of items, which include a letter of invitation, participation criteria for both coach and client, and an explanation of research theory.

To participate in the study, the coach will need to have practiced for a minimum of one year and confirm that his or her practice is informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry. Each coach will be asked to invite one client to participate in the study. The potential client-participant will need to have experienced a process of adult transformative learning while participating in life coaching. The researcher acknowledges the likelihood of multiple interpretations of an adult transformative learning. For this reason a description of adult transformative learning theory has been provided for your review.

I will schedule 15-minute telephone call with each coach-participant to introduce myself, answer any questions, and review the process including the informed consent. I will ask that he or she initiate a preliminary invitation to one of his or her clients to participate in the study. All coach-participants will be sent copies of the client-participant paperwork to review prior to contacting his or her client. After the coach-participant receives acknowledgement that his or her client has agreed to participate, the coach will be asked to contact me with the client's telephone number and email address. Each potential client-participant will receive a letter of invitation, a description of client criteria, and a copy of an informed consent. In the letter I will state that I will be contacting each potential client-participant to introduce myself, review the research process, answer any questions, and schedule the interview time. I will provide each coach with a copy of the client-participant criteria and letter of invitation.

APPENDIX D

Explanation of Adult Transformative Learning Theory

Adult Transformative Learning

In support of research credibility and trustworthiness the interview topic, adult transformative learning will be defined by Daloz, 1986; Dirkx, 1996; Illeris 2003, 2004; Mezirow, 1990; and, O'Sullivan, 2002.

Adult Transformative Learning

Transformation is a significant change that from one form to another, similar to how a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. Learning that is transformative, involves an experience in which deep learning occurs, identified by a basic change in beliefs, values, ways of thinking and being in relationship. Jack Mezirow, a professor from Columbia University, began the study of adult transformative learning, to bring greater understanding as to how the education process could support it to benefit both individuals and society. Mezirow (1991) suggests that adult learners need to experience an equal opportunity to participate and be critically reflective about information and arguments, rather than just acquire information or be told what to do.

One of Mezirow's (2000) conditions for transformation is "the presence of other" (p. 112). Being in the presence of the client, the coach has the potential to facilitate a collaborative environment of inquiry, dialogue and reflection to encourage the client to take action of his or her new learning.

Mezirow (1990) suggests, "Learning may be defined as the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action (p. 1). Mezirow's (1996) theory of adult transformative learning indicates that most personal transformation involves a subjective reframing, which is often in response to a disorienting life event. He describes the criteria for personal transformative learning to be:

1. Experiencing a disorienting dilemma
2. Engaging in critical reflection on one's *assumptions*
3. Validating the *critically reflective* insight through discourse
4. Taking Action

An initial stage of an adult transformative learning involves an individual experiencing a disorienting dilemma. This occurs when people encounter a situation that has lead them to question the values and beliefs through which they have constructed their lives. A divorce, job loss,, new relationship, loss of relationship, accident, change in physical ability, travel to a foreign land, among other examples, might all qualify as disorienting dilemmas. Based upon this definition, most coach's have the shared experience of working with individuals who have experienced a disorienting dilemma.

Interpreting a disorienting dilemma requires critical reflection on one's assumption. Critical reflection is when an individual engages in a critique of assumptions (the frame of reference or beliefs that influence his or her experiences) in order to explore new learning, beliefs, and understanding.

This study will explore adult transformative learning as an integrated and holistic process. Illeris (2003, 2004) posits that all learning includes three dimensions: the cognitive dimension of knowledge and skills, the social dimension of communication and cooperation, and the emotional dimension of feelings and motivation, all of which are embedded in the context of social relationship. For Illeris, the cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of learning work in collaboration rather than in opposition to one another. Each description of the three dimensions could be identified as intended outcomes of a life-coaching practice.

Dirkx (2006) proposes learning as an integrated and holistic process, which includes the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual dimensions of an individual. Dirkx suggests that transformative learning is a type of deep learning, which challenges embedded assumptions about the learning process. He proposes that transformative learning is an integration of an individual's life with his or her experience of the inner and outer world. Dirkx describes the inner world as the private internal voices of a person that offer uninvited comments and feedback. This perspective of adult transformative learning guides a life coach to be aware that the outcomes of learning are influenced by the interaction between the client's inner world and his or her way of knowing and being in the world.

O'Sullivan (2002), also, states an integral nature of transformative learning is a significant change in awareness that dramatically alters how an individual perceives how he or she wants to be in relationship with the world. To facilitate a shift for the client, the coach would engage an individual to understand how he or she relates to self and others, relative to an approach to living and a sense of possibilities in life.

