UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THEY MUDDLED, JUMPED, AND SOMETIMES FLEW: WHEN

PROFESSIONAL MEN IN THEIR THIRTIES MAKE A SELF-CHOSEN

CAREER CHANGE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

CHRISTOPHER K. BRAY
Norman, Oklahoma
2009

THEY MUDDLED, JUMPED, AND SOMETIMES FLEW: WHEN
PROFESSIONAL MEN IN THEIR THIRTIES MAKE A SELF-CHOSEN
CAREER CHANGE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

_____
Dr. Irene Karpiak, Chair

_____
Dr. Joan Smith

_____
Dr. Gregg Garn

_____
Dr. David Tan

_____
Dr. Terry Pace

Acknowledgements

This journey has been a life-changing experience for me and was made possible by the support and assistance of so many individuals. To my five daughters, who gave me so many precious and much needed gifts along my path of learning; the gift of hope, perseverance, love, understanding and laughter. I could not have done it without you, thanks for understanding why I needed to be gone in the evenings. May you learn from my example and carve your own pathway in life, even if the decision is difficult or not popular. Next, to my ever patient, all demanding, most beautiful and incredibly brilliant chair Dr. Irene Karpiak, who has such a gift for words and writing. May I someday write like you. Thanks for your patience, your expectation of excellence and your stern, but kind prodding. I will forever be indebted to you, thank you. To my committee; Dean Smith for teaching me to love qualitative research and the joy that is found in bringing others stories to light. Dr. Garn, for guiding me through my prospectus and always offering keen insights into my research, Dr. Tan, for your incredible knowledge of Quantitative research. Dr. Pace, your excitement and interest in my research validated my own thoughts, I was lucky to have you on my committee. To my (unofficial) sixth committee chair Kathryn Roden. I would have never have navigated this ocean without you, you are a dear friend and always will be. Most importantly, my incredible wife Gale, words will never express my deep gratitude for you. I would not be the person I am without you. Thanks for choosing to spend your life with me and continuing to make that choice! This degree I share with you, I love you forever—now it is your turn!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Illustrations

Abstract

THEY MUDDLED, JUMPED, AND SOMETIMES FLEW: WHEN
PROFESSIONAL MEN IN THEIR THIRTIES MAKE A SELF-CHOSEN
CAREER CHANGE

Christopher K. Bray

The research and literature on career and personal transitions have mainly focused

on the mid-life career changer. Little research has been conducted with the man in

his thirties who decides to make a career change when all seems to be going well.

This qualitative Narrative Inquiry study was designed to understand the career

transitions of men who make a self-chosen career change while in their thirties. It

will seek to understand the fifteen participant's motive to change, process of

transition and the lessons/reflections they experienced from the career transition.

The study's sample consists of fifteen men who made a decision to change

careers in their thirties. Data for the study was obtained through 1-2 hour interviews

and also a follow-up interview. The theoretical perspectives for this study center on

adult development, career development and personal transitions.

The findings emanating from this study include: (1) all participants were

compelled to change careers by some external or internal motivation. The specific

motivation to change played a role in the success of the vocational transition; (2) the

ability to reflect upon the motivations to change, and then apply the lessons learned

throughout the transition process is a key aspect of the transition process; (3)

choosing to transition careers is more than a career change, it becomes a significant

life event; and (4) the importance of a strong support system throughout the

transition process.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

Corporate America has long been a lure for men who seek to build a lifelong and progressive career. During the early to mid nineteenth century the focus of the man beginning his career was to learn a skill that would provide a job for him and monetary support for his family for the next forty years of his working life. This man, often identified as the "traditionalist," had a work ethic forged from his experiences through the Great Depression as a young man or teenager. Once a job was secured the traditionalist was grateful for his corporate position and was fiercely loyal to the company that provided it. The memory of the Great Depression was never far removed and served as a constant reminder to the traditionalist to work hard and be grateful for his position within the corporate structure; it would be considered foolish to ever think of leaving a corporate position (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

Following the traditionalists, the Baby Boomers emerged in corporate America during the 1970's and early 80's, driven by an intense desire to succeed and have more money, more prestige, and more corporate power than their parents. The Baby Boomer employee was hardworking, flamboyant in his material goods and wealthy.

In the past fifty to sixty years the majority of traditionalists and Baby Boomers worked for a single corporation their entire lives, always giving the corporation undying dedication and loyalty and rarely ever seeking out other career options. The traditionalist and the Baby Boomer were secure in their positions as they aged through their mid to late thirties and forties. Changing careers or seeking out other options was not the norm, and such a decision at the time was considered a weakness of resolve and lack of moral character (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). In return for this dedication to the corporation, the men earned wealth, promotion, decision making power and prestige.

As the nineteenth century came to a close the landscape of corporate America was changing, including the image and type that characterized the corporate working man. The global economy, technology, structure of jobs and worker demographics was causing a flux in how corporate America conducted its business. Corporate restructuring and the shifting value of employees from a needed commodity to an expendable one were becoming the norm in the workplace (Bond, 1997; Gillon, 2004). These changes have altered the relationship between corporate America and the career corporate man.

Many of the men who left corporate America in the 1990's and 2000's did not leave by choice, but instead were victims of a corporate restructuring or downsizing due to the global economy. Despite these increases in job loss, other men have decided to leave their careers in corporate America to start a vocation in a different field. The reasons for this desire to change range from increased monetary gain, job

title promotions, and aspirations for a more fulfilling career to a more balanced work/personal life. The availability of the internet to search out other professions, career interests, and educational opportunities has opened the door of possibilities for the working individual. The current research available has not kept up-to-date with specific job change data concerning what career fields are transitioned to and what fields men transition from. The research has continued to develop within the career counseling and career development fields to include Krumboltz's social learning theory (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002); Peterson, Sampson, and Reardon's cognitive theory (1991); and Gottfredson's developmental theory (1981). However, with the changing global economy, increase in new careers and individuals changing careers and also the changing landscape of education, it is difficult for the research to stay current with career transition issues.

My own personal journey also played a role in this topic. My personal motivation to choose voluntary midlife career change as my topic of study originated with my own decision to leave a successful corporate career to begin a different occupation. A difficult and long journey ensued as I attempted to come to terms with my desire to find a career that matched my strengths, provided growth opportunities and a more fulfilling work experiences versus a lucrative career that provided well for my family. I inherently knew that my "dream job" would most likely come with a salary which would be significantly lower than my current employment. At that point in my life I knew that both were not possible and the inner turmoil was emotionally cancerous. As my career transition progressed and I searched for meaning in my

decision to change careers I experienced an awakening of a whole new life and available opportunities.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years the tide of the corporate man has turned, and men are not finding the same satisfaction and beneficial returns from working for a large corporation. Corporate America is now considered a less secure long term career choice, and attitudes within corporate America have transformed from a focus on people development to a narrow concentration on how corporations can better increase monetary returns no matter what the impact on the corporate worker (Ginsburg 1997). The employee of the post-war era worked out of the need to support himself and his family instead of choosing a career that he wanted. In the 1980's the meaning of work in a man's life changed from the traditionalists and Baby Boomer view, which was working out of necessity, to a view of working in a career of choice.

This revolution in corporate America has motivated men to find meaning and purpose from other sources outside of work, including focusing on family, hobbies, relationships, service and community rather than money, wealth, promotion, and decision making power (Palmer, 2000). This change in perspective has motivated many men to leave the corporate work place and seek out other careers to match their values and lifestyles.

A substantial amount of research has been carried out and presented on the self-initiated career change of men in their forties and relationship of this career choice to what has been identified as the mid-life crisis (Ginzberg et al., 1951; Jung, 1954; Levinson, 1978; Merriam, 1994; Merriam & Clark, 1991). Mid-life may be classified by some as the middle of life which, depending upon the context, and can mean age 40 based upon an average life span of 80 years. This span of years most commonly refers to that period of middle age falling between 40 and 60.   In turn, due to the focus of research on the age of the mid-life crisis man, little research has been conducted on successful, corporate affiliated men, not in their forties, but rather in their thirties, who decide to make career changes not motivated by a crisis event.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to further the understanding of the career transitions of men who make a self-chosen career change while in their thirties. The study seeks to gain understanding of the nature of their experience from the time they decide to leave their current position and embark on the career change process to where the men are currently. Further, the study asks: What was involved in the transition, and what experiences did they have? What lessons were learned from the transition, and how did the men interpret the whole career change experience?

Research Questions

This study seeks to contribute to the current body of knowledge in proposing

three research questions: 1) What did the men experience after they decided to make

the career change? 2) What lessons were learned from the experiences of the career

changers? and 3) How did the men reflect upon their career change years later?

Significance of the Problem

Making a career change is neither easy nor quick. As with any life change that an

individual incurs, changing an occupation brings fear and anxiety. Krumboltz stated,

"Giving up one's work environment requires a profound shift in values and

relationships. It can pose emotional problems just as severe as those triggered by

divorce" (Krumboltz, 1996). It is expected that this body of work, reported in

narrative form, may provide guidance and assistance to the many men who are

currently experiencing a career change, as well as those who may be considering

such a transition. Reading and understanding the stories of those who have walked

the career change path before may prove helpful in their own journey forward and

may also give valuable knowledge to employers and corporate organizations that

employ men who have expressed a desire for a career change.

There is also a need for further understanding related to the family members,

friends and significant others who experience a career change through their loved

one. The families of those who are making a career change often do not understand

the need for a change, and it is hoped that this work will provide understanding to

those families seeking answers to "why" the man in their life is making such a change. The intentions are that this work will build upon the knowledge base previously studied by other researchers and provide increased information and understanding for the career counselors, families, employers, and loved ones who deal with this issue.

CHAPTER II:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The theoretical perspectives for this study center on adult development, career change and personal transitions. This literature review draws in particular on the aspects of adult development theories as these pertain to career change and personal transitions of men during their thirties. Career change and personal transition theories provide a rich context to further understand the correlation between career and personal transitions. Also, recent Empirical Research into career change and personal transitions focus on the midlife career change leaving a gap that still remains for the younger individual who transitions to another career. Finally, this section concludes with the relevance of these adult theories to my study.

Adult Development Theories

The questions have often been asked, "What is involved in the transition from a career in a Fortune 500 company to a new career outside of corporate America?" "How do adults deal with a working world that is in constant flux?" "How can adults prepare themselves for a career transition?" Many of the answers to these questions can be found within the adult development, career change and personal transition theories that have been researched in the last thirty years.

The adult development theories contained in this literature review are the lens for my research. Specifically, the research focuses on the significant developmental changes and transformations that occur during and after a career change by a man in his thirties. It also seeks to expand the knowledge of questions regarding the transition; what did the men experience after they decided to make the career change, and what lessons did they learn? How did they wade through the transition, and what did it mean? Does the meaning change as they progress through their 40's and 50's? By incorporating the qualitative narrative inquiry method, I seek to further the knowledge base on the phenomenon of men who change from a corporate career to one outside of corporate America.

The purpose and goal of this adult development review is to summarize the main adult development theories in relation to individual professional and personal change, transitions and the role of education in career transitions. While there is an abundance of literature on adult development, I have selected and narrowed down the theories to four different frameworks. The first is the phase theorists; the second is the stage theorists; third is an integration of various other theories that are relevant to my research; and last is a review of personal transition theories.

Carl Jung

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was a Swiss-German psychoanalyst who with Sigmund Freud was instrumental in taking psychology into the twentieth century.

9

He developed numerous theories, two of which are the collective unconscious and archetypes. Jung also wrote about adult stages of development which consists of three separate stages; the first stage is childhood which encompasses the time between birth and adolescence. It is during this stage of development that most energy is expended on learning the fundamental skills necessary for survival such as how to talk and walk. As the child grows and matures towards adolescence, more and more energy is directed towards sexual activities which will reach its peak during adolescence. In the early years of life Jung held that there was no continuous memory, but instead there were islands of consciousness in which there was no connection for the so-called ego. The problems associated with this stage were more directed to parents, educators and those who dealt with children. Jung believed that this stage of development came with certain problems, but that the child himself or herself really had no problems of their own. He alleged that it is only after growing up that an individual can have doubts and be at variance with himself/herself.

The second stage of development is young adulthood which encompasses the time from adolescence to around the age of 40. During this stage most energy is directed toward getting married, raising children, learning a vocation and connecting in some way to community life. It is during this stage that the demands of life soon put an end to the dream of childhood. For some individuals this transition may take place smoothly, while others will cling to the illusions they had of adult life from their childhood, even if those illusions contradict the reality of this stage of life.

During this stage the individuals will have certain tendencies towards being outgoing, energetic and passionate in their daily lives.

Jung wrote extensively that the tendencies, beliefs and expectations of youth need to be overcome during this period as well as other stages of development to achieve self-actualization, which, according to Jung, is life's primary goal. The struggle to overcome childish illusions and habits help the individual to transition into the middle of life. As an individual approaches the middle of life, the more one has discarded the behaviors of childhood and the problems of young adulthood, the better one enters the final stage of human development. It is towards the end of the second stage of development (between thirty-five and forty) that a significant change in the human psyche occurs. It is not a striking change, but one that Jung calls "a slow change in a person's character, one which seems to take its rise from the unconscious" (Jung, 1933, p. 38).

The final stage of development is Middle age. This stage covers the age of around 40 to the later years in a person's life. It is in this stage that Jung spent a majority of his focus and which he felt was the most important. It is during this stage that a person is transformed from an outgoing, energetic person to one who is entrenched in their own personal standpoints and social positions.

As one approaches the middle of life, Jung supposed that individuals should have succeeded in entrenching themselves in their own personal standpoints and social position. The more individuals discovers the right ideals and principles of behavior, the better they are prepared for the "middle of life." This occurs through

11

experiencing and overcoming the problems that are faced in the earlier stages. As one progresses through this stage, one becomes more oriented towards a cultural, philosophical and spiritual view. The person is more concerned with wisdom and with the meaning of one's life; the needs of this stage are different than those that were experienced during the earlier stages. One such need that emerges in this stage is that of spirituality. This spiritual journey helps to decipher the meaning of life and the evolution of the psyche toward understanding, harmony and wisdom. According to Jung this journey is the primary goal of life, the path to achieving self-actualization.

The strengths of Jung's work are his many new ideas and concepts dealing with personality theory. He originated the idea of self-actualization and the importance of self reflection in the personality developmental process. He also emphasized the importance of purpose and meaning in an individual's life. This optimistic view led him to see the positive side of human destiny and why individuals behaved as they did. Jung's theory argued that the attainment of self actualization was the master motive behind human behavior.

A weakness of Jung's work is that he limits who he felt could attain self-actualization. Jung was of the opinion that only well-educated individuals who were highly intelligent and had ample time to reflect upon their lives could reach self-actualization. According to Jung's view this omits a majority of individuals in today's society. Another weakness of Jung's work is the lack of validation of the major parts of his theory. Many of the principles that lie within his theory can not be

tested or duplicated; only his research using the word-association test has been validated.

Many aspects of Jung's work are directly applicable to my research. The phenomenon of "the needs" of the individual in each stage of development is relevant to this study which seeks to find out what needs were important to these men and how their current work situation was not meeting those needs. The manner in which Jung classified his middle-age group of men did not seem to resonate with my research interests. He felt that man changed extensively in his forties, yet in an ever changing and evolving workplace, people are today faced with many of the work place issues much earlier than the forties. Both the workplace and the working man are much different than during the time of Jung's writings.