Daloz (1986, 1999), maintains that adults search for ongoing learning and education to makes sense of their lives when the life's meaning has changed or become unraveled. His developmental approach suggests that to guide a client's transformative learning experience that the individual needs to have the ability to understand his or her environment, including culture, family, and social dynamics. In working with a client who is seeking new learning, the coach has an opportunity to facilitate an environment of new learning and understanding within the life coaching relationship.

References

Daloz, L. (1986). *Effective teaching and mentoring.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dirkx, M., & Mezirow, J. (2006). Musings and Reflections on the meaning, context and process of transformative learning: A dialogue between John M. and Jack Mezirow. *Journal of transformative education, 4,* 123-139.

Illeris, K. (2003). Towards a contemporary and comprehensive theory of learning. *Journal of Lifelong Education, 22*, 396-406.

Illeris, K. (2004). Transformative learning in the perspective of a comprehensive learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education, 2*(2), 79-89.

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformation theory out of context. *Adult Education Quarterly, 48*(1), 60-63. Retrieved December 23, 2005, from Academic Search Premier database.

Mezirow, J., & Associates. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

O'Sullivan, E. (2002). *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning*. New York: Palgrave.

APPENDIX E

Coach-Participant Demographic Profile

[This form will be emailed to the participant. The form will be reviewed during the introductory telephone call. The form will be completed, signed and mailed to the researcher prior to scheduling the 90-minute interview].

Date:_____

Name: _____

Address:_____

Home phone: _____

Work phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Please provide the number of years you have been coaching: _____

Please briefly describe your Appreciative Inquiry Certification or Training:

_____

_____

Certifying or Training Organization: _____

Coaching certification: _____yes   _____no

If 'yes' please specify certifying organization_____

Please select one of the following choices:

        I have signed and completed the informed consent form and understand I will

have complete anonymity in this study. _____

        I have signed and completed the informed consent form and give permission for

my name to be used in this study._____

Please fill out the following to provide a baseline understanding of the diversity of the
participants in this study.

        Age:_____

        Race:_____

        Gender:_____

_____
        To be filled out by Michelle T. Carter – Principle Researcher

1. Date/Time of Telephone Confirmation of Participation:
2. Participant Name:
3. Participant Code For Anonymity: [see Demographic Participant Form]
    Additional Information:

APPENDIX F

Participant Consent Form

[This form will be emailed to the participant. The form will be reviewed during the introductory telephone call. The form will be completed, signed and mailed to the researcher prior to scheduling the 90-minute interview].

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Purpose:

The purpose of this grounded theory research study, will seek to understand from the perspective of both the coach and client, if the *philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry* applied within the context of the life coaching relationship have the potential to facilitate an integrated adult transformative learning process, and if so, how.

The primary research question addressed in this study is: *Can the practice of life coaching, informed by the philosophy and principles of Appreciative Inquiry, foster an integrated process of adult transformative learning?* The secondary questions will explore:
- In what ways can Appreciative Inquiry principles be incorporated into life coaching practice?
- What conditions of the coaching practice, informed by Appreciative Inquiry, best support adult transformative learning?

This project is the focus of a dissertation study conducted by Michelle T. Carter. It is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Psychology, with a concentration in Organizational Systems, at Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center.

Principal Researcher:
Michelle T. Carter
[contact information]

Procedures:
[1] This study involves developing research questions, conducting research, analyzing data, and constructing a theoretical framework.
[2] Completion of these procedures will require approximately 15 minutes for each of the 20 participants to review and complete participation forms, 15 minutes for each of the 20 participants to engage in an introductory telephone call, 90 minutes for each of the 20 interviews, for a total time of no more than 2 hours of participation for

each person and a follow-up phone call to confirm the completion of the research participation.

[3] The grounded theory research method procedure is to engage 10 coaches and 10 clients in an interview process to explore their interpretation of the question if a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate an adult transformative learning process, and, if so, how. Each of the 20 interviews will be conducted and tape recorded by telephone and should take no longer than 90 minutes.

Possible Risks and Safeguards:

This study is designed to minimize as much as possible any potential physical, psychological, and social risks to you. Although very unlikely, there are always risks in research, which you are entitled to know in advance of giving your consent, as well as the safeguards to be taken by those who conduct the project to minimize the risks.

I understand that:

[1] My participation shall in no way have any bearing on me personally or professionally, or require any further involvement with the researcher or the institution sponsoring, funding, and providing oversight, inclusively, for this research project.

[2] Although my identity shall be known to the principal researcher, all identifying information shall be removed at the time of transcription of the tape recording.

[3] My responses to the questions will be pooled with others and all identifiers, such as names, addresses, employers, and related information, which might be used to identify me, will be given a code.

[4] This consent form will be kept separate from the data I provide, in a safety deposit box for 10 years, known only to the principal researcher, after which it too will be destroyed.