Erik Erikson

Erik Erikson was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1902. He was an artist and a teacher in the late 1920's when he met Anna Freud (the daughter of Sigmund Freud), an Austrian psychoanalyst. She was instrumental in Erikson's education and persuaded him to study child psychoanalysis in Vienna. After studying in Vienna Erikson immigrated to the United States in 1933 where he taught at Yale University and Harvard University. His main interest was the influence of society and culture on child development, and he is best known for his theory on the eight stages of development.

Erikson held that all humans must pass through eight developmental stages in their life and that at each developmental stage certain things happen to the ego. The first five stages of personality development closely relate to Freud's psychosexual stages of development, but after these first five stages the two have little agreement.

The last three stages are Erikson's own work. These three stages are one of his greatest contributions to psychology and personality development. It is important to note that the ages associated with each of the stages can only been seen as approximations. Due to the limitations of my current work I will only address the last two stages of Erikson's work.

For reference purposes the first six stages of Erikson's work consist of:

1. Infancy: Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust. Hope
2. Early Childhood: Autonomy vs. Shame, Doubt. Will
3. Play Age: Initiative vs. Guilt. Purpose
4. School Age: Industry vs. Inferiority. Competence
5. Adolescence: Identity vs. Identity Confusion. Fidelity
6. Young Adulthood: Intimacy versus Isolation. Love

The verb following the explanation of each stage is the ego quality that should emerge from completing that phase of development.

The seventh stage of Erikson's work is Adulthood: Generativity versus Stagnation. The ego quality that emerges through this stage is care. The approximate ages that comprise this stage are from 25 to 64, which refers to middle adulthood. If one has passed successfully through the early stages, developed a positive identity and is living a productive, happy life, the next step is to pass this on to the next generation. This "passing on" can happen in numerous ways such as

interacting with children directly or creating experiences that enhance the lives of the following generation.

If an individual is to successfully navigate the seventh stage of personality development he should develop a sense of generativity, which may be better known as productivity and creativity. When an individual's primary concern is to establish and guide future generations, that person has developed a sense of generativity. The person's ego is then described having the value of care. This "type" of care is shown as the adult seeks to provide children with the same types of experiences that helped the adult facilitate personality growth and develop personal and cultural values, or in other words, those events that helped them develop an ego that values care.

When people have not developed a sense of generativity, they are characterized by "stagnation and interpersonal impoverishment" (Erikson, 1950/1985, p. 267). Since each individual will not tip the balances fully in either direction, the ratio of generativity to stagnation will determine if one leaves the stage with the virtue of care. In defining care Erikson said, "the widening concern for what has been generated by love, necessity, or accident; it overcomes the ambivalence adhering to irreversible obligation" (Erikson, 1964, p. 131).

The final stage of Erikson's personality development is that of Old Age: Ego Integrity vs. Despair. The ego quality is wisdom. This stage occurs from the age of 65 until the death of the individual and is referred to as late adulthood. Erikson defined ego integrity as,

him who in some way has taken care of things and people and who has

adapted himself to the triumphs and disappointments adherent to being, the

originator of others or the generator of products and ideas—only in him may

gradually ripen the fruit of these seven stages—I know no better word for it

than ego integrity. (Erikson, 1950, p. 268).

If a person has attained a life which can be looked back upon as rich, constructive

and full of growth that person will not fear death, but experience a feeling of

fulfillment and completion. In contrast if an individual looks back upon a life which

was full of frustration and stagnation then they will experience despair. This

individual is not prepared for death because it is obvious that they have not achieved

their major goals in their life.

It is important to note that the eight stages are directly related to each other with

the eighth stage relating back to the first stage, finishing a circular pattern. In the

eighth stage if a person has more ego integrity than despair that individual's life will

be characterized by the virtue of wisdom.

The strengths of Erikson's work are the major contributions he made to

psychology and the applicable value that they have today in the areas of child

psychology, vocational counseling, education, and business. He also studied healthy

people in relation to his eight stages. The development of the study of personality

across an entire lifetime is also a strength of his work; today many psychologists

consider Erikson's eight stages to be one of the most useful theories developed.

A further strength of Erikson's work in relation to my research was his emphasis on problem solving, identity and interpersonal relationships. His departure from Freud and Jung in relation to an emphasis on sexual instincts provided more insight into the type of individual that I will be studying.

One of the weaknesses of Erikson's work is the difficulty it presents in testing empirically and through statistical analysis. Another weakness in Erikson's work is the optimistic view that he presents, instead of delving deeper and focusing on the intense struggle individuals will experience. Many researchers also found his final stages especially naïve to the complexity of adult development.

I found Erikson's stages contained age ranges that were too broad for the specific participants in my research. This study focuses on the changes that occur through the 30's and 40's, and for Erikson that is included in one stage. I am of the opinion that the change and development that occurs for a 27 year old man is much different than that of a 52 year old man.

Daniel Levinson

Daniel Levinson is a Yale Psychologist who in the sixties and seventies studied a small group of men to gain a deeper understanding of male adult development which lead to his groundbreaking book, *Seasons of a Man's Life*. Levinson's theory of Seasons of Adulthood belongs under the umbrella of phase theories of development, but Levinson's theory departs from the other theories in that he eliminates the

assumption that movement through these stages needs to involve development of the individual.

The central theme to Levinson's theory of adult change consists of an individual's life structure. This life structure is the "underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time" (Levinson, 1986, pg. 6). Life structure is explained by Levinson as the key components of our life including relationships with others. These relationships consist of spouse or partner, children, work individuals and other significant groups or social structures, such as a church or social club. He states, "These relationships are the stuff of which our lives are made they give shape and substance to the life course" (Levinson, 1990, p. 42).

The life structure that each person creates is affected by their personality and situations and cannot remain stable throughout one's life. As a person grows, matures, and has different experiences, careers and relationships, the life structure will change. This is shown in the example of two individuals who mainly deal with similar life circumstances, yet they will not create the same life structure. The life of an adult consists of alternating periods of stable life structures intermixed with transition periods during which the old life structures are adjusted, reexamined or altered in some way.

Levinson's theory consists of four eras. The first is the era of preadulthood which occurs at the age of 0-22. The second era is that of early adulthood which consists of individuals age 17-45. The third era is that of middle adulthood consisting of

individuals age 40-65. The last era is that of late adulthood or those individuals who are 60 years of age and older.

Transition periods occur during the middle of each era. In the era of early adulthood the transition occurs at age 30. During the era of middle adulthood the age 50 transition occurs. There are no midlevel transitions for the eras of early adulthood and late adulthood.

At the culmination of each era another transition phase is introduced by Levinson. The first transition period is between the era of early adulthood and middle adulthood, consisting of individuals between the ages 17-22. The second transition period is mid-life which occurs between the era of middle adulthood and late adulthood, consisting of individuals between the ages 40-45. Last is the late-adult transition which occurs between the ages of 60-65. The last three eras and transition periods will be discussed in depth.

Two key elements play a critical role during the era of early adulthood (17-45). The first is the creation of a relationship with a mentor and the second is the establishment of a dream. The dream is an idea or imagined possibility of what one may want to become. As one begins to pursue this dream the individual needs to establish a mentor relationship with someone who is eight to fifteen years older. That mentor may then take the young person under his wing and teach, advise, sponsor, support or serve as a model for the young person. This mentor can be a friend, relative or coworker.

The main role of the mentor according to Levinson is to assist the young person in making the transition from reliance on his parents to reliance on himself. This time is considered the early adult transition. During this transition one will deal with issues ranging from independence to establishing an identity and life that is separate from one's family. This time will not last as goals may or may not be reached and other demands may come into play. As the individual copes with the transition the first life structure is created or the beginning of the era of middle adulthood.

It is important to note that the movement from transitions to different eras of a man's life is not marked by development that is better or worse or an individual man who is more or less mature. Levinson affirmed, "The tasks of one period are not better or more advanced than those of another, except in the general sense that each period builds upon the work of the earlier ones and represents a later phase in the cycle. There are losses as well as gains in the shift from every period or era to the next" (Levinson, 1978, p. 320).

During the era of middle adulthood the individual invests himself in work, family, friendships, and community. The individual establishes a niche in society and strives to "make it," to achieve the dream they had during early adulthood. As the forties begin the man enters midlife transition and asks himself such basic questions as "What have I done with my life? or "What do I want for myself and others?" This period is not always marked by crisis but can involve crisis for some individuals.

The two questions posed in Levinson's work are an essential component in my research. According to Levinson men will ask themselves significant questions that

are central to their existence during this stage of development. While some men will experience crisis, others will not. My research will focus on the men who are not in crisis but are still experiencing change, development and transition.

Levinson surmised that when the transition period is over the man begins the next era of adulthood where he may create a new life structure which may involve a new job, a new marriage or a change in the nature of the individual's work life. The individual is building a second midlife structure or is settling down to their middle adulthood. This may be a very happy and fulfilling time as the adult has successfully adapted the life structures to changes in his life and roles.

The last transition is the late-adult transition where the individual is terminating middle adulthood and bridging into late adulthood. The individual is preparing for retirement and the physical declines of old age. This is a major turning point in the life cycle as the individual once again has to create a new life structure that will suit retirement and coping with increasing physical declines and illness.

One of the strengths of Levinson's work is the dissecting of each developmental period for the adult male. Levinson was very specific about the events that could occur during a 5-7 year time period. This smaller age range for each of the transitions and eras makes it easier for the learner to decipher what events/obstacles may occur. I found this more applicable to my research as the smaller age periods are more in line with the phenomenon of my research. I found Levinson's specifics of the tasks of each developmental theory easy to follow and more substantial in understanding each developmental period.

One of the weaknesses of Levinson's theory is his original theory was based entirely on an intensive study of a small group of middle-aged men. There is also little support for his notion of the dream and mentor roles during the early adult era.

George Vaillant

George Vaillant is a professor of psychology at Harvard Medical school and is another theorist that plays an important role in the development of the adult life. Although Vaillant's theory does not have specific stages, it is more focused on the gradual, slope like development of an adult rather than on the movement of an adult from one stage to another.

Valliant's theory acknowledges the stage-like development that adults go through as they develop and mature but then describes this growth as more complex. Individuals are different as each one develops, grows and changes at their own rate. Vaillant was interested in the potential progressive change in how adults adapt psychologically to the trials and tribulations that they face. He called the major form of adaptation defense mechanisms. Vaillant listed four levels of defense mechanisms: psychotic, immature, neurotic and mature. The more an individual incorporated mature mechanisms, the less distortion of reality an individual experienced. It also reflected a more graceful, less uncomfortable way of coping with life's difficulties. Vaillant supposed that the more effectively an adult could cope with the trials and tribulations of normal life, the more mature an individual's defense mechanisms would be. He described most adults as using a wide range of

defenses covering several different levels; many times the choice of mechanism depended on the level of stress that one encountered. Vaillant's theory is more developmental than a phase theory as he focused on the progress an adult makes towards maturity. Vaillant's theory has added to the base knowledge of adult development, but his focus on defense mechanisms in dealing with stress and change does not deal directly with my research.

Robert Kegan

Robert Kegan is a developmental psychologist from Harvard University. An author and lecturer, Kegan has written numerous books that deal with the evolving self and its role in business and personal life. To fully understand Kegan's theory of human development one must start with his concepts of persons and development.

Kegan held numerous notions regarding persons. He deemed that people construct their realities, that they are the ones who make meaning out of their lives. Kegan supposes that as individuals construct their own realities, they evolve through a succession of "selves." He wrote that individuals were always moving through times of stability and change. Kegan was of the opinion that people had two yearnings in life: to be included and to be independent. These two yearnings constructed a life long tension seeking to be fulfilled.

The other concept that Kegan discussed was the notion of development. Kegan deemed development as an evolutionary motion that is ongoing; it consists of a lifelong process of integration and differentiation. This process is a constant

movement toward making meaning of one's life, resolving discrepancies, and also preserving and enhancing personal integrity. Kegan described it as, "an individual who is responding to a complex world" (Kegan, 1982, p. 92). A response occurs when an individual encounters and then resolves disequilibrium in their life; this process includes the individual moving back and forth between inclusion and independence, depending on what the person is encountering.

Kegan described six stages of development. Each stage is characterized by the needs of that stage, how the individual reacts to those needs, and what subject or object relation may play a part in determining what the person is seeking. Kegan emphasizes the importance of regarding each phase as an evolving transitional process where dynamic tension pushes us to grow. The first three stages discuss the individual up to age sixteen. Stage zero is the incorporative self which ends around the age of two. Stage one is the impulsive stage which ends between the ages of five and seven. Stage two is the imperial self which ends between the ages of twelve and sixteen. It is the next three stages that address more of the adult development theory.

Stage three is labeled the interpersonal stage. This stage is focused on the self and how the needs of the individual are determined or ordered by interpersonal relationships. At this stage the individual experiences interpersonal relationships but not intimate relationships. Kegan says of the individual at this stage, "There is no self to share with another, instead the other is required to bring the self into being" (Kegan, 1982, p. 134). At this point the person does not express anger as anger

24

would put the relationship at risk of failure, but instead channels emotions into feeling wounded, sad or incomplete.

Stage four is named the institutional self, because in this stage the interpersonal relationships are rooted by the institution. The person is self-reflective of roles, norms, and self concepts. The individual does not determine truths for themselves, but in turn are determined by a faction, group or class. When chaos enters into the person's life it is met with resistance, for the chaos threatens the order and the structure of the self. The self wants to experience equilibrium in its environment so the question the person asks himself/herself changes in stage four. During stage three the question might be asked, "Do you like me?" In stage four the question now appears as, "Does my government still stand?"

The last stage is called the interindividual self. The self and its needs have now evolved into a weave of personal systems where the individual is no longer defined by the needs and descriptions of their job, their work roles, or those individuals around them. The person is not a description of who the individuals around them are, nor the needs that used to define those relationships; they are now a "self" who is able to seek out information that causes changes in behaviors. They are capable of constructive, negative judgments about oneself. The individual is also now capable of intimate relationships, for there is now a self that can give to others and is not held back by the needs of the individual, which in the past has dictated behavior.

The strength of Kegan's views is his focus on the individual's effort to make sense of every life experience and how that experience gives the true meaning of life.

Kegan writes about this process of human development focusing on the internal experience of both growth and transition. His focus is more on the internal changes that come from external and internal tension. Kegan's view will play a role in my research as I spotlight the individual's effort to make sense of the experience they had during their career change.

There are few weaknesses to Kegan's views as they have been extensively studied and written about in numerous articles and journals. His views are on the internal change of the individual and leave out many of the external changes that can occur simultaneously. Kegan could be more descriptive about the external tensions and changes that occur. The tension spoken of by Kegan throughout each of his stages can be externally focused without causing internal tension. As stated before, his theory will play a strong role in my study but will be combined with other views that bring in the external nature of adult development and transition.

Jack Mezirow

An Emeritus professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, Jack Mezirow has focused his research on the study of Transformational Learning. In line with this work he started the AEGIS program at Columbia University, a PhD program geared toward transformational learning in adult development and higher education.

The study of transformational learning emerged with the work of Mezirow in 1981. Mezirow described transformational learning as "learning that induces more
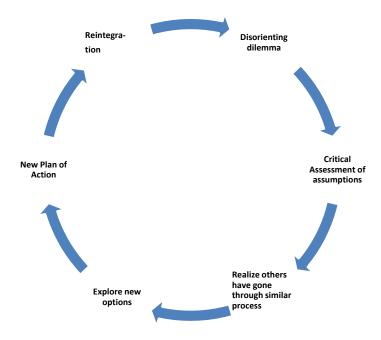
far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning, especially learning experiences which shape the learner and produces a significant impact, or paradigm shift, which affects the learner's subsequent experiences" (Mezirow, 1990, pg. 8).