[5] The data collected in its raw and transcribed forms are to be kept anonymous, stored in a locked container accessible only to the principal researcher for 10 years, after which it shall be destroyed.

[6] Transcribed data in the form of computer disks will be kept indefinitely for future research.

[7] All the information I give will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. The information obtained from me will be examined in terms of group findings, and will be reported anonymously.

[8] There is to be no individual feedback regarding my responses. Only general findings will be presented in a Summary Report of which I am entitled a copy, and my individual responses are to remain anonymous.

[9] All personal information I provide associated with my identity will not be released to any other party without my explicit written permission.

[10] If quotes of my responses are used in the research report for the dissertation, as well as any and all future publications of these quotations, my identity shall remain anonymous, and at most make use of a fictitious name.

[11] I have the right to refuse to answer any question asked of me.

[12] I have the right to refuse at any time to engage in any procedure requested of me.

[13] I have the right to withdraw from participation at any time for any reason without stating my reason.

[14] I have the right to participate without prejudice on the part of the principal researcher and other persons assisting the principal researcher.

[15] It is possible that the procedures may bring to my mind thoughts of an emotional nature, which may upset me. In the unlikely event that I should become upset or experience emotional distress from my participation, the principal researcher present shall be available to me. She shall make every effort to minimize such an occurrence. However, should an upset occur and become sufficiently serious to warrant professional attention, as a condition of my participation in this study, I understand that a licensed professional will be made available to me. If I do not have such a person, the principal researcher will refer me and reasonable costs up to the first 2 visits will be paid by the principal researcher.

[16] By my consent, I understand I am required to notify the principal researcher at the time of any serious emotional upset that may cause me to seek therapy and compensation for this upset.

[17] I will receive a copy of this signed consent form for my records.

Regarding any concern and serious upset, you may contact the principal researcher, Michelle Carter, at: [phone]. You may also contact the Research Supervisor of the project, Dr. Nancy Southern at [phone]. Should you have any concerns regarding the conduct and procedures of this research project that are not addressed to your satisfaction by the principal researcher and his or her research supervisor, you may report them to Dr. Willson Williams, the Chair of the Saybrook Institutional Review Board at [email].

Benefits:
I understand that my participation in this study may have possible and potential benefits.

[1] I may obtain a greater personal awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the ways Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate adult transformative learning.

[2] Through future communications and possible applications of the findings of the research, indirectly my participation may bring future benefits to others who participate in the life coaching relationship.

[3] My participation may enable the principal researcher and others working in this field to make a contribution to knowledge and theory of an Appreciative Inquiry-Adult Transformative Learning framework to be studied.

Summary Report:
Upon conclusion of this study, a summary report of the general findings will become available. If you would like a copy of the report, please provide the address to which you would like it sent (your email or postal address):

_____

[---Email address---]

OR:

_____
    [---Postal address---]

_____
    [---City, Country, Zip---]

Consent of Principal Investigator:

I have explained the above procedures and conditions to this study, and provided an opportunity for the research participant to ask questions and have attempted to provide satisfactory answers to all questions that have been asked in the course of this explanation.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____
    Print name

Consent of the Participant:

If you have any questions of the principal researcher at this point, please take this opportunity to have them answered before granting your consent. If you are ready to provide your consent, read the statement below, then sign, and print your name and date on the line below.

I have read the above information, have had an opportunity to ask questions about any and all aspects of this study, and give my voluntary consent to participate.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____
    Print name

APPENDIX G

Client-Participant Demographic Profile

[This form will be emailed to the participant. The form will be reviewed during the introductory telephone call. The form will be completed, signed and mailed to the researcher prior to scheduling the 90-minute interview].

Date:_____

Name:_____

Address:_____

Home phone:_____

Work phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Please specify the number of *months OR years* you have engaged in

coaching:_____

Please specify if you are still engaged in coaching: Yes_____   No_____

I have signed and completed the informed consent form and understand I will have

complete anonymity in this study. _____

Please fill out the following to provide a baseline understanding of the diversity of the

participants in this study.

Age:_____Race:_____Gender:_____

_____

To be filled out by Michelle T. Carter – Principle Researcher

   1.Date/Time of Telephone Confirmation of Participation:
   2.Participant Name:
   3.Participant Code For Anonymity: [see Demographic Participant Form]
   4.Additional Information

APPENDIX H

Client-Participant Letter of Invitation (sent by e-mail)

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate at Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center in the Department of Psychology with a concentration in Organizational Systems. I have been working in the field of professional and personal coaching since 1990. I transitioned from executive coaching in 2001, and for the last 7 years have specialized in life coaching. I am currently writing my dissertation, which will explore how a practice informed by Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate an adult transformative learning process within the context of the life coaching relationship. This research will provide a worthy opportunity for both coaches and clients to share their perspective of how Appreciative Inquiry facilitates transformative learning within the context of the life coaching relationship.