Transformational learning is adult development and learning that occurs both in a person's individual life and in the learning environment and involves dramatic change. To describe it in a global view, it is a change in the way one sees oneself and the world around them. There are three issues that are a central theme to the transformation learning process and assist in understanding the progression. The first and most important is the "experience" which is the starting point and the content for reflection. Experience is part of the material that constructs an individual and what a person must reflect upon to begin change. The second issue is to consider one's life experiences in a critically reflective manner which is crucial for transformational learning. The third issue is making a change which initiates growth and development.

Dr. Mezirow developed the concept of "meaning perspectives" as one's overall world view and the concept of "meaning schemes" which are smaller components that contain specific knowledge, beliefs and values about one's personal experiences.

The process of transformational learning is explained by six separate steps or processes. These steps are not consecutive nor do they need to start with the disorienting dilemma, but can begin anywhere in the transformative process.

Table 1. Mezirow's Process of Transformational Learning

Most individuals will begin their transformative learning process with a disorienting

dilemma which is a particular life event that occurs unexpectedly such as death, an

illness or a job change. When the disorienting dilemma occurs the crisis cannot be

resolved in the usual way, so the individual will have to engage in the second step

which is self-examination. Self examination is necessary due to the fact that an

event has occurred which is not in the normal realm of the individual, and they may

not have the necessary tools or skills to cope with such a disorienting dilemma. The

individual is thrown from the raft of their normal life into the rapids of a river.

Self examination then leads to the individual critically assessing their

assumptions. The individual questions the basis of what they have known to be

"true" or "right." This self reflection also carries with it questions on how the

assumptions were developed and formed. As this process of self reflection and critical assessments occurs, the individual then is able to look outside themselves and recognize that others have gone through a similar process. As this is recognized, the person will begin to reach out to others and form new relationships, starting to embrace new roles in their life, as well as new actions that have to be taken.

As the individual embraces the new roles, actions and relationships they are led to create a new plan of action which includes acquiring new knowledge and skills. The individual must try out new roles and begin to negotiate new relationships and renegotiate current relationships; the changing of the current relationships and the building of new relationships will build the self-confidence of the individual. As spoken of earlier by Kegan, one of the two yearnings of life is to be included, and at this point in the transformational process the individual has found new relationships and renegotiated old ones in their new life roles.

The individual then initiates reintegration back into one's life based on the new transformed perspective, relationships and life roles. Unfortunately and fortunately, this is not a once in a lifetime event, but something that will occur throughout the different stages in the course of one's life. Mezirow believed that this transformational learning could happen in the classroom. The educator and the student both hold roles in making this occur, but three common mechanisms must be incorporated for this to be successful. There must be action, critical reflection and rational discourse. Mezirow stated, "transformative learning involves reflectively

transforming the beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions that constitute our meaning schemes" (Mezirow, 1990, pg. 63).

Dr. Mezirow's transformational learning theory has been criticized by many; some feel that the idea of phases can be artificial. It has also been asked if transformations can occur without the critical reflection of the individual, as some doubters have asked if it isn't possible to transform in an instant instead of going through the different steps of transformational learning. Another weakness is the focus of Mezirow on the individual without looking at society as a whole. Some scholars feel that a clear context must be set in order to understand when transformational learning has occurred.

On the opposite side of the spectrum are the strengths of Mezirow's work that many scholars have found in the transformational learning theory. Steven Brookfield and Pablo Freire have written on this area and see transformational learning as central to the goals of adult education. What are some of the goals of adult learning, is it to "challenge our abilities to communicate, understand and learn?" as spoken of by Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p. 322)? Or is the main goal to learn selected material and then proceed on with the next course?

Mezirow has opened up many new ideas on the meaning and value of what adult education can bring and has expanded the thought processes on what the main goals of adult education are. Mezirow's theory of transformational learning plays a central role in my research. Portions of this research deal with the role higher learning plays

in the career change of these individuals as the participants return to school, learn

new trades, and seek out knowledge for new career options.

<center>Transition Theories & Empirical Research</center>

Research on transitions is currently divided up into two frameworks: the career

transition and the personal transition. The current research on personal transitions is

not included with career literature but is beginning to be discussed when examining

how adults transition from one career to another. This study includes both career and

personal transition literature to give a broader understanding of the men's transition.

Both frameworks are complimentary in understanding the research topic and should

not be viewed as competing theories.

William Bridges

William Bridges is a speaker, author and consultant who is best known for his

work in dealing with change and transition. Before changing careers himself,

Bridges was a professor of American Literature at Mills College in Oakland,

California. The best overall description of what constitutes adult transition can be

found in Lewis Carroll's "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.*"

> "Who are you?" said the Caterpillar….
> "I – I hardly know, Sir, just at the present," Alice replied rather
> shyly, "at least I know who I *was* this morning, but I think I
> must have been changed several times since then."

Bridges presented four rules of transition and then introduced three different phases of an individual's transition which will be discussed later. Bridges writes that the first rule of transition is: You can find yourself coming back in new ways to old activities when you're in transition. Rule number 2: Every transition begins with an ending. We have to let go of the old thing before we can pick up the new and not just outwardly, but inwardly. This rule is best described as letting go of our old ties and old ways. The third rule of transition is: although it is very advantageous to understand your own style of endings, there is some part of you that will resist that understanding as though your life depended on it. Every individual has their own style of ending, and it is important to learn how each individual deals with their endings.

The fourth rule of transitions is: First there is an ending, then a beginning, with an important empty or fallow time in between, which Bridges described as the order of things in nature. Bridges felt this was best described by seasons that end and the new beginnings that they bring. He wrote, "human affairs flow along similar channels" (Bridges, 1980, p. 18). The four rules of transition lead us into understanding the transition process and how it occurs. Bridges wrote that no one person can be expected to fit into a natural stage of adult development, but rather everyone involved in transition will go through three different experiences or phases. These natural phases are named by Bridges as "Endings," "The Neutral Zone," and "The New Beginning."

The first natural phase is that of Endings. This is when the individual disengages from some component of their current life situation. All types of events may start the disengagement such as a divorce, death, job loss or change, moves, illnesses and even some smaller events. These situations break up the old system which "served to reinforce our roles" (Bridges, 1980, p. 96).

Once disengagement has begun, the person loses their current self-definition. This was explained as Disidentification, which is best illustrated as the loss of a role that dictated behavior and made the person "readily identifiable" to themselves and others (Bridges, 1980, p. 96). As the person becomes separated from their old situation, identity Disenchantment begins to set in. What the individual once believed to be true is now seen in a different light; this is what Bridges describes as the first signal that things are now beginning to move into transition. The final signal is that of Disorientation. Transition has started and the reality that an individual has always known is beginning to change. The feeling of confusion, being lost and not knowing "where you are going" sets in, which leads to the bridge of the second natural phase of transition, The Neutral Zone.

The Neutral Zone is the place that the individual begins to surrender to the change that is taking place and a new awareness begins to set in. The most difficult of the three phases, this phase is full of emptiness and loneliness; it is also in this phase that the first inkling of a new direction can be discovered.

The final natural phase is the New Beginning. It is in this phase that the individual is ready to make a beginning and look for new opportunities. It is during

this phase that the individual begins to feel a renewal of energy and a new focus take hold. A comment by Eleanor Roosevelt exemplifies the final phase of transition, "Somewhere along the line of development we discover what we really are, and then we make our real decision for which we are responsible. Make that decision primarily for yourself because you can never really live anyone else's life, not even your own child's" (Lash, 1971, pg. 14).

   The strengths of Bridge's work on transition is his ability to take a more global view of what occurs during change. The manner in which he describes internal feelings instead of specific outward actions or steps made his theory more relevant. The weaknesses of Bridge's work may be the simplicity of his three phases. Bridges described the feelings, difficulties and tensions that can be found in each phase, but he offered no solutions or steps of action for passing through the transition phases. He felt that this was up to the individual and could not be written to the population as a whole since individuals are so diverse.

Nancy Schlossberg

   Schlossberg has been a major contributor to the field of counseling since the early 1950's. She received her Bachelors of Arts in Sociology from Barnard College in 1951. Later returning to school, she earned her Ed.D in Counseling in 1961 from Teachers College, Columbia University. She has served on numerous faculties including at Wayne State University and Howard University. She is currently professor emeritus in the Department of Counseling and Personnel Services,

University of Maryland, College Park. She first published her research in 1981 in the periodical, *The Counseling Psychology.* In 1984 she published a book length treatment called *Counseling Adults in Transition* (Evans et al., 1998). A noted author and researcher Schlossberg has written numerous book and articles about counseling adults in transition.

Schlossberg's (1994) definition of transition was based upon the individual's perception of their personal change. This included life events of birth, death, divorce and any other event that results in a change. Schlossberg (1984) defined transition as an "event or nonevent that results in a change in relationships, routines, assumptions, and or roles with in the settings of self, work, family, health." Transitions are only transitions if the individual views it as a transition and experiences internal and external change (Schlossberg, 1984, p. 42).

Schlossberg (1996) introduced a career counseling phase model that treated work life transitions and identified four types of work transitions: Moving in, Moving Through, Moving Out and Trying to Move In Again. Her emphasis on career transition discusses the whole individual's needs and suggested interventions within the four types of work life transitions. Moving Out is most appropriately tied to this research as the participants were leaving their careers and may have needed career counselor guidance in discussing how to leave and then how to move forward with life. During this time individuals feel a sense of loss, which is then overtaken with grieving.

Her three-step transition model which includes her theory for providing career

assistance to adults is, one, approaching transitions: The Transition Identification and

Transaction process where the individual realizes that they are in a change mode and

the counselor determines the type, context and impact of the transition. Second,

Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4S System Taking Stock of Coping

Resources: Situation, Support, Strategies, and Self where the counselor identifies

resources for the individual to assist them through the transition. Last, taking charge:

Strengthening Resources (Schlossberg, Waters, Goodman, 1995) which discusses

ways individuals can deal with transitions. Schlossberg has expanded her work to

include different perspectives and theories in her "Integrative Model of the

Transition Model" where she includes theories from Bridges, Ebaugh and others.

Other Theories & Empirical Research

O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) developed a theory of coping with transitions

included a series of five stages. The first is stability (pre-transition) where the

individual maintains the roles and relationships with other workers in the absence of

internal or external pressure to change. The second is rising discontent where

pressure to change or begin to change is felt by the individual. They desire a change

from the old and common way of doing things, and they begin to become aware

(reflection) of parts of the self they have ignored in the past. The third is crisis and

appears different for everyone depending on the personal situation. The fourth is

redirection and adaptation which follows crisis and could include growth and change

or a return to the previous patterns of thought and behavior. Fifth is restabilizing a new identity and perspective that coincides with the growth and changes that have occurred.

Other empirical research that should be mentioned include Ebaugh's (1998) study of transitions as role changes. Ebaugh interviewed 195 individuals focusing on their voluntary exits from role changes. Her participant pool included men and women from varied socio-economic background. Her findings surmised that disillusionment and the taking on of new roles were all a part of the transition process. She also discussed the "ex-role" and the feelings and emotions that come with the loss of a role/label. Ibarra (2002) built upon Ebaugh's knowledge base by examining organizational provisional selves and the image and identity changes that occur during professional adaption. Ibarra interviewed 22 participants and their stories of career change concerning personal identity. Ibarra suggested that career transition is directly related to identity changes and how with one change comes other changes. A working identity is comprised of one's work, relationships and organizations.

Another researcher to look at career and personal transitions was Hall (1986) who suggested that transitional events always disrupted one's life and led to sub-identity transitions. When an individual transitions in professional or personal life that identity transitions will also occur. Hall suggests that transitions are complex complex processes, resting on mixed motives. Other notable transition & empirical research includes Hudson and Mclena Van Gennep (1960), Van Gennep, (1960).

Adult Theories' Relevance to this Study

The research into each of the different theories on adult development and transition has proven a tremendous benefit in focusing the lens through which my research will be viewed. All of the theories addressed here play some role in my research, but I expect the focus to primarily come from Mezirow's transformational learning, Levinson's theory of adult change and Bridges and Schlossberg's theory of transitions. When conducting narrative research, the study is not begun with a theoretical framework, but instead with experience as expressed in lived and told stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pg.40).

Each of these theories previously mentioned will be woven throughout my study as they emerge through the stories that are told.   In an attempt to create a seamless link between theory and the stories, the theoretical lens will be held until the themes have emerged from the inquiry and I, as a researcher, have a better understanding of the study participants' stories and their experiences.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Mode of Inquiry

This study involves the use of narrative inquiry. This chapter provides a review of narrative inquiry in order for deeper understanding of the narrative inquiry approach, the importance of narrative inquiry within qualitative research, and how it relates to adult and higher education. I will demonstrate why narrative inquiry is best suited for this study and then provide a description of the research design as it relates to this study.

History of Narrative Research

Narrative research has been occurring for decades but first emerged as a qualitative research form in the early 1990's. This type of qualitative research is utilized in numerous fields of study each discipline has developed specific procedures in making use of it. The first comprehensive overview for the field of education originated from educators D. Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly in the article entitled, "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry," published in the *Educational Researcher* in 1990 (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

The field of education has been a fertile ground for the influence and continued development of Narrative Inquiry. Cortazzi (1993) suggested that three factors within the field of education have increased the use of Narrative inquiry. First, there

is an increased emphasis on teacher reflection. Second, increased importance is being placed on teacher knowledge, which is comprised of factors such as how teachers think, what they know, how they develop professionally, and how they make decisions in the classroom. Third, educators are now seeking to bring teachers' voices to the forefront of education by empowering them to talk about their experiences. This sharing of experiences and stories is the basis of Narrative Inquiry research.

What is Narrative Research?

Narrative research designs are a distinct form of qualitative research that focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through a collection of stories, and then reporting the individual's experiences. A reporting of the experiences includes a retelling of the story in the researcher's words including the meaning of those experiences for the individual. Narrative inquiry describes the lives of individuals, collects and tells stories about people's lives, and also writes narratives of individual experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Narrative research is a literary form of qualitative research and has strong ties to literature; this connection with literature provides the researcher a literary form in which to write. Narrative research does not rest on the larger picture of cultural norms, ethnography or abstract theories, as in other types of qualitative research, but is a micro-analytic picture of individual stories and the experiences that are drawn from the participants' experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Narrative research is utilized when there is a phenomenon that a researcher wants to report about and when there are individuals willing to share their stories about the phenomenon. By gathering the stories and the meaning experienced, the research offers practical and specific insights into the phenomenon being studied. Narrative research is able to capture everyday, normal forms of data that are familiar to individuals (Creswell, 2005).

Steps in Conducting Narrative Research

There are numerous types and forms of narrative research, but nearly all educators follow the same seven steps in conducting it. The first step is to identify a phenomenon that addresses an educational problem. The researcher is exploring a phenomenon of interest that is in the form of a story. The second step purposefully selects an individual/study participant from whom you can learn about the phenomenon. A purposeful sample requires finding an individual who can provide understanding and meaning of the phenomenon through their story. Although many narrative studies examine only a single individual, several individuals may be used in a study. Each individual may share a different story that can conflict or support the phenomenon.

The third step collects the story from the individual. The intent of the researcher involves gathering the story of the individual's experiences concerning the phenomena by collecting field texts. The most productive way to gather the story entails personal conversations and/or interviews. Other ways to collect field texts

include reading the individual's journal or diary, observing the individual and recording field notes, collecting letters sent by the individual, hearing stories about the individual from family members, gathering documents that would include memos and official correspondence about the individual, obtaining photographs, memory boxes and other personal artifacts and recording the individual's life experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The fourth step necessitates restorying or retelling the individual's story. Once the raw data and field texts have been obtained, the researcher restories or retells the individual's story. This process includes examining the raw data, identifying the elements of the story in it, sequencing or organizing the story element and presenting the retold story in a way that conveys the individual's experiences. The restorying is used for numerous reasons; one, restorying allows the listener and the reader to better understand the story told by the participant if it is resequenced into a logical order. Second, the chronological order becomes crucial to analyzing the themes and categories found within the individual's story. Lastly, the researcher weaves the themes and categories found throughout the research data into the narrative including appropriate literature and studies.

One of the key elements of analyzing the raw data includes arranging the elements of the participant's story into the retelling of the researcher's story. It is crucial to incorporate many of the key elements found in a literary analysis of a novel. The time, place, plot and scene are all major elements that should be integrated in the story of the research participant.

Step five in conducting narrative research requires collaborating with the participant-storyteller. This step engages all the other components in the process. In narrative research the participant and researcher actively collaborate during the research process. Although the collaboration may take on different forms, the researcher and participant-storyteller must interact throughout the whole process.

Step six involves writing the story about the participant's experiences. At this point in the research process, the researcher writes and presents the story of the individual's experiences. The researcher's retelling highlights specific themes that emerged during the collecting of the story. This is imperative to increase the trustworthiness of the study.

A characteristic of narrative inquiry concerns the research literature. A specific literature section is not included; instead, the literature and research studies relevant to the problem or phenomenon are incorporated into the final sections of the study. As with all qualitative research, the researcher remains present in the narrative report with the first person pronoun referring to the researcher (Creswell, 2005).

Key Characteristics of Narrative Inquiry

One of the foremost points in a researcher's mind when conducting narrative inquiry concerns exploring the educational research problem by understanding the experiences of an individual. This learning occurs through collecting stories told by individuals which constitute the data gathered through interviews or informal conversations. The stories are referred to as field texts (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000). The field texts provide the data for the researcher to analyze as they retell the story based on the literary elements such as the problem, characters, setting, actions and resolution (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2000). During this process the researcher retells the story and at the same time identifies the themes or categories that have emerged. Throughout the whole process of collecting and analyzing data, the researcher works in partnership with the participant by discussing field texts, interviews and the meaning of the experience.

There are seven central characteristics to narrative research. I will briefly discuss these seven characteristics and highlight the relevance of each. The first characteristic comprises the individual experiences. In narrative research, the researcher studies a single individual, although many researchers include two to three participants to add depth and meaning to the restorying of the same phenomenon. Through the individual's experience the phenomenon is explored and meaning occurs. The focus on the participants' experience relates to the thoughts of John Dewey, who believed that individual experience was the central lens for understanding a person. This view of experience was seen as continuous, where one experience leads to another experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This focal point centers on why narrative researchers concentrate on understanding an individual's history and past experience and how these contribute to present and future experiences (Creswell, 2005).

The second characteristic involves the chronology of the experiences. Narrative researchers focus on understanding a participants' experiences, and by concentrating

on the experience the researcher elicits information about a participants' past, present and future. Time sequence or chronology of events becomes important. This chronology sets the narrative inquiry apart from other genres of research. The chronology gives depth and understanding of how the events occurred, in relation to the context and environment in which the experiences happened. Deeper meaning is drawn from understanding what happened first that led to the occurrence of other events.

The third characteristic collects the individual stories. In order to develop the chronology of the experience it becomes vital to gather the individual's story about his/her experience. The collecting of these stories should be conducted using multiple field texts, which has already been addressed in this paper.

The fourth characteristic implies restorying. After a participant has shared their experiences and story, the narrative researcher is then responsible to retell the story in the researcher's own words. The rationale for this is to allow the researcher to provide order and sequence to the story/experience as well as analyze the stories for key elements, themes and contexts. Numerous processes are utilized when retelling the story. Some processes that have been utilized by other researchers include retranscription, table ordering into story elements (setting, characters, actions, problem and resolution) as well as three-dimensional space narrative structure. The three-dimensional space narrative structure advanced by Clandinin and Connellly (2000) employs the participant's story into three structures: interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present and future) and situation (place).

The fifth characteristic recognizes themes and categories. As with all qualitative research the data can be segmented into the identification of themes and categories which assists with the depth and insight into understanding the individual's experiences. The most common number of themes identified by the researcher within the narrative inquiry is five to seven; the researcher then incorporates these themes into the individual's story or includes them as a separate portion of the study. In past narrative research themes are typically presented after the retelling of the story (Creswell, 2005).

The sixth characteristic consists of the context or setting. In narrative inquiry the context and setting are central to the individual's experiences and can range from family, work, home, school etc. It is the place where the story actually occurs. In many narrative studies the retelling of the story may begin with a description of the setting and context before the actual telling of the events of the story.

The seventh characteristic involves the collaboration between the researcher and the participant. The participant and the researcher are both actively involved in the research process. The collaboration is can extend to any aspect of the complete research process. The collaboration process must include the negotiating of the relationship so as to lessen the gap between the narrative that was told by the participant and the narrative reported (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Potential Issues in Narrative Inquiry

　　Some elements of narrative inquiry can potentially jeopardize the trustworthiness of the study. When a researcher gathers stories, many concerns may arise as to whether the story is authentic or the participant has given accurate data. Some information may have been distorted over the passing of time, or the participant may be unable to tell the real story. Other problems that may arise include the participant not remembering the full events of the story or the story being changed to present a "Pollyanna" view of the individual's experience. These are all key issues in narrative research as the researcher relies heavily on self-reported information from the storytellers.

　　The researcher has numerous tools to overcome these issues. The collection of multiple field texts, the triangulation of data, and member checking can help ensure that the data collected is considered valid.

　　Retaining the participant's voice in the final narrative report is important. The researcher should be cognizant that they are not telling their own story, but instead the story of the individual. This can be particularly hazardous because of the collaboration between the participant and the researcher.

Importance of Narrative Inquiry

　　Narrative inquiry has emerged as an important design within the qualitative research framework. Narrative inquiry brings understanding of an individual's experience. It encompasses the whole experience of the individual ranging from the

context of the setting of the phenomenon to the time, place and participants involved in the individual's story. Narrative inquiry brings understanding of a phenomenon to others through the telling of a personal story. To place narrative inquiry in a general framework, it answers the questions of meaning, significance and purpose in relation to a specific phenomenon through the gathering, analyzing and retelling of an individual's story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

My research interests are directed towards understanding the phenomenon of men who make a career change from a corporate career to one outside of corporate America and their experiences through the transition. The reflection of the participants and the meaning they gained from the experiences is important to their stories. These included lessons and reflections on their experiences once the career change process was started. I am also interested in the implications of higher learning or transformational learning that had to take place to complete the career change. Narrative inquiry will allow me as a researcher to gather data from men who have experienced this phenomenon and then through the analyzing and retelling of their story understand the meaning these men made through their career change. The research question drives the choice of using the narrative inquiry qualitative approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Research Design

Qualitative Methodology

The methodology that will be used to gather data for this qualitative study about men in their thirties who make a career change will rely on stories that are analyzed through the narrative inquiry method. Since I am conducting narrative inquiry, the research questions are not intended as a hypotheses to be supported or not supported, but rather as a loose guide for inquiry into what happened after the career change was initiated. I want to let the words of the study participants guide the inquiry. I also want to provide a full and rich look into the lives of these men, which can be assisted by using the participants' own words and life details (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Sampling

The population included in the study consists of fifteen men who made a career change while in their thirties. The study includes men who worked in a large corporation and then decided to leave corporate America. This could include, but is not limited to, joining a smaller business entity that is not recognized as a nation wide company or starting a small business with others or on his own.

Process of Data Collection

The data will be collected through two in-depth interviews with each study participant. The interviews will focus on the experiences, changes, and meaning that the men had after leaving their corporate positions.

Other means of primary data collected include letters that were written during and after career change, journals, resumes, emails, other significant documents and also an interview with a significant other who was present during the career change.

This narrative research approach allows for in-depth investigation and the gathering of rich personal accounts on why the men changed their careers. It also enables the men to tell their stories, in their own words, of what has occurred. The interviews will be tape recorded and the research participants will be asked to review the transcripts for accuracy of information.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Throughout the process of analyzing and interpreting the data, I will work in partnership with the participants by discussing field texts, exploring the themes of the interviews and the meaning of the experiences. First, I will highlight the characteristics that comprise the individual experiences. I will utilize the experiences of two to three participants to add depth and meaning to the restorying of the same phenomenon. Through the individual's experience the phenomenon will be explored for meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The focal point will center

on understanding an individual's history and past experience and how these contributed to present and future experiences (Creswell, 2005).

The second process of analysis involves the chronology of the experiences. I elicit information about participants' past, present and future. Time sequence or chronology of events is important. This chronology sets the narrative inquiry apart from other genres of research. The chronology gives depth and understanding of how the events occurred, in relation to the context and environment that the experiences happened. Deeper meaning is drawn from understanding what happened first that led to the occurrence of other events.

The third aspect of the analysis is restorying. After a participant has shared their experiences and story, I retell the story in my own words. This includes a discussion of the context of the individual's experience. In narrative inquiry the context and setting are central to the individual's experiences. This allows me to provide order and sequence to the story/experience, as well as analyze the stories for key elements, themes and contexts. Numerous processes are utilized when retelling the story. I employ several processes that have been utilized by other researchers including retranscription, table ordering into story elements (setting, characters, actions, problem and resolution) as well as three-dimensional space narrative structure.

The fourth process of analysis involves identifying themes and categories. As with all qualitative research, the data can be segmented into the identification of themes and categories which assists with the depth and insight into understanding the individual's experiences. The most common number of themes within the narrative

inquiry is five to seven, but of course this depends upon the nature of the data. I then

incorporate these themes into the individual's story or include them as a separate

portion of the study (Creswell, 2005).

Chapter IV

The Strugglers

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to further the current knowledge and

understanding of men who make a self-chosen career change in their thirties. This

study focused on the motives, processes, learned experiences and reflections of the

individual's career transition experiences that occur from the time they decide to

leave their corporate job to ten to fifteen years later.

This study utilized the narrative inquiry method of qualitative research. Narrative

inquiry describes the lives of individuals, collects and tells stories about people's

lives, and also writes narratives of individual experiences (Connelly & Clandinin,

1990). This narrative inquiry study focused on the experiences of the men during

their self-imposed career change and described the themes, patterns and selective

experiences that emerged during the career transition. The conceptual framework for

chapter 4 assists in constructing the meaning of what occurred to these men during

their vocational change.

The study's research questions are:

1. What did the men experience after they decided to make the career

    change?

2. What lessons were learned from the experiences of the career changers?

3. How did the men reflect upon their career change years later?

This chapter will briefly introduce the 15 participants in the study and provide a descriptive summary of the first grouping of men, the Strugglers, and their identifying characteristics. The Strugglers' themes and patterns that emerged from the analysis of the data collection will also be discussed.

Introduction of the Participants

All of the fifteen research participants were men who voluntarily left their chosen careers in their thirties, seeking a career outside of corporate America. Three participants were minorities and three participants lived outside of the U.S. Five of the participants left senior management roles, three left middle management roles, four were base level employees with no supervisory responsibilities and two had been doctors. The years of experience in their chosen professions ranged from 6-26, with an average of thirteen years. All but four of the participants had more than ten years of work experience in their chosen profession before they decided to transition to another career.

The ages of the participants ranged from 34-56 of which six were between the ages of 34-40, five were between the ages of 41-45, one between the ages of 46-50 and the final three participants were 52, 56, and 56 respectively. All participants were in their thirties when the career transition took place, and to protect the anonymity of each of the study participants, pseudonyms are used.

A Description and Discussion of the Major Groupings

After data from participant interviews were analyzed, each participant was categorized into one of three groupings: Strugglers, Still Becoming and Successes. These categories emerged from the data that was collected.

The men categorized into the Strugglers grouping are still in the process of coming to terms with their career change. At the time of the interview, the men had a vague understanding of what the whole experience meant to them, while most conveyed that they were unclear at the beginning of the career change as to what the desired end result or goal of that change would be. They initially had not realized the degree to which a career change would affect so many aspects of their lives, as well as those closest to them. These men were still questioning the decision of the career change and wondering if they had made the right choice. The pain of that question was apparent by their responses throughout each of the interviews.

The Still Becoming men showed larger variation in the themes and patterns that emerged while also extending along a wider spectrum. The men left their careers in search of a challenging and fulfilling career, while still seeking balance between their work and family lives. The Still Becoming can best be described by one of its members, who said, "We are stuck in the muck of the change." This feeling of subsisting in the "middle" of the change was consistent through the Still Becoming group. Further, they shared the expectation that the change process as a whole would have been easier, and/or that it would have already been completed by the time of our interview.

The men who were categorized as Successes had a clear understanding of what their desired goals were at the time they decided to make a vocational change. The men could speak about their goals, dreams and ambitions in detail, even if they had not yet reached their desired career. A majority of the Successes envisioned the transition as a continuous journey and not one that ended with the next career, but continued on to other career and professional development opportunities. The men spoke of their "next" career change and how another transition may be needed to reach their desired occupation, or more importantly the desired occupation at that moment in their lives, knowing that career goals changed as individuals developed and matured. Notably, the Successes also had a tremendous support system of friends and family to assist them through their career change.

Each of the groups are addressed at length in the sections that follow. Within each participant grouping (Strugglers, Successes, Still Becoming), results of the study are organized into a framework of motive, process, outcome and lessons/reflections of the change. This discussion includes both the formal and informal learning that took place within each grouping.

For cohesion in reading and to gain an understanding of the experiences of these men, their stories are shared within the framework already mentioned. For example, a comparison of the participants' motives, process, outcome, and lessons/reflections within the *Struggler* grouping provides a richer insight into the experiences of these men.

Strugglers

The Strugglers are best described by their ability to persist and stay on the path to their career change. The Strugglers' experiences during their self decided career change can best be described as difficult, as not one of the participants described his career transformation without mention of hardships, struggles, and self doubt. This was a norm amongst the group, but a certain cluster of men emerged from the others as continuous Strugglers, trudging through the phases of career changes in distinctively different ways than the other participants.

It is important to note that the Strugglers were not identified by their failure to procure other employment. In contrast, many of the Strugglers did find other employment and move on to monetary and career success. Rather, the men were identified by three distinct themes: their motives to transition, the way in which they navigated the process of the change and the lessons they learned through reflecting upon their career change. Numerous topics emerged related to these themes that differentiated the Strugglers from the other groupings. The first was a lack of a clear goal when the men left their original career. They knew they desired a career change, but began that change unsure of the desired end result. Second, the motivators to leave were based upon negative aspects of their current careers, as opposed to searching out a career that would provide satisfaction and self-fulfillment. Some of the men were running from their current career instead of running to something better. Next, the men constantly questioned their decision to leave and whether or not it was a wise choice. Finally, the loss of identity that

accompanied the transition and the delay or inability to regain another professional

identity was difficult for the participants. The distinctive themes that emerged for

the Strugglers within the framework of motive, process, outcome and

lessons/reflections will be discussed at length following an introduction of the

participants categorized into the Strugglers grouping.