My plan is to interview 10 life coaches, and 10 of their clients. I am interested in interviewing coaches whose practice is informed by Appreciative Inquiry that have facilitated a process of adult transformative learning for a client. I am, also, interested in interviewing the 'clients' of coaches who themselves have experienced a process of transformative learning within the context of life coaching. Each interview procedure is constructed to fulfill the purpose of investigating the perspective of both the life coach and the client specific to experiencing the connection between a practice that is informed by Appreciative Inquiry and an outcome of the adult transformative learning process. All research has been pre-approved by the Institutional Review Board of Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center.

Each potential participant will engage in a 15-minute introductory telephone call to review the criteria for participation in the study, answer any questions regarding the research, and review the overall process. The potential benefit to each participant is the opportunity to contribute to a body of knowledge about the ways Appreciative Inquiry can facilitate transformative learning in the coach-client relationship. In the process of reflecting upon the coaching experience, additional benefits for participants will potentially include increased self-awareness, insight, and perspective about themselves and how they show up in their relationships.

Prior to engaging in a tape-recorded 90-minute telephone interview, each participant will be given an informed consent form that outlines confidentiality and use of information. Participants will be asked to read and complete the informed consent form to indicate an understanding and acceptance of participating in the study. I will contact each participant to schedule the telephone interview. I will contact each participant at the prescheduled time and ask a series of open-ended questions to engage the participant in a storytelling process to recollect his or her life coaching experience. If you wish to participate in this study the steps will include the following:

1-Contact Michelle T. Carter (researcher) ASAP through either:
    a.   Telephone [….], or
    b.   E-mail [….]

2-Please provide your name, e-mail, and the phone number where I can contact you.

3- Upon receipt of your email, I will e-mail the criteria for participation and the informed consent.

4-In the 15-minute introductory telephone call, I will contact you to introduce myself, review these documents, and determine that there is no risk of participation.

5- Prior to scheduling your interview, you will need to sign, complete, and mail the forms to me. I will confirm receipt of the documents and schedule your interview through email.

6-At your scheduled time for the telephone interview I will call you.

7-I welcome your calls and questions at any time during the research process.

8-I will inform you when the research is completed. Upon request, a summary of the results will be made available to you.

Specific to the objectives of this research, your participation in this study is important based on your insights and experience of what occurs within the life coaching relationship. There is a deficit of research specific to life coaching, and especially relative to the relationship between interventions and outcomes from the perspective of both the coach and the client. Thank you for your time and consideration of this research.

Sincerely,

Michelle T. Carter
Doctoral Candidate
Psychology Major-Organizational Systems Concentration
Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center.

APPENDIX I

Client-Participant Criteria

Selection criteria for the client includes the stipulation that he or she is a

minimum of 21 years of age, has experienced a disorienting dilemma, received life

coaching, and attributed an outcome of coaching to experiencing an adult transformative

learning process. Each client-participant will be asked to recall the details of his or her

adult transformative learning experience. Each client-participant will be asked to

participate in a 15-minute introductory telephone call. I will contact each client to

introduce myself. I will review the research process, the informed consent, and answer

any questions. All participants will be advised that the total time for their involvement in

the research project will be less than 2 hours.

APPENDIX J

Coach-Participant Interview Protocol

[Intro Text] Hello. How are you doing? Thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed. I am delighted and honored that you are willing to participate in my project. Do you have the 90 minutes of time that we discussed for the interview? [Based upon the participant's affirmative response, the conversation will continue]. That's great. As you might recall, when I previously called to introduce myself, we reviewed the purpose of the study. The purpose of this interview is to understand the ways you have integrated Appreciative Inquiry into the coaching relationship, and to explore how your process facilitated transformative learning in the life of the client. Ultimately, I want this conversation to be a positive and potentially provocative experience for you. Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

1. [Background]. To begin the interview, I'd like to learn about your history as a coach. I would be interested in hearing the story about your beginnings as a coach.

   a. What was it that initially attracted you to coaching?

   b. How long have you been coaching?

   c. Previous to being a coach, what was your professional experience?

   d. Have you participated in a training program for coaches? If so, which one?

   e. When a client contacts you, how do you describe what you do?

   f. Do you have any specific criteria the client must meet to be eligible for coaching? If so, can you describe the criteria?

2. [Background]. I am curious to learn more about your experience with Appreciative Inquiry and how you use it in your life coaching practice.

   a. How did you find out about Appreciative Inquiry?

   b. How do you describe your AI approach to coaching?

   c. How would you describe the coaching relationship?

       d. What was it about Appreciative Inquiry that you believed would be an effective and provocative way to engage clients in the coaching relationship?