Participant Profiles

#001 Jason

Jason presents as an intellectual and positive forty three year old; graying on the

sides and thinning on the top of his head, Jason is reaching middle age. Evidently in

a very good mood the day of our interview, his greeting to me upon our first meeting

was a smattering of questions. "Where did you go to college? What is your favorite

college team and do you have season tickets to the local pro basketball team?" It

was clear that Jason is "into sports". Jason is the father of three, all under the age of

10.   Jason is busy and juggles numerous responsibilities, which easily surface when

you converse with him. An admitted family man, he describes a great weekend as

"one at the ballpark spent watching your kids play." He is an assistant coach for

every sport his kids participate in but refuses to be head coach as that would require

"too much commitment."

Jason is quick to smile and laugh and easily makes fun of himself. He worked as

an environmental scientist project manager for nearly seven years before deciding to

leave his corporate job and pursue a new career in academia. His father had been a

professor for over thirty years, and Jason wanted to have some of the benefits that go along with teaching at the university level. Opportunity came while working as a project manager. Jason was approached by a former colleague about an open teaching position in his area of expertise, and he decided to jump at the chance and apply for the position. Having finished his Master's Degree, Jason was qualified to teach but did not have a doctoral degree, so within months he had both enrolled in a doctoral program and begun a new job.

After teaching for several years Jason was promoted to department chair. Three years into his position as department chair, Jason had still not completed his doctoral degree, although he had finished his course work. He was under pressure from the dean of the College as well as many of his colleagues to finish his dissertation, which would give him more clout as a department chair. It was difficult for him to lead a department full of tenured professors when he had only completed his course work and had not yet started his prospectus. Jason did not realize how busy he would be as a department chair and thought he would have more time to write his dissertation without so many tests, research papers to grade, student responsibilities and a heavy teaching load. Jason's wife is anxious for him to finish as his pay would rise significantly upon completion of his advanced degree. Jason is contemplating stepping down from his position so he can have more time to work on his dissertation. In addition, he is tired of managing professors in his department. He wants to return back to what he loves to do most, which is teaching.

During the process of his vocational change, Jason was less reflective about what impact this change was having on him and his family. Reflection occurred later in Jason's career change, nearly two years after he started teaching at the university. He discovered two facets of himself that were unknown to him before his career change; the first was his desire for stability and the second was the realization that he was not the entrepreneurial type.

Jason was raised in a family where his father worked for the same university his whole career while his mother stayed at home to raise the children. During dinner time his father spoke very highly of his job and how lucky he was to not have to worry year to year whether or not he would still be employed. This had an immense impact on Jason, and in his thirties he realized that he wanted the same type of occupation. He was more concerned about stability and job security than making a large income, which was proven by the fact that in his previous career he made nearly three times more money than in university teaching. Expressing his thoughts on the difference in salary, Jason stated,

> I don't think money, in and of itself would drive me back to my former job. I would certainly like to be making more money, but I would not go back to the old job or the private arena to do it. I think the stability of this job and the opportunity to teach, and not risk a lay-off. . . that is worth more to me. I can be content with a steady job and less money.

The second self-discovery was his dislike for any type of sales or entrepreneurial careers. Jason did not want to have his salary dependent on making a quota. Instead

he preferred a steady position and income. Jason's self-discovery did not extend much deeper than the thoughts of what type of job he wanted and the security of his salary. He spoke briefly of the effects of the job change on his family. However, he felt the responsibility of his career and providing for the family were his obligations. His main desire was to finish his degree so that he could earn more money as a teacher.

Jason has no regrets in regards to his career transition. The only change Jason wishes he could make would be to have started his PhD earlier in his career and focused more on completing his dissertation while serving as department chair. Jason enjoys his job and the interaction and development with students and is also grateful for the benefits that come with a job as a professor. He is able to take much of the summer off and spend time with his family. Jason has a few concerns regarding his financial status but knows that he could help remedy the problem by finishing his degree.

Jason's Advice

> I guess my advice would be to evaluate your circumstances relative to family, financial needs or responsibilities, obligations and then pursue the career that you think would make you the happiest. Be careful of the job you think will make the most money, it is not about money, but about family and home and social life.

Would he do it all over again?

> Yes, I am a much happier person than I was. But I still have to finish my
>
> dissertation to complete my goal! I am not quite there yet, but hope to be in
>
> the next year.

#004 Dave

Dave has a full head of curly black hair and a laid back demeanor that belies his role as a corporate executive, but that is exactly what Dave was for sixteen years, trading goods and clothes to Japan. Dave speaks fluent Japanese and was sought after by numerous corporations for his language abilities, as well as his connections. Financially independent, Dave soon tired of the corporate "rat race" and left to start his own business at the age of 35. Taking most of the money he earned from trading goods and clothes, he developed a website that sells cars where he is the only employee. At the time of our first interview, Dave was still building his business after 3 years. Dave's resources were almost depleted and the website was still under construction, with a launch date for the site three months away. Dave has five children and a wife who stays home to care for the children. He shoulders the responsibility as the main breadwinner for the family.

Nearly a year later I followed up with Dave and learned that he is currently unemployed. His website that sells cars is ninety percent complete, but Dave ran out of funds to complete the project before it was finished. In an effort to raise funds, Dave tried to reconnect with his international trade contacts but was unsuccessful.

He began looking for jobs that could use his Japanese translation skills, as well as his

expertise in international trading, but nothing has come to fruition in this area.

In December of 2008 Dave declared bankruptcy; he left his home in Southern

California and moved his wife and five children to his parent's home in another state.

He plans to live with his parents until he can get back on his feet financially and still

hopes to launch his website in the next few months. He hopes the future success of

his website will help his family return to the standard of living they were previously

accustomed to.

The setbacks and challenges have taken a toll on different aspects of Dave's life.

Dave had to return to the same neighborhood that he grew up in. He is embarrassed

about what happened and does not want to run into old friends or neighbors. His

children are going to the same elementary school that he attended, and Dave views

this as a negative situation. He hates that everyone knows what happened and feels

like a failure.

> I absolutely hated returning back to my parent's house. In one aspect I am
>
> lucky to have had somewhere to go, but then I have to face everyone. . . . I
>
> can't leave the house without seeing someone I know. The worst part is that
>
> everyone knows that I am bankrupt. . . . I never thought at my age I would be
>
> dealing with this.

The change in careers and the subsequent move has affected Dave's marriage. The

stress and turmoil initially strained the marriage, but Dave feels they will make it

through this rough patch and recently have started to pull together to better deal with

their family situation. Dave is applying for every job that he is qualified for but has not been successful in securing a job.

Dave has experienced numerous regrets during his job transition. Looking back, the largest regret was letting his partners at the international trading company take advantage of him. Dave felt he did all the work and negotiated all the deals while they were "goofing off" in other states. He felt his partners where dishonest with him as everyone received the same split of the income while he was doing 80% of the work. Dave now says that would have never left his previous job had everyone been pulling the same weight.

In retrospect on his career transition, Dave would have spent more time researching how to sell products on the web before jumping into the online arena without experience. He also did not have any contacts in the web sales or car sales industry, which made starting his business difficult. This lack of knowledge cost him thousands of dollars. Dave hired four different web designers in the first year and a half before finding one who qualified as "honest, and knew what he was doing." This lack of planning and learning his intended industry made the transition more difficult than was necessary. Dave regretted the fact that he could have done most of the research and networking while still at his previous company, and then when he was prepared he could have initiated his career change.

Dave regrets not keeping better track of his financial situation during the last few years of his career before the vocational change. He clarified this by saying,

We always had extra income that we could spend on what we wanted. We would vacation in Palm Springs at least once every couple of months. I expected that the money would keep on coming in. What I didn't expect was for our savings to dwindle as quickly as it did. I should have been more frugal than we were. It is mostly my fault as I keep track of the family finances.

Dave admittedly kept spending money when he should have slowed his expenditures. Knowing he was headed to bankruptcy within months, Dave did not stop his children's piano, cheerleading, football, dance, and gymnastics lessons to prevent his children from knowing that the family was in a financial quandary. This humiliation over returning home financially depleted was difficult for Dave to accept. He did not want his children, or anyone for that matter, to know of the financial challenges the family was facing. The most difficult moment for Dave was when he had to turn off his cell phone because he could no longer afford the monthly payments. This was a devastating blow for his ego that he would never forget. The shame of the disconnected cell phone and the impact on his financial status was clear in his statement, "What man can't afford to own a cell phone for he [sic] and his wife?"

Dave's change was more radical than any of the other participants, and his communication style is now more direct than it was during our first interview. He worries that he is going to be taken advantage of in business situations and is more forthcoming in his business dealings.

Dave also exhibited less confidence in our second interview. During the first interview he was sure that his car website was going to launch, but events during the recent year have deprived Dave of some of his confidence. He worries now more about the future than he did prior to the career change and realizes that circumstances do not always work out in a positive manner. He was more reflective and contemplative than all of the other Strugglers, which may in part be due to the increased hardships and obstacles that Dave faced as he lost more financially than any of the other men. He was the only Struggler who was currently unemployed and not earning any income.

Dave attributes much of his professional failure to not finishing his education and earning a degree. The trading company was his part-time job while he attended university, and its success occurred during his junior year. When it took off Dave decided to leave school "for a semester" and earn some extra money to provide for his wife and new daughter. Dave never returned to school and understands that a part of the problem is he never completed his Bachelor's degree. He wants to return to school to finish his last two years but at this point cannot afford it. He is cognizant of the never ending circle he has created. He needs a degree to get a decent paying job; however he can't go to school until he has earned enough money to pay for school. He is deciding on whether to take out loans [if possible] to pay for his Bachelors degree and take as many hours per semester as possible to complete his degree in the shortest amount of time.

The other option Dave presented is to get a part-time job and support his family and schooling as much as possible with the revenue from the job. He would then take out loans to subsidize his family's living expenses. Dave is waiting to hear from two other job opportunities before he makes a decision.

David participated in several types of learning as he began his transition. He knew nothing about web design, car sales or mixing the two together. Initially, Dave tried to hire all of his work out, but the hiring of consultants to complete the work was costly so he went to the library and local bookstores and spoke with others in the industry to learn what he could personally do to build and launch his website. Admittedly, the research was rushed and late in the process of his transition. However, Dave began to make contacts with key individuals. He also was able to learn what his programmers should be doing and how to monitor their progress. Knowing this information would have saved him time and money had he begun the learning process earlier.

Some positive experiences have come out of the challenges faced by Dave and his family. The circumstances Dave experienced over the last few years modified what he deems important. He is grateful that his family is healthy and that he had a place to move when they lost their home. He appreciates time with his family and his wife more than he did prior to his transition. He has also come to the conclusion that happiness in life is not derived from material things, but it is more a state of mind. He realizes that he will not always be in this situation, so he tries to be positive and

live in the moment although he struggles with thinking about the past and the choices he made.

Dave's Advice

> If you are looking to make your own change and to work for yourself, the results can be very good. You know, the outcome might be wonderful. . . . Believe in yourself and . . . never give up, that you will succeed at all costs and you are willing to sacrifice the time and effort and the money to get where you need to go. We know plenty of examples in history where people were told they couldn't do things and that things wouldn't succeed, but with their determination and their hard work, they proved people wrong. That would be my advice.

Would he do it all over again?

> No, I feel I didn't have a choice on whether or not I wanted to make a change. It has been way too hard.

#006 Frank

You have to listen intently to hear Frank speak as he is a quiet and subdued individual. In his mid forties, divorced and a bit disheveled, Frank has responsibility for his one teenage son. Having worked in computer technology for most of his life, Frank likes to work alone. His corporate job in Nashville allowed for just that type

of job, but he soon became bored with the position and decided to return to school

and earn his Master's. He wanted to teach at a local ""vo-tech school or a smaller

college. Frank returned to his home state of Oklahoma to attend school so that his

family could assist him in raising his son.

Frank had to take many odd jobs to pay for school and accommodate his school

schedule. His main job was a night stocker at Toy's R Us, and he tried to work

minimal hours at numerous other retail chains. Frank pushed hard through school

and finished his degree in less than two years. He was an excellent student and

maintained an A average throughout the program. He enjoyed school and found that

the program was valuable to his development and the time away from working full-

time was worth it, but he wished that the program had been more applicable to the

work environment. He also thought the school would have more connections to

Adult Education jobs, thus making it easier for him to secure a new position.

During his last year of schooling Frank applied for a position at a Job Corps and got

the job. Frank enjoys his teaching position but would like to secure a job at a two

year college or Career Tech.

Frank's experience was unique from the others in that he was a single father with

sole custody of his son, which represented a major factor in his decision making

process. When key decisions needed to be made, Frank put his son's well-being

first. This decision process made it easy for Frank to have fewer regrets than many

of the other Strugglers. If things worked out positively for his son and negative for

Frank, Frank considered the decision a positive one.

Parts of the transition were extremely difficult for Frank. The foremost was dealing with the loss of friends and colleagues in Nashville where he had built a strong network. Having to leave the state and move to Oklahoma was at times nearly unbearable. He found it difficult to keep in touch on a regular basis, blaming the long distance for the decrease in communication.

Frank was very open and shared numerous experiences and feelings about his career change. Nevertheless, he had difficulty processing the experiences to share the lessons he learned and how the transition had changed him. Frank admittedly avoided reflection but experienced each moment of the transition as literal, not having deeper meaning. Only once in the interview did Frank admit to having changed or being "different" from before he started his career transition: "I'm different in that I'm less money driven, which is probably a thankful thing because I don't have it the way I used to. I get more fulfillment out of other things than I did before."

Frank's Advice

> Do it. I think life's really short. And if we stop ourselves because of fear, then
> we never live up to our potential. If they want to become a teacher, I would
> say you need to want it, because there needs to be a passion there. Going back
> to the stress, the stress that you feel as a teacher is worlds of difference from
> anything else. And, you know, you really have to want to do that. It's sad
> when you see people who are doing it for the paycheck.

Would he do it again?

Yes, life is too short not to.

#013 Larry

Larry is the epitome of an entrepreneur. This showed in our first ten minutes together when Larry shared three ideas for new businesses that he is interested in starting. A dentist for nearly nineteen years, Larry started to get ill from job-related stress and when he was nearly forty decided to sell his practice. He alerted his wife of the sale of his dentistry practice the same day it was sold.

Investing his money in greenhouses, Larry moved his wife and eight children from a major Canadian city to a small rural town to begin growing "organic" vegetables. The greenhouses lasted two years, but, without any financial success, Larry had to declare bankruptcy. Bankrupt and feeling unsuccessful, he decided to return to dentistry part-time to help fill the financial needs of his family.

Larry is currently working part-time as a dentist in a rural town in Canada. He refuses to work full-time, afraid that his stress induced illness will return. He is also fearful that if he returns to full-time dentistry he will become "trapped" again and will not leave himself open to other career opportunities. Larry has two children left at home who will be finishing high school in the next two years. His "real" part-job is researching other career and business opportunities. He has not decided on a specific job to pursue but is satisfied in researching entrepreneurial businesses.

Larry is not financially stable. At this time he makes enough income to support his family but has little left for anything else. His wife has been very supportive during the whole process and rarely complains about their current situation, which differs from his children who believe their father has lost his mind when it comes to business decisions. When the family gathers for the holidays, the running joke is that the children's inheritance is down the road three miles in four empty greenhouses.

Larry does not view his career transition as negative and has decided that it was a major step in his life that needed to be taken. He said, "The consequences and events that would have happened had I not sold my practice would have been much worse than what we have dealt with." He has two major regrets from his life which are both directly related to his career and the timing of the decision to change careers. Larry has always desired to accomplish something with his life and career, which he feels he has not done yet. He has transferred this sense of accomplishment to his happiness as an individual.

The principal regret for Larry is he never wanted to be a dentist. He had numerous other occupations that he desired to pursue at the university level, but family pressures and the expectation to earn a high salary kept Larry in the dental program. By his second year in dental school Larry's wife was expecting their second child and he felt pressure to stay in school to provide for his young family. How could he have made a career change at that point? His wife's pregnancy and the decision to stay in school was a key turning point in how Larry viewed his dental

career. He remembers that it was the first time in his life that he felt trapped by his choice to be a dentist. He explained the trapped feeling when he stated, "I knew that I didn't want to be a dentist, but I was already so far into the program I couldn't stop and change. It was a suffocating feeling. Little did I know at that point how much worse that feeling would increase."

Larry's second regret was that he stayed in dentistry so long. He said, "There were three or four opportunities that I had to leave, but I did not jump on them. I was always worried about how I would provide for my family. What if things didn't work out financially?" Dentistry had a strong hold on Larry as it was the means by which he provided for his family, but it offered nothing else in the way of job satisfaction or fulfillment. Larry never let his feelings towards his career filter over to his wife and children and tried never to blame them for his unhappiness at work. "It was my choice to stay, I have no one to blame for it," he said. "I wish I did—that way I wouldn't have to face the fact that I was scared to do anything else for so many years."

Larry had strong regrets about staying with dentistry for so long, although he is confident that other opportunities will happen for him in the future if he keeps looking and stays open and available for the chance.

Larry recognized the varied types of learning that he has experienced in his life when he said,

> Dental school learning was much different than when I was learning about the greenhouses. Dental school was interesting, but you read books, listen to

lectures and then practice.   Learning about the greenhouses was completely

different, it was exciting. I didn't go to one class, but felt like I learned more.

The life learning that Larry participated in was the antithesis of the class room

lecture style of learning. He poured over books, reading how to construct the

greenhouses and what vegetables he could raise. He e-mailed and spoke to

greenhouse owners in Canada and other parts of the world about their experiences,

where they had failed and what they had done to succeed. Larry spoke to local

farmers about what crops yielded the most revenue. He spoke to everyone he knew

and constantly was gleaning information from every source possible. Larry

exemplified the learning that can take place outside of a classroom.

Why was it not successful? After all the time he spent researching and learning

about greenhouses and growing vegetables, it seemed Larry would have been

successful, but this was not the case. Explaining his failure, Larry said,

> I made money with my green houses. The problem was that I didn't have
>
> enough stores   to sell the vegetables to. I live in a town with one grocery
>
> store. They would only buy so much. The next closest town was 45 minutes
>
> away. I had a great product, the issue was not enough stores to sell too. I just
>
> didn't have a way to truck everything out to different towns.

 Larry's experience was invaluable to him because he enjoyed the time he spent

learning about greenhouses and growing vegetables. He has no regrets about the

decision that he made to open up greenhouses and feels that he can take that learning

experience and translate it into other career opportunities.

Larry had the most positive outlook on his experiences and the meaning of his transition. He was aware of how his decisions affected his family and took responsibility for the choices that he made. Larry, more than any of the other Strugglers, accepted both positive and negative outcomes of his transition. He had come to terms with his decision to make a career change and the consequences of that decision.

Larry came to the conclusion after a few "defining A-HA moments" that he wanted to help young people understand that you don't have to choose your life-long career so early in life. He wants them to know that there is time to experiment, change and learn what you enjoy most about work because it is those things you should be doing for your career. Larry speaks with everyone who crosses his path and hopes to take his message to the local high school. He expresses that the time is not right now, as he isn't the best example of one who has made a career change, and shared that he needs to be successful before he perceives anyone will listen to his message.

Family and social pressures to earn a certain degree, take a specific job and choose a path were important factors in Larry's life. He recognizes the strong impact such pressures created in his own life and vows that it will not happen with his children. Larry has moved to the opposite end of the spectrum with his children where he strongly encourages them to go to college and earn a degree, but places no pressure on a certain major or the time they should finish. He wants to give his

children the opportunity to try out different majors so they do not end up feeling like he did later in their life.

Larry's Advice

A person needs to try things out earlier in their life. Students get to college at the age of 19 and make. . . important decision about what they are going to do for the rest of their lives. Take lots of classes, work at different places, find out what you really enjoy and then start making that decision. You really have longer to make that decision that you think you do. Do what *you* want to do, not what anyone else wants you to do.

Would he do it all over again?

Yes, I have had some great experiences in trying another career. I hope to have more.

Motive for Initiating Change, Looking Back & Can't See Forward

The Struggler's motivation to leave their first career was based on problems surrounding the current career. The men were bored and unfulfilled and desired to leave what they considered a bad work environment that caused them unhappiness. They disliked aspects of their job including their boss, time spent at the office, coworkers and certain job responsibilities. When the men made the conscious decision to pursue other employment opportunities they left with no clear vision and

an absence of goals concerning their second career. This lack of clarity opened the door for constant questioning of their decision to leave.

Lack of Clarity

"Why did you decide to change careers?" was the first question I was asked by friends and family as I began my own employment transition. I often did not know how to respond to such a question. I always thought I knew why I switched careers, but in interviewing these men I realized my answers may have initially been trite and shallow. I found the same experience while interviewing the Strugglers. Many of the participants had initial ideas as to why they quit, but those motives would often change as the interview proceeded and the participants had the opportunity to reflect on the thoughts, feelings and experiences they were communicating.

The overall theme to emerge from the Strugglers was lack of clarity about what they wanted from the career change. This lack of clarity consisted of three similar themes. Foremost, the Strugglers were unclear as to why they wanted to change careers, no matter where they were in the process of change. Second, they consistently questioned the decision to leave their first career. Further, they did not have a strong vision or goal of what they desired at the end of the change. The Strugglers were not able to communicate clearly where the end of the change was located or what it would look like. They had difficulty verbalizing and visualizing the desired end result.

Running Away

At the start of the interviews, the Strugglers would have a sound explanation for their change, with a response that was usually succinct and matter of fact. I sensed from the tone of their answers that the Strugglers felt the need to have a quick and valid response as to why they had changed their career. Each time I asked "why did you decide to change careers?" their answers surfaced quickly and they spoke in a memorized fashion. It was clear the same response had been delivered numerous times before, and the participants were starting to believe what they were saying.

The preliminary motives the participants discussed included boredom with the current job, insufficient remuneration, and feeling undervalued or unfulfilled. Other reasons included the need to balance work and family life or the need for "something more challenging" (Jason #001). These motives initially appeared valid, even to the participant, but unraveled as the discussions continued. Inevitably, the phrase "I don't know why I changed" would surface as we discussed the process and outcome portions. It became apparent through their words and stories that a façade existed behind the initial motives the Strugglers spoke about, but more important to their experiences was the reason for the façade. The façade of the initial motives were excuses, or "valid reasons," for changing their vocations. They expressed a strong need to have a reason for the change, and, once given the opportunity, to voice their feelings and experiences; the confusion, doubt and fears would break the surface and expose the meaning of the words and stories they shared. This type of communication shattered the façade and allowed a deeper introspection for both the participant and myself.

Jason stated at the start of our interview that the reason he left corporate America was the demands of travel that put him on the road nearly fifty percent of his working time. As the father of young children Jason wanted to be at home more so he could participate in their lives. Jason stated, "The thing that started to wear on me was travel, we were all over the country, so there was lots of travel and spending time on an airplane." Yet, further into the interview this reason for leaving his job became a moot point to other factors. When asked the same question later in the interview, Jason responded, "I really enjoy my job" and there was "little impact from traveling for the job" on his home life and family. This change in his story occurred during the process portion of the interview when Jason repeated three times, "I really don't know why I decided to change careers."

There is a specific desire on the part of the Strugglers to have an answer to "why did you decide to change careers?" They need to be able to coherently explain why they had initiated a job change. At first, I presumed that the Strugglers felt that they must have a reason to explain their transformation to others, but as their stories emerged it was apparent that the reason was more important to justify the change to themselves. The Strugglers appear to be on a search to find a personal meaning in the change; most had not reached that understanding at the time of the interview. The "struggle" to understand their experience and be able to explain it to others was ongoing.

The first difficulty facing the men was the desire and need to give explanation of the career transition to certain key individuals in their lives. The Strugglers talked

openly of these individuals who they hoped, as one offered, "would not be let down by their choice." Each participant had one or two individuals they voiced concern about as they discussed the motive to change: "My mother and father would never understand my need to change jobs" (#006 Frank). "My brother has always had the good jobs. Isn't it okay to want a better job?" (#004 Dave). The individuals ranged from parents to spouses, significant others or close friends/mentors. The Strugglers rarely spoke positively of these individuals in relation to their career change. "It has been very difficult for them to understand why I made this decision" (#013 Larry).

The Strugglers alleged that they were still trying to explain to these individuals why they had changed careers, but the need for acceptance and understanding of the decision to change was what I heard repeatedly from their words. The Strugglers sought approval from these individuals who served as influencers. This affirmation did not occur for a majority of the Strugglers, which played a major role in their classification to the Strugglers group. Lack of acceptance from these individuals was a major cause of the Strugglers' constant questioning. Had they made the correct decision to change? The need for a strong network and support group to assist the Strugglers as they progressed through the job change was paramount and will be discussed later in the process section.

The Strugglers appeared to need a significant justification for changing careers, both to others and to themselves. When asked by friends and associates, the Strugglers wanted to give a logical explanation for their desire to change careers, but many did not have a reason, or at that point in the interview were not able to identify

the reason. The need for the Strugglers to have a reason for change was, and continues, to be a gnawing cause of anxiety and turmoil for each of the participants. The lack of explanation for leaving the original career linked the Strugglers to a seemingly unending path of inward questioning on whether it was the correct decision.

Doubtfully Looking Back

The second element of the Strugglers' motive to change was the constant question of whether or not they had made a correct decision in initiating a career change. The Strugglers were consistently looking back to the decision that had been made instead of looking forward to the desired occupation. This pattern was constant through each of the participants in this grouping. The act of looking back and questioning prevented the Strugglers from moving forward. They spoke more of their decision to leave, than they spoke of their desired future career and goals. As one participant said, "I always wonder if I made the right decision" (#013 Larry).

The pain of wondering whether or not they had made a correct decision was confirmation that they were still in the process of coming to terms with their career change. At the time of the interview, the men had a vague understanding of what the whole experience meant to them and what they had learned from the process. They conveyed that they were unclear at the beginning of the career change to what the desired end result or goal of that change would be. They initially had not realized the degree to which a career change would affect so many aspects of their lives, as

well as those closest to them. The events and consequences of the change had not settled enough to provide an opportunity for them to reflect. Though the career change was in process for these men, they had not yet integrated these experiences into who they are now as individuals.

The inability for the men to reflect on their experiences through the career change lens caused a sense of a loss of identity. The men were, and continue to be, aware that the career change brought about events, emotions, and certain key incidents that impacted who they are and how they see themselves, but many were unable to understand the personal lessons of the career transition. This state was best described by one of the participants as "a smoky room that has just enough smoke that you can't see the other side of the wall, you know it is there, but you can't see or, or begin to guess where it is. You are not lost, but you can't see where you are going" (#004 David).

A negative outlook prevailed in their conversation as they reflected back on the transition. They were missing the fulfillment, success, perception of self, or that unidentified "something" that they expected to feel at certain points within their career transition. The other groupings acknowledged such events, but for the Strugglers it rarely if ever materialized. They did not feel what they thought they would or experience what they expected to experience. A loss of self resulted from leaving the "defining first career" and moving to the second, where they had not accepted their new role. The Strugglers' negativity festered around their first careers, and many blamed job related issues for their separating from the company, i.e.,

dissatisfaction, work/life balance issues, money strains, boredom, leadership issues and work stress. A majority of the men supposed that the new career would in some way be "different" and they would not have to deal with the same issues in their next position

Vagueness of Vision & Goals

The final theme to emerge from the Strugglers was the absence of a concrete goal. What did the ending to their story read like? Where did they envision themselves in five years? If the perfect job change could happen for them, what would it be? These were all questions that did not have clear cut answers for the Strugglers. They had not defined the end of their change, and this absence of goals stemmed from their desire to look back and question more than move forward towards a different career.

One specific reason for this lack of a definable goal came to light while interviewing Jason (#001). The other participants within this group had alluded to such a reason, but Jason was able to clearly communicate through his experiences the reasons for a lack of a vision and goal. When Jason was hired with his company he immediately made good friends with his boss. A few months after he started working with the company, his boss was let go, and this initiated a snowball effect on how Jason perceived the company. "It always weighed on me that the person that hired me, the one that I was most familiar with at the company, was relieved so quickly of his duties," he said.

This was the beginning of uncertainty for Jason and his chosen career path. He did not begin looking for another career but was instead approached about a year later with a university instructor position in his current field. Jason interviewed for the position and was hired. When asked about the change, Jason shared that he was not looking to change but felt he needed to leave for more job stability. He thoroughly enjoyed his project manager position, the company was strong, there had been no lay-offs and he received outstanding performance reviews. It was unclear, at this point in the interview, why Jason had desired a vocation change at all. "I had not desired or even considered an alternative career at all," he said. "My job was a good job, I was happy there. I just needed to leave the instability for stability."

Jason's company was not laying off; in fact they had one of their most lucrative years in a decade. The statement that Jason was generally happy at his career and not looking for a job change resonated with all of the other Strugglers. Jason and the other Strugglers were not headed towards another career; they were leaving behind some unfavorable situations, whether real or imagined. This clarified the continuous questioning of their decision to change and the absence of a vision.

Summary of Motives for Initiating Change, Looking Back & Can't See Forward

The Strugglers were not in a comfortable, secure place. They spoke as if they were headed to some better career, but instead they spent much of their time wondering if they made the right decision to leave their original career. The lack of clear vision in relation to their career goals made it difficult to seek out friends and

84

colleagues for assistance or decide what other learning, schooling or certifications might be needed. They had no direction or road path to guide them to their next career.

The binding theme for the Strugglers' motives was their absence of vision. No matter where in the process of change the Strugglers were, they all shared a lack of vision. They consistently looked back, analyzing their decision to leave their first career even though they agreed that they would change again if given the chance. The men were reluctant to admit that their first career was intolerable and that they were looking to leave because they could not work there any longer. The lack of preparation for the exit and the goal planning were second in importance to "leaving" the job. These issues hindered the Strugglers from progressing through their career change and their experiences in the career change, up to the point of the interview, were more negative than positive. The majority of the Strugglers did not classify their transition as a success.

<center>Transition Process; Lost Identity</center>

The process of change from leaving the original career to beginning the new career consisted of numerous challenges for the Strugglers. On the day they quit their jobs the men were elated and excited to begin new opportunities, but this feeling soon dissipated as they faced a lost identity now that they were no longer "identified" by their occupation. The men experienced uncertainty in their future as they took on new roles in their lives. The support of family and friends was

<center>85</center>

minimal, and this appeared to be a factor in causing the men to have many unanswered questions about their self-imposed career change.

Challenges of the Change

Once the Strugglers left their original career they embarked on the most difficult part of their career journey, the actual process of change. Although the Strugglers described this process as "difficult, painful and grueling," the process initially started out with feelings of "excitement, hope and joy," as expressed by a few of the men. These words describe the "quit day," or the last day they worked, including the days that followed, but soon reality set in and the men began to undergo difficulties.