[Researcher's comments]. Thank you. Your story is very meaningful, and has given me rich information about your history of coaching, and why you integrated Appreciative Inquiry with your coaching practice.

3. [Highpoint] – You have been coaching for [xx] many years. Now, I'd like you to reflect upon the highpoint experience of working with the client who is participating in the study. As you think about this time, when you integrated your practice with the principles and philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry, can you describe how the process resulted in creating a shift that we might consider transformative for the client?

       a. Why did the client seek coaching?

       b. How long did the coaching relationship last?

       c. How would you describe the inquiry and dialogue that occurred between you and your client?

       d. What would be examples of the language that informed your practice of inquiry and dialogue?

       e. How would you describe the way the client was responding to your practice approach?

       f. How would the client describe what happened for him or her as a result of engaging in the coaching relationship?

       g. What did the client experience that was transformative?

       h. What are your thoughts about how and why the client's transformative experience occurred?

4- [Valuing]. When you think about the coaching experience with this client, I'd like you to reflect upon what you valued most about what occurred within the coaching relationship.

       a.   What did you value the most about your best skills and qualities in coaching the client?

      b.   What conditions did the principles and philosophy of AI construct for you and your

           client in the coaching relationship?

      c.   Did certain principles provide more resources to guide your practice than others? If

           so, how?

      d.   What did your AI approach foster within the context of the coaching relationship that

           was most valuable for facilitating the client's transformative learning experience?

5. [Dream - Future]. Now let's look to the future. Imagine you are being honored by the

International Coaches Association – and your client is asked to speak about you and his or her

coaching experience.

      a. How does he or she describe the ways that the coaching experience impacted his or her

      life?

      c. How does he or she describe the essence of what occurred within him or herself?

6- [Ask for coach referral]. You have given me new understanding about why you do, what you

do, and, why you are so successful. I'd like to thank you for making such a provocative

contribution to the study.

      a. Would you like to tell me anything else?

      b. If this has been a positive and provocative experience for you, do you know of another

      coach whom I might invite to participate in this study?

      c. Would you be willing to contact him or her, and, email contact information if he or she

      is willing to participate in the study?

 [Closing remarks]. Thank you. Upon completion of the research, I will send you a

summary of the study. You have really helped me get great data for my research.

APPENDIX K

Client-Participant Interview Protocol

[Intro Text] Hello. How are you doing? Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I appreciated [name of coach] referring you as a client who would be willing to participate in this study. I am delighted and honored that you are willing to participate in my research project. Do you have the 90 minutes of time that we discussed for the interview? [Based upon the participant's affirmative response, the conversation will continue]. That's great. When I previously called to introduce myself, we briefly reviewed the purpose of the study. As you might recall, the purpose of this interview is to understand the ways you have interpreted the process and outcome that occurred in your life coaching relationship. Ultimately, I want this conversation to be a positive and potentially provocative experience for you. Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

1. [Background] Your coach has recommended you for participation in this study because s/he thought that you have experienced what we might consider to be a transformative learning. The questions I will ask explore I would be very interested to hear the story of how and why you came to be in relationship with your coach.

   a. What originally attracted you to coaching?

   b. How did you find your coach?

   c. How did your coach describe his or her approach to coaching?

   d. Was there any special reason why you chose your coach?

2. [Highpoint] Let's imagine you have a friend who is curious about the benefits of coaching and wants to hear about the highpoints of what you learned in the life coaching relationship. I would be curious to hear how you would describe the process of learning that occurred for you.

   a. How do you describe the essence of life coaching?

b. How would describe what happened to you?

c. How do you describe the relationship with your coach?

d. How do you describe the learning or change in your life that the coaching process supported?

[Researcher's comments]. Thank you. Your stories help me to understand what motivated you to seek coaching, and, as important, why you chose to work with your coach.

3. [Highpoint] - You have generously shared your coaching story. Now, let's imagine in response to my need for a deeper understanding of what we might consider a transformative learning experience, you have invited me to watch the video tapes of you and your coach working together.

a. What was it about the dialogue that occurred between you and your coach that stimulated your process of learning?

b. What would be unique about the ways you were responding to the coaching process?

c. What inspiring questions or language would I hear?

d. How would I know that what was happening in the coaching relationship was facilitating a process of learning for you?

4. [Valuing]. Reflecting upon what occurred between you and your coach, can you describe the characteristics of the coaching relationship that you experienced as being most valuable to facilitating your process of learning.

a. What was extraordinary about the skills and qualities of your coach?

b. What did you value most about the coaching relationship?

5. [Dream - Future]. Imagine you now have a clear understanding of what creates a positive and successful life coaching experience. Living into the future, your coach asks you to give a 5-minute talk about the benefits of coaching at the International Coaching Conference. You have

been asked to describe how and why life coaching facilitated a transformative learning experience for you.

  a. How do you describe the ways your coach worked with you?

  b. What do you say enabled your process of transformative learning?

  c. How do you describe the conditions for learning that were created within the life coaching relationship?

  c. How do you describe what people closest to you say about the extraordinary ways that engaging in the life coaching relationship made a difference in your life?

6. [Closing remarks]. I'd like to thank you for making such a worthy contribution to the study.

  a. Would you like to tell me anything else?

  b. Are there any more details about your coaching experience you would like to tell me about?

Thank you. You have also given me new understanding about why your experience of the life coaching relationship was both transformative and provocative. Upon the completion of the study, I will send you a summary of results. You have really helped me get great data for my research.

APPENDIX L

Participant Summary Sheet

1.

a. Notes:

b. Notes:

c. Notes:

d. Notes:

2.

a. Notes:

b. Notes:

c. Notes:

d. Notes:

3.

a. Notes:

b. Notes:

c. Notes:

d. Notes:

4.

a. Notes:

b. Notes:

c. Notes:

d. Notes:

5.

a. Notes:

b. Notes:

c. Notes:

d. Notes:

APPENDIX M

Research Time Table

(January through April 2009)

Research Protocol   Timelines

Data Collection

1.   Contact organizations to receive approval   Week of 1-25-09
2.   Distribute information through org network   Week of 2-1-09
3.   Send information to coaches who respond   Week of 2-14-09
4.   Coach introductory call, review information,
     schedule interviews   Week of 2-21-09
5.   Confirm client-participation- send information   Week of 2-21-09
6.   Introductory call to client-participants,
     schedule interviews   Week of 3-1-09
7.   Begin Coach and Client Interviews   Week of 3-1-09
8.   Begin interview transcription process   Week of 3-7-09
9.   Complete Coach and Client Interviews   Week of 3-21-09
10. Complete interview transcription process   Week of 4-1-09

Data Analysis and Recording

     1. Begin analyze using summary notes   Week of 3-14-09
     2. Open coding - begin process to synthesize data
     3. Selective coding – construct categories
     4. Axial coding – test relationships
     5. Logic diagram – construct relationships
     6. Develop theoretical hypothesis   Week of 4-14-09

APPENDIX N

Context of Learning

Examples of the natural language of participants that constructed the pattern of conditions and interpretation of learning

Coach-Client Pairs	Precondition	Personal Condition	Environment Condition	Relational Condition	Interpretation of Learning
1A	I'm an Appreciative Inquiry coach, and I use Appreciative inquiry as the template for my life.	Always assume positive intention. The emphasis that we move in the direction that we explore…the more positive the stories, the more positive the outcome	My whole relationship and the whole way I interact with her is a model of that – we talk and model what we want to do	The focus, of course, is on the client, and I want to celebrate what's right. I give her language and resources.	She blossomed. I gave her the language and support to discover who she really is. The world is better served because of who we are and our present in it.
1B	Being conscious of wanting to change my path or the way I perceived things around me	It is shaped around language like the powerful use of words and the words he says and how they effect how you think about things	He had such a quiet, gentle presence…you just feel that there are greater possibilities. He was so completely open and generous and willing.	It was that real synergistic interaction that when we were speaking and when we had these ideas and were sort of dreaming, I think we built something greater than the two of us in that.	I had a new way of looking at things and a new language within which to frame it to go places that we never knew we could even get to before. Having that language allows y you to go to a completely different place.
2A	Desire to be involved – be instrumental in seeing them be the change they wanted to be – we talk about the their whole life really is something we need to look at	Holding her, as being whole and resourceful. Inquires to find her stories. It was through those stories, - images that gave her hope. Looking for how she could go back and change her stories.	Having the principles and the framework – maintain what's in the structure – and begin over again at any point in the cycle.	I view it as a partnership, hold my client with dignity and respect - Action can be reflection. I'm there to be a provocateur. I valued my acceptance of who she was and where she was in her life. Respect and compassion.	View of the world shifted. - She said my view of his world is larger. She took herself to the depth of who she is. Her shift in her mood was more generative, more looking forward anticipated. She noticed a shift in her relationships
2B	Searching for better leadership skills, I was trying to escape a box, and needed somebody who would challenge me. Willingness to take a bold new step.	I was aware that I was moving into a new dimension of self-understanding and of connection with me. I would describe it as an exploration, a journey, a process of self-discovery. Ability to talk without reservation	It was a structured process but open and quite free. Her non-judgmental presence – for someone to be truly present and truly listen, - She was truly present to me in the fullness of herself.	Comfortable, founded on trust. Very exploratory. Non-judgmental presence. Openness and trust. An element of grace, a kind of listening that enabled me to feel most free and open.	The discovery of some deep gift that needed to be uncovered.
3A	I'm here to bring out the best in them and to help them. I partner with them on creating a life they want. I am honored to be kind of a conduit for change in people.	I notice strengths that they may not know they have – there are questions – futuring questions. I prepare myself to be connected to the presence of the conversation. Positive purposeful and focused.	The space to say in the inquiry and see what insights come from just speaking. I think coaching presence is something. My client's life is sacred, thereby so is the space.	I appreciate what they bring to the table. Be aware of their learning edges.	Increase insight and motivation. Transformative's the word, transformative change of perspective on how he fathers, how he husbands, etc. He got the bigger picture, - he discovered he was more.