The themes that emerged during the process of change began with a loss of identity. For years the men had equated their identity with their profession, and now that identity was gone. Next, the men were uncertain in the new roles they had taken on, as a new employee at the new job, as a new student and also with their family and friends. The men were uncertain about how to redefine themselves and be comfortable in these new roles. Further, the men began to comprehend the degree to which their career change would affect their friendships and family. The support they expected to receive was drastically different than what actually occurred. Lastly, unanswered questions came to light as the Strugglers experienced each of the three themes previously mentioned. The process of change was more difficult than the Strugglers expected.

Quitting Day – A New Beginning

The manners in which each of the Strugglers left their current positions were varied. Some of the men had carefully planned their change and calculated how and when they would quit, while others decided to make it a more spontaneous event. No matter how they left, the men experienced differing, yet similar emotions. The reason for the oxymoron is the words used to describe the experiences of their last day at work compared to the experience of physically leaving the job for the last time.

The process and experience of the men *going to* and *during* their last day of work was vastly different than the following days and weeks. Many of the Strugglers were taken aback by the emotions they experienced on the final day of their employment. These emotions ranged from sadness, fear, depression and uncertainty to relief, excitement, hope and confidence. The most common feeling expressed by the men was sadness directed towards colleagues with whom they would not have daily interaction with any longer. Many of the Strugglers experienced the last day as a difficult one, while others communicated how easy it was to leave the job.

The similarities emerged when the men shared their experiences of leaving the place of employment and the days and week that followed. The common feelings experienced were relief, hope, confidence and happiness, and many of the participants shared that these emotions began the moment they walked out the door of their employment. "I was so happy, it was as if I was starting a new life and I had

every opportunity in the world" (Jason #001). "It was a relief to leave. I felt like I was a different person. I had a happiness and hope for my future" (Dave #004).

There was little spoken regarding leaving and the short time that followed that was not positive in nature. The men conveyed a feeling of hope and empowerment in the actual fulfillment of their choice to leave and transition to another company. This time period for the Strugglers was a short "high" for them. It was stirring to listen to their feelings and experiences during this time, as the period was full of hope, optimism and the belief that there were vast opportunities ahead. Unfortunately, within a few weeks of quitting, the experiences and feelings of the Strugglers changed. The early feelings of happiness, confidence and hope soon conceded to the realities of the challenges that come from a career change

This quick and radical change differed from the other groupings as the majority of the Success and Still Becoming groups did not experience such a large swing of emotions in such a short period of time. The other groupings were more stable in their emotions during this time frame.

Lost Identity

The initial theme to emerge during the process portion of the Strugglers' career change was the loss of identity. The men had identified with their chosen professions, believing that these described them as individuals, which caused difficulties when others would ask them what they "did" for work. This was a complex question for them to answer, as explained by Frank's and Larry's comments,

88

"I didn't know what to say or how to explain it. Do I tell them my former profession and then say, but I don't do that anymore, I'm going to be a …..?" (#006 Frank). "I was embarrassed to let them know what I was doing. I felt like I had to say I trained as a dentist, but now I was raising vegetables in a green house. I hated that I was embarrassed about something that I really enjoyed doing" (#013 Larry). It was during these moments that the Strugglers became conscious of their loss of identity, as shown by Larry's statement, "I really didn't know who I was or how to tell people what I did for living" (#013 Larry).

The identities of the Strugglers were in flux, and the most affected Struggler was Larry. The highly educated dentist turned green house caretaker was extremely bothered that "every time I met someone new the first thing they would ask me was, 'What do you do?'" He expressed that he was much more than his career. As a father of eight children he decided to answer the questions of "What do you do?" with "I'm a father." Larry stated that this was his true identity as an individual.

The participants' loss of identity created an opportunity to reflect upon their roles and identities. Without a career to immediately answer "who they are," the men did not have a reply, thus causing discontent and feelings of restlessness. It was at this point that the men began to have an awareness of who they were "at that moment." This was an arduous process for most of the Strugglers and instigated the opportunity for the men to look back at the career they left and discover why they left and where they wanted to go.

Unfortunately, many of the Strugglers got caught in the habit of continually looking to the past, which brought about feelings of inadequacy. Why did they leave their position of importance? Why did they leave a lucrative career? Why did they leave a great work environment with excellent coworkers? The Strugglers had no identity without a career to define them, and instead of looking forward to a new career and future opportunities they tended to looked back. This regular practice of looking back stalled their progression in moving forward with their career change.

Relinquished Roles

As the Strugglers proceeded through their feelings of lost identity they began to procure new roles and identities. This was an awakening for the men as they became conscious of starting all over, not only in the career aspect of their lives. This was a difficult step for the men as they moved from the role of one who has experience, competence and familiarity to that of a beginner. The beginner role was burdensome for the Struggler in numerous ways; the men did not like the emotions that accompanied being a beginner, and they were unable to embrace fully some of the new roles. Lastly, the "uncertain space" was an uncomfortable, confusing and complex state for them.

The emotions that accompany any beginner were especially bothersome to the men as they expressed awareness of experiencing self-consciousness, inadequacy, uncertainty, and confusion. The conflict was laborious for these men, as they were dealing with new roles and the feelings and experiences that accompanied them. The

90

men repeated numerous times that this was unexpected and a large obstacle for them to overcome.

The new roles that the Strugglers procured varied in differing aspect of their lives. The career roles the men accepted were numerous and diverse. Some of the men took jobs that were close in salary to their former positions; one decided to return to school so he secured a minimum wage position to earn his living. Not one of the Strugglers secured a job managing others, though each of them had some managerial experience. The new jobs were initially difficult for each of the Strugglers.

It is important to note that the Strugglers had increased personal time during this part of their transition. The men discovered that their new careers were not the only new roles for them, and a majority was spending less time traveling and more time at home. The Strugglers referenced additional responsibilities at home such as assisting in driving children to after school activities, taking increased responsibility with household duties, and participating in child rearing activities and community endeavors. Their responses to this new role were mixed.

The emotions that accompanied these new experiences were generally negative and arduous to cope with for the men. The Strugglers were more tied to their previous careers than they had anticipated, and it was more formidable to relinquish those roles and start creating something new. The bridge from expert to beginner, from having respect to giving it to another, was difficult for these men. These emotions were new to most of the participants, and they were unable to sort through and understand the feelings or recognize where they originated from. Not one of the

Strugglers sought career advice from a professional career counselor or a licensed therapist.

The Strugglers identified this time period as painful and troublesome. The emotions that immediately followed the exiting of the first career were now overshadowed with doubt, worry, loneliness, uncertainty and fear. It was a large pendulum swing for these men who had at the beginning of the career change experienced elation and newfound hope.

> I was really nervous and anxious about my ability to teach and to share what I knew with college age kids. I had never done this before. I knew that there was a difference between not only knowing the subject matter, but actually being able to teach it. I was very nervous and never quite completely comfortable in front of a room full of students. (Jason #001)

> I needed to return to school so that I could get the education I needed for my job. I went from working in IT and making good money, to stocking shelves at Toy's R Us late at night. I couldn't even understand what I was doing or that I was even there, doing that job. It was a horrible time. (#006 Frank)

> I became so worried. At the time I had five children, so my biggest concern became working. My biggest worries became making sure that the basic necessities were met. This was a cause of great concern. (#004 Dave)

This time period was very confusing and complex for the Strugglers. Although it was their choice to leave, many of the men still felt that the world had been turned upside down. It was also challenging to focus on getting out of this space and moving forward with the career transition. The difficulty of this "moment" would trigger the emotions mentioned which would lead to the questioning of whether or not they had made the right choice in deciding to leave. Each of the four men did not have the ability to return to their former careers at that juncture. The dentist practice had been sold, the IT and consulting job had been filled, and all ties to the overseas trading companies had been severed. The Strugglers could not return to their positions, but looking back at the past did not stop, and the question of whether they were correct in their decision still lingered.

Financial Distress

Financial concerns before and during the transition were not the main priority for the Strugglers. They were most concerned about leaving an unfulfilling job and starting over in a new career. All four of the men had children to support and were burdened by this responsibility, but it did not dissuade them from making the change. Two out of the four men made over $150,000 a year. One man made $90,000 and one made $45,000 a year. Two out of the four men had a savings of over $60,000 while two had around $5,000. There was no difference in how the men viewed their change due to how much money they had saved.

The unease and worry only set in for the men when their savings were nearly depleted and no money was being made. It was an on/off light switch reaction and sudden realization of their financial situation. Upon leaving their first career only one of the men (#006 Frank) made a change in his financial lifestyle. He downgraded his home and extracurricular activities and carefully watched where he spent his money. Conversely, the three other men maintained their style of life and continued spending like they had previous to their career change.

> We ran out of money so fast. I just didn't realize this until our savings was nearly spent. . . .When we got down to about $20,000 in the bank I realized that we needed to rein things in and stop spending like we were. That was a difficult thing to do. (#004 Dave)

As the financial situation became dire, only one out of the three men started to make a change in his financial lifestyle (#001 Jason). Jason had returned to school and was now making a professor's salary instead of a corporate salary. "It just took us some time to realize that we needed to change how we managed our money," he said. "We couldn't do the same things that we had done before" (# 001 Jason). The other two men (#004 Dave & #013 Larry) made no change at all in their lifestyle until it was absolutely necessary due to limited resources. The men remained in their homes, drove the same luxury vehicles and kept their children in all their lessons and activities. It appeared that this was due to one of two factors: one, the men did not know how to cut back on their spending and manage their money; or, two, they did not want to recognize the reality of their financial situation.

94

Subpar Support

The extent to which the participants received support from family and friends significantly determined their attitude and ability to deal with obstacles faced during the employment transition. For the Strugglers a theme of little to non-existent support emerged. The Strugglers had family and friends who cared about them and were concerned about their well being. The problem was the men did not receive the specific support they needed and desired from family and friends.

This lack of a social network and support group to assist the Strugglers throughout their transformation brought forth numerous issues. The Strugglers did not have individuals to discuss their thoughts, feelings, fears and anxieties associated with a life change. They also had fewer networking opportunities to discuss job opportunities and gain valuable information about different careers. They felt isolated when the daily interaction with work colleagues became less frequent and friendships with colleagues at the new career had not yet begun to develop.

One of the largest obstacles the Strugglers faced was the feeling of isolation during the transition. The men had few, if any, individuals or mentors to look to for support and direction. They expressed the desire to have someone to discuss these experiences and the emotions that were associated with them. Three of the men were married and one was divorced. The married men were similar in that they did share experiences and feelings with their spouses but felt limited in doing so. As one participant said, "I did not want to constantly share all of my difficulties with my

wife. I didn't want her to worry and be concerned, especially concerning financial

matters" (#004 Dave). The men sought out others who could "understand" their

situation, but found few other career changers.

> I wanted to talk with someone who had the same responsibilities that I did. It
>
> just isn't the same if you don't know what it is like to have to go to work
>
> every day and provide for a family and their needs. (#013 Larry)

I felt as if I was on an island, all alone and marooned, but in the middle of a big city.

Everywhere I looked it seemed everyone was successful, enjoying their jobs and

their lives and I was the only one who wasn't. People complained about their jobs

and this and that, but no one ever did anything about it. (#006 Frank)

The Strugglers had a strong desire to find other individuals to talk with and share

their experiences and feelings. The men wanted an outlet to express their ideas and

concerns related to the career change. One of the largest needs expressed by the men

was to have an individual who could support and encourage them. The men wanted

an advocate to advise, support and tell them that they could successfully complete the

transition. The need to communicate was paramount for the men, but they found it

difficult to locate others who were going through or had made a self-imposed career

change. When dealing with their challenges, personal interaction and

communication were more important and useful than information found in books,

journals or literature.

At the conclusion of my interview with Dave (#004), I shared my own career

change experiences and a few personal thoughts and feelings. This opened the flood

gates for Dave as he asked me specific questions, such as "Did you feel like….?" "How did you get through…?" and "Have you found many other men who decided to change?" "How did it all work out for them?" The last two questions were paramount for Dave, the epitome of the Struggler, who wanted to know if others had completed a transition successfully and in some way answer his own question of whether he had made the right decision to start a new chapter in his life by choosing a new career.

The lack of a social network hindered the Strugglers. They had fewer resources to gather needed information about other careers and opportunities. It was a common thread for the men to want to know what it was like to work in other career situations, but it was difficult to make a decision about a new career when you could not find the "ins and outs" about a new job. The men could find information concerning more common jobs such as doctor, lawyer, and accountant, but they found it more difficult to locate information about less common fields of employment. The men wanted to know "what was the daily life like for careers less known? The comment of "I don't even know all of the job opportunities that are available to me" was a recurring inquiry. The lack of career networking and social circles limited their knowledge about other vocations. Not one of the Strugglers discussed spending time researching careers at a library, with a career counselor or on the internet.

The feeling of isolation that men experienced was in part due to the loss of daily communication and interaction with colleagues from their previous employment.

The Strugglers were surprised by how quickly they lost contact with friends and colleagues from their original career. As described by Dave, the communication gradually declined soon leading to an abrupt halting of communication: "It was as if I had died. Pretty much everyone stopped calling. If there was a phone call I was the one who was initiating the call" (#004 Dave). Frank voiced the fact that they didn't expect the void to happen so quickly and to the extent that it did: "I worked with some of these individuals for close to ten years. I knew their spouses and their children. I thought our friendship extended beyond work" (#006 Frank).

The closer to the separation from the original career the Strugglers were, the more they were affected by the lack of communication from colleagues. It was one of the most devastating aspects of the career transition. It is important to note that for each Struggler there seemed to be one or two individuals that the Struggler maintained contact with and who they still deemed as "friends." However, despite these friends the men still felt a loss of their community. They shared stories about previous colleagues and all that they had been through, both good and bad. They thought the years of working together had cemented strong friendships and were troubled when these friendships did not continue in the manner they expected.

The understanding of why there was a lack in communication did come to the men later in the transition, although there was still a tone of disappointment and resentment. One of the participants likened it to moving to another state, saying, "If you are not living next to your neighbor and seeing them on a daily basis the friendship is bound to change" (Frank #006).

Unanswered Questions & Concerns

The hardships that the Strugglers dealt with during their transition to a new career initiated questions for the men. These questions in turn were a catalyst for the men to reflect on their current situation. The questions that surfaced during and after the interviews were for many of the men unanswerable. The men earnestly had a desire to know whether or not they were going to be successful in their new career and if they could complete the job change without running back to their former employment. They also wondered if they would enjoy their new career. After each of the interviews they wanted to know if I thought that they would be successful and if I thought everything would end up okay. They desired to know how the other men in the study were coping and moving ahead and if they were dealing with the same obstacles and struggles. They also wanted to know how successful the other men in the study had been.

The fixation with how others were doing and how far along they were in the career change process was monumental for the Strugglers. They wanted to know that others were experiencing the same hardships and obstacles and if they had made it through the transition successfully. Only one Struggler (#004 Jason) at the time of the interview felt like he had nearly completed his transition. The other Strugglers were still contained in the luminal space of change.

Summary of Process

For the Strugglers the process of a career change began with mixed experiences and feelings. The last day of work for some of the men was positive and motivating, and they were hopeful about the new options available to them. They did experience some melancholy due to the loss of work friendships and leaving the workplace they had been coming to for years. Others found the day to be painful, with the loss of friendships, the ending of their career and the unknown future all difficult to deal with.