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3B	To deal with personal relationships. To figure something out.	Acknowledged my strengths. And offered challenging viewpoints.	Comforting to know that there is a person out there whom listens. I sense I'm in a safe area – honest, not judged. A relaxed environment.	Trust and respect. Very positive and supportive.	The learning is having new perspective. New energy, new enthusiasm to go face situations. My learning was enabled due to some of his structure and keeping the goal out ahead of us. Relationship with my son is extraordinary. Coaching has made a difference in my life.
4A	AI – I live and breathe it every day. Strength focused perspective, unconditional focus on the positive.	Ask questions that provoked her own understanding of thinks. I was dependable – response.	Participatory. Language around positive change, around connection and partnership. Open and honest.	Partnership with one another. I value the infinite wisdom and knowledge in their own context that they bring into the relationship.	It fostered ability, an appreciative eye and a belief, an ability to see what want more of as opposed to hope it comes up.
4B	Wanted to learn more about Appreciative Inquiry and using it in community work. It also applied to my personal life.	Reflecting more. An appreciative way of coaching and questioning requires some reflection. Exchange of ideas. Frame things in a strength perspective	Gave me context hearing some of her stories. General openness. Organic and practical. Space and reflection in conversations to think – reframe things.	Collaboration of taking my knowledge and her knowledge and mixing them together. No power differential	Conscious about how I talk. What the consequences of how those words impact other people. More reflection. I know have the kind of conscious belief system or understanding how I see certain things and how I think they fit together.
5A	Willingness - Like the one-on-one relationship – I'm on a journey with them. You just have to really get into the principles – then you apply them any which way. I bring a lot of depth and that whole really truly belief that you can change, and the belief that I can't change you, you change yourself.	The whole discovery process….I seek to understand…what emotions and the language, are they in the present. Unconditional support, accountability, action-oriented, help appreciate who they are, their strengths, what they would like to accomplish	Safety, openness	Confidentiality and trust She was soaking things up – she wanted to think differently about herself.	She viewed her life with slightly different eyes. It really transformed her way of thinking about herself and life around her. Coaching went into a deeper level. I could get insider of her and help her sort her thoughts and feelings out, and distinguish between "these are old", "this is new". She went through a period of being introspective…where it was muddled, it became clearer. She felt differently, and then she could act differently.
5B	I was at a bit of crossroad on a number of levels. I was in crisis, it was not good, and I was pretty low. I couldn't go on any longer the other way. My openness and willingness to learn and change.	Learning in terms of new ideas. You attract back the energy that you project out, good or bad, and you actually have a conscious choice in that.	Envisioning, Validation and reassurance. She called me on the carpet so to speak…I appreciated that.	Respect, admiration,	Dramatic, powerful was the essence. I started to see that I had quite a bit of power. My body language shifted, more relaxed, more confident, and happier. Most profound outcome of the whole coaching experience…she showed me the ways to integrate…how you show up at work and at other

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					places in your life. My personal life, my professional life, whatever the situation.
6A	I am a co-collaborator. I'm coaching one on one. Willingness to just be with someone come from a place…to discover what's great about them. I'm fearless and relentless in my willingness to the positive in people	Stories are so powerful, the metaphors paint pictures.	Positive regard. Altering a sense of time. Safety hopes celebration, benevolence, and kindness.	She's so bright and so self-motivated – she knew that she needed to change. I think she was in psychic pain and she wanted it to go away. She very introspective and willing to reflect.	It change her shift, I think it was that pursing of the positivity, the positive core. We find what we seek. She started looking for the evidence indicators and finding them. She got clear on what was really important.
6B	We had moved a very big step, probably the hardest decision I have ever made – my life just had become a little bit in disarray. I needed an unbiased opinion.	A lot of brainstorming. Step back away from the situation and try and look at it from different angles. She was devil's advocate at times, and roleplaying with me.	Positive, very enlightening, very encouraging, appreciation for her listening. Security, safe haven. She way my rock.	Very considerate, helpful. Very honest.	Learning by trial and error, having different resources. What enabled my transformative learning wanted to learn, and – gentler way of talking through life experiences – positive spin.
7A	Sometimes I call myself a coach, more often a thinking partner. It's about asking questions …to access the specialness of who they are and what they want to do. Encourage others to explore.	Working with the principles, it's not a standard program ever, it's something that is iterative and it evolves. The need to be willing to learn about themselves. To be billing to explore creatively the unknown. Provocative and difficult questions.	Them to feel safe. Often referred to the space as being a kind of sanctuary. To surface some ideas that had been sitting latent. A place of learning rather than as a place of criticizing yourself.	It is the opportunity of having a conversation around what could happen. The freedom and the space to have a conversation around something different. Look at different possibilities Asking open questions to take them to a new or different level of meaning.	Got clear about a particular action. Opened up new ways to think. Made a difference.
7B	Major bereavements, illness, a frenetic state. Willingness to experiment, willingness to change pace.	Appreciated her maturity and wisdom, this calm, this sense of peace really being present.	Peaceful space, very positive, it's a bit of a sanctuary.	It just struck me as sort of ebb and flow, sort of emergent, like an organic thing.	There is a real shift. I think over time that sense of calm and being present, being focused in the moment. A shift in terms of sense of self. – More present. I'm more able to trust in the possibility of the future as it opens up rather than hold desperately to the past. – Trust the possibility of what might emerge.
8A	I feel skilled in the one on one relationship. I'm looking for is there a possibility for movement and is there some desire to try it out.	The focus really is on the aspirational aspects of ourselves and our abilities. The destiny stage – is being in the coming. – Always live in the moment.	Fun and serious. Acceptance. Bring the past and the future into the present moment. There's something powerful about the aspect of time in Appreciative Inquiry.	I have to gain their trust. …Supporting them towards the end that they're trying to achieve. The relationship shifts. I really pay attention to what appears to be	We didn't focus on the stress behaviors, but focused on what she needed. I think that was the pivotal moment. She became more relaxed and accepting of herself. I think, what she realized is that she is just

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				their learning style	a powerhouse.
8B	To work on how I responded to people. I had a desire to be a better leader. I had a desire for change.	She had a depth of knowledge expertise, and a calming effect. The dialogue was unguarded and very welcoming. I was heard and listened to.	Safety, grounded, quiet and reflection, friendly, empathetic.	Partnership – genuine desire to be in relationship. Connection and Interactive. Trust	People closest to me say I Have completely shifted my paradigm. I listen and seek new understanding. Helped me to become more aware of my behavior and emotions. And the impact upon my relationships.
9A	I help them transition from their vision to reality. I do that by helping them reframe their story from the inside out. Come up with a dream idea - and work with them to make that more alive.	Open to exploring possibilities. I apply gentle pressure. Willing to be in a conversation around envisioning what they want – willing to take necessary steps to get into action. Ask questions that would illuminate without making people go down the rabbit hole.	Organic. Create trust. A climate of trust. Inviting. She is seeing things differently.	Appreciative.	Opening up her worldview as opening up a new space for he to look at herself through – she could have a bigger life.
9B	I got involved in a coaching and mentoring program – I was not really prepared at all for the change in position. I was afraid a lot of the time. The timing was right, too, in terms of where I was in my life.	Asked me question without me feeling like I had to put my guard up. There was something about the way she communicated with me that made me trust her. She pushes me without me feeling like I'm being forced to do something.	She was able to create an environment where I felt comfortable talking about those issues. She listened to me.	Trust. I don't feel that she judges me.	It's transformed the relationship I have with the people in my life in so many positive ways. I'm open to things that I wasn't open to. I'm open to this relationship with this person who's really wonderful. So I'm open to this relationship. Big think in my personal life. Confidence.
10A	Essentially I think she just felt there was something more. Typically the types of people – are somebody who is at a cross roads. A deep discovery, which is essentially looking a them from multiple points view.	The question is and the context of the question is vital. I'm probing deeply in the individual, learning about things – they may know it but on a unconscious level – they haven't articulated it.	Nature of probing.	Level of trust. Partnering.	The fullness, confident, focused. . She was ready to go out on her own. In the middle of the process she made a major life change.
10B	Came with a very personal need. I longed for clarity and someone who could help guide me to that from a strength based perspective.	He asked questions that focused on my core passions. He asked questions that helped make visible all that low hanging fruit.	Laughter and intensity.	Really focused, really clear.	Minimal effort and huge passion and drive I could make it all happen and I did. It was a willingness to make the space in my life so that those good things that I wanted more of could come.