The time immediately following their "quit day" was exciting for the Strugglers. They experienced feelings of hope, relief, happiness and confidence. The future was exciting and new opportunities were now available to them as they were experiencing a new start to their lives.

The new beginning and positive feelings did not last for the Strugglers when the men soon felt a loss of identity since separating from their former place of employment. The men could no longer identify themselves according to their job and were also uncertain in their new roles. They had become beginners in their new roles, and the Strugglers found themselves unsure of how the roles would redefine them. They also felt isolated due to the loss of friendships from former colleagues, which was exacerbated when friends and family did not provide needed support.

The themes that emerged during the process of their transition precipitated a period of reflection which was varied amongst the participants. The emerging theme

was unanswered questions and the realization that the process of change was more difficult than they had expected.

Reflections & Lessons from the Strugglers

Reflections

   The overriding reflection from the Strugglers' experience is their continual effort to understand the lessons they were learning and to reflect on their career change. The men had an ambiguous understanding of why they decided to initiate a career change, and this ill-defined comprehension caused questions to arise throughout the transition. The men were unclear at the start of the career change as to what their desired end result would be, and this lack of a clear goal made it difficult for them to explain the career change to their family and friends. It also made it difficult for them to continue through the problematic parts of the career transition.

   The Strugglers did not experience the kind of support that would have made the transition smoother. They did not realize the degree to which a career change would not only affect them, but also their family, friends and work colleagues. The career change for the Strugglers was a difficult process, as they sought out answers for why they decided to leave their past employment and what they desired from their future career. All but one of the Strugglers is still in career transition.

Learned Lessons

A few of the Strugglers sought out other means of understanding their experience through internet sites and books but found very little support. They sought out examples and stories of other men who had gone through the same type of experience but found little information to help them. They found ample job change, midlife crisis, and self-help information for discovering a "happy, fulfilled" life, but they did not connect with the information and felt that it was not in line with what they were experiencing.

The men internalized their experiences and started to reflect later in the process of the transition. Reflection occurred when difficulties materialized such as loss of income or the second career not being successful or providing what they expected. These difficulties provided an "awakening" to the reality of their current situation for a few of the men. For the others it never occurred and they continued in the same behavior. For example, Dave did not begin looking for another job until after his car website ran out of financing. He declared bankruptcy and moved his family to another state to live with his parents. When asked about his decision to hold off on searching for another career to provide for his family he replied, "I thought the website would work. I never thought it wouldn't."

The ability to reflect on one's situation and make the necessary changes and adjustments did not occur for most of the Strugglers, as they differentiated themselves from the other groupings by not stopping and reflecting on their experiences and then changing course dependent on what they learned. They were

slow to learn the necessary lessons from the transition, if they learned them at all. The drive to find another career different from the original job overshadowed the men's ability to take stock of what was happening to them at that moment in time. They never experienced the change as they did not evaluate each of the moments of transition, but muddled through the obstacles. The opportunities for personal development and growth were lost for many of the Strugglers due to the fact that they did not reflect on their experiences and learn from them, making necessary adjustments.

Chapter V

The Still Becoming

Introduction

Transitioning from one career to another can be exciting and exhilarating. The opportunity to start on a new path and to follow a long-held dream of a job that meets an individual's expectations has led many to consider undertaking a career transition. Finding a career that is challenging and fulfilling may be difficult; the subsequent career change pathway is not always what the individuals had expected and can be more problematic when challenges and obstacles stand in the way.

The Still Becoming group exemplified this notion, as they envisioned leaving their current careers in search of a vocation that better met both their professional and personal needs. The Still Becoming had various individual motives for change in their vocations; they had a defined vision of what they expected from the career change, they desired increased control over the direction of their professional lives and they aspired to a personally fulfilling career. The changes the men were experiencing in their work environment compelled them to reevaluate their personal values and priorities; family, friends and personal interests were no longer taking a back seat to their career. These factors combined to bring the men to a realization that it was the "right" time to exit and begin a second career.

The process of change was difficult for the men as they left their former place of work after 5, 10, and 25 years. The first few steps after exiting their career were relatively simple. However, as the men became "rookies" in their new roles they were stretched to redefine their identities. They could no longer be identified as a "corporate success," being now students or new employees. The role of "new" was difficult for the Still Becoming to deal with, especially when the process was more protracted than they had originally anticipated. This slowed momentum in progressing towards their second career led to a "stuck in the mud" feeling, as one man expressed, and became one of the largest hurdles that the Still Becoming encountered. The spouses or significant others were varied in their support during such times and could be an assistance or hindrance to the transition from the "middle" of the career change towards their desired vocation.

At this point the outcome is substantially different for each of the Still Becoming participants; some of the men have been able to move through the obstacles and complete their transition, while others are still trudging through the transition process towards their second career. The shared feature for these men concerns the manner in which they experienced the process of the change, as well as the preparation, planning and occurrences during the job progression. A few of the men became less focused on the second career and more focused on the process of change, in which they lingered and "got stuck" in the middle of the career change.

A brief history of each of the participants in the Still Becoming group will assist in gaining the necessary appreciation of the men's career transition and their

experiences during the change process. A profile of each of the participants is presented along with each individual's specific career change advice and their response to the central question of "Would you change careers again?"

Participant Profiles

The Still Becoming Group is comprised of five participants whose corporate careers and experiences are varied. They range in age from late thirties to mid forties and vary in the degree to which they have completed the transition process. The men also varied in their relationship status, including married, single, divorced and gay. The group, as a whole, is best described as "stuck in the mud" due to the difficulty they experienced moving through the process portion of the career transition. To gain a better understanding of each participant, a personal history and synopsis is provided.

#002 Kyle

Kyle presented as quite serious and rarely laughed when we talked. He is articulate concerning his career change and its effects and has obviously spent much time reflecting on the decision he made a year and a half ago. A distinguished man at the age of forty-two, Kyle does not fit the mold of a college wrestling coach; his brown Chinos and Izod shirt would fit better at the local country club. His stature is more that of a golfer than a wrestler, but wrestling is what Kyle is passionate about, and he left his corporate accounting job a year and a half ago to take the position of

assistant wrestling coach at one of the top Division II wrestling programs in the United States. Kyle is divorced but now remarried.

When Kyle left his executive position at a large energy company, a paid position as assistant coach at the local university did not exist. This did not concern Kyle or stand as an obstacle between him and his desired career as he planned to work in other arenas until a position opened. The head coach of the Division II wrestling program at the university had known Kyle for many years and coached him when he was in high school. After deciding to leave his corporate job, he approached the head wrestling coach with the idea of becoming an assistant coach. The immediate reply of the head coach and the athletic director was, "When can you start? Unfortunately, we currently have no paid positions." Kyle agreed to a volunteer position and by the start of the following wrestling season (nearly 8 months) Kyle had secured the job as assistant wrestling coach in one of the top programs in the nation.

Kyle worked as an assistant wrestling coach without pay for the first five months of the wrestling season; then in a surprising turn of events the associate athletic director announced his retirement and the University decided to split that position into two specialized positions within the athletic department. This created a paid position for Kyle while still allowing him time to serve as an assistant coach of the wrestling team. He was ecstatic about the offer and perceived the two positions as an excellent opportunity to interact with key individuals and increase future opportunities on campus.

Two years into his new position Kyle found that he was spending a majority of time doing what he had done at his corporate job for less money. His involvement with the wrestling team was decreasing each semester as more director activities consumed his time and energy; after missing two weeks of wrestling practice due to scheduled meetings and other job responsibilities, Kyle spoke to his manager about the direction of his career:

> I left my job so I could pursue something very different, more in line with my
>
> goals, instead two years later I am doing exactly what I did before, just not
>
> making as much money as I used to make. . . .I don't know how it happened.

Six months after our initial interview Kyle appeared to be much happier. In response to my question of how he was doing, he remarked with excitement that our first interview "woke him up" to the original reasons he had left his corporate job. He had since spoken with senior level administrators at the University and expressed concern about his current position and indicated his desire for a position that would allow him to balance his time with the wrestling program while still managing the athletic department. The administration was very accommodating and changes were already beginning to take place. While Kyle was excited about the renewed commitment to his early goals, he still had reservations about the forthcoming events. "It isn't happening as fast as I would like it to," he said. Kyle has a few regrets about his decision to change vocations. Kyle voiced his frustration over the lack of commitment by some of his staff and colleagues within the university athletic department when he said,

> The atmosphere on campus is a less stressful environment. . . .Expectations here are not as high as they are in the corporate world, which is both good and bad. The good side is that you don't have the feeling of pressure where there are jobs on the line every day. The bad side is the level of . . .competence. It is quite a bit lower when you involve individuals in both athletics and education. It can at times be very frustrating for me . . . I want everyone to be more committed to excellence in both academics as well as athletics.

Kyle did notice a change in his standard of living once he left corporate America. Even though his wife was a medical provider, the family restricted their spending habits. Before leaving his corporate job Kyle's family was able to take numerous vacations every year, with at least one being international. The family still vacations at least once or twice a year. However, the trips are not as spontaneous or extravagant as they were before his career transition, and the family now has to plan and budget.

Kyle's wife, children and immediate family were very supportive of his decision to change careers. They wanted him to be happy with the work that he was doing every day. His associates at his corporate job were also supportive. Even though many were surprised by his decision to leave, they acknowledged that they longed to follow in his footsteps and make similar career changes. He also noticed the ease with which he was replaced when he left the corporation; a month had not passed before his previous position was filled by another individual. As a Vice-President of

an energy company with over seventy-five employees, Kyle had expected it to be more difficult to replace him due to his expertise in the field.

> I knew they would initially miss me for a month or two, maybe six months while they were getting someone else in there and trained. Who wouldn't miss me when things aren't running as smoothly until they were able to get someone else up and trained? Now that they have someone else in the position that is capable, they are fine and I don't think I'm as missed.

Kyle did not have to return to school or participate in any formal learning for his job transition. He did participate in informal learning at the university as he coached wrestling. The majority of "how" to coach wrestling he learned from watching and assisting the head coach of the university program or, as Kyle described, "on the job coaching experience where your only test is how well the athletes perform." Kyle also had to understand and learn about the hierarchy and "how to get things done" at a university. His experience in corporate America differed drastically from the university setting, and Kyle had to learn a more tactful approach to dealing with problems. When faced with an employee who did not work Kyle decided to confront his boss about firing the individual. However, his boss did not respond as Kyle expected. This surprised Kyle when he stated,

> In corporate America they can fire you for anything. If you aren't doing a good job your career is over. In the academic setting individuals have tenure…. university employees are protected because it is a state job. There

isn't the fear of losing your job like there is in other parts of corporate

America.

Kyle adapted well to the university environment and has settled into his position. Kyle enjoys the relationships he has made with students, faculty and administrators and finds this aspect of his job very rewarding and fulfilling. He still deals with the ongoing struggle to find a balance between coaching the wrestling team while acting as an administrator in the athletic department.

Kyle's Advice

I think that college age students should dabble in everything and find out what they really like to do. If you find a career that you think you like, spend time in that career and if you find you don't like it, then leave and find something else. Find a career that you get a lot of fulfillment out of.

Don't worry about "Am I doing a good job, am I impressing people, am I doing this better than the last person who did it?" Instead be motivated by, "Am I making a difference, are people around me better because I am here?" If you are more concerned about the first statement you soon realize that those goals are empty and at the end of the day, nobody cares and nobody will remember, but they will remember if you changed their life.

Would he do it all over again?

> Yes, I might do different things along the way, but looking at it overall I
> would make the same choice. It has been much tougher than I thought it
> would be, but it has been good for me and my family.

#008 Marcus

   Marcus is single and in his late thirties. He came to our interview well-dressed,
and it was apparent from the cross worn outside of his shirt that religion plays a
significant part in his life. Marcus grew up in a small town where, according to
Marcus, the main industries were timber, marijuana and methamphetamines. Marcus
was raised in a very traditional family where his mother's responsibility was taking
care of the children and home while his father's was to pastor the congregation at the
largest Pentecostal church in town. After high school Marcus left home to attend a
small college affiliated with his religion in a neighboring state. Soon after
graduating with his Bachelor's degree, he returned home and accepted the position as
assistant preacher at the mega-church his father pastored. He remained there for ten
years. Marcus enjoyed the position and the work with his father but, deciding he
wanted to seek other opportunities, he packed up and moved to a larger city. He
returned to school to earn a Master's degree in Adult Education but now has no plans
about his next career.

   Originally Marcus wanted to perform on Broadway or become an actor. He
dreamed about performing in front of large groups of people and becoming famous.

He was sure he would have been successful and the right doors would have opened if he had taken this route. He concluded that he is fulfilling those dreams and using his God-given talents in others ways as "God did not want me to become a Broadway performer and sell my soul to be famous." Marcus still performs shows about Dr. Seuss at local libraries and elementary schools.

Marcus credits God for his desire to change careers. He felt God put into his heart that he wasn't meant to be a preacher, but that it was his personal choice to change careers. He knew that he needed to make a career change even though he did not dislike his current job. Immediately upon making the decision to leave, he became excited about the opportunities to find another career.

At present, Marcus is in his last year as a graduate student. He is still unsure of what career he wants to pursue, but he does not want to return to the ministry. He knows he is doing what he should and is not overly concerned with his tomorrows. His major goal for a new career is to make a difference in the lives of others through his work, and he is not overly concerned about the financial ramifications. He feels he can live off a small salary since he is single and has few financial responsibilities. He works at a local university campus teaching the undergraduate students about safe sex issues.

During a follow-up call Marcus decided to continue his schooling and earn a PhD after completing his Master's Degree in Adult Education. He stated that he loves to teach but is unsure of what his doctoral degree will be in and has not yet applied to any program. He explained that he is happy with where his life is going and secure

in the career road that he is on. He feels like he has made a successful career change up to this point; he has not yet completed the transition, but he is on the right path to do so.

Marcus had no regrets during the initial phases of his career change. He made it clear that he did have a choice in the direction of his career transition, although God "would continue to put me on the right path to what I need to accomplish."

Before and during his career change Marcus had a strong support system, consisting mainly of his family, who are also very religious, his friends and his church network. However, this support system did not provide Marcus with adequate dissenting voices of opinion. He was hearing only supporting views that matched his own perspective and thought processes. His view of the career change and the opportunities available to him appeared to be limited due to his surrounding network of family, friends and church associates.

Participating in both formal and informal learning processes, Marcus had to take on the role of a new student and face the obstacles associated with returning to school. One of his first classes was online and, although computer savvy, Marcus had never taken an online learning course before. He had to attend introductory classes to learn how to participate in an online learning environment and correspond with students and teachers in a learning module setting. This proved challenging at first, but he felt that he caught on quickly and was able to master it learning environment. Another challenge for Marcus was returning to school and navigating the process of enrolling, attaining student loans and filing for financial aid. He felt it

was easier to show up, attend class and do homework then to try and get a student loan.

Marcus's Advice

> People need to follow their heart and their dreams. They need to trust that the right thing will happen for them. Everyone gets so wrapped up in what they want, but need to look outside of themselves to find a career where they can help others.

Would he do it all over again?

> No doubt in my mind that I would.

#009 John

John fits the look of a corporate executive. His fitted suit and expensive shoes are all the marks of his success. He is "in shape" and talks and moves confidently. Unmarried and in his late thirties, John has spent most of his life devoted to his career. As a training and development director for a regional bank, John felt that he had reached the promotional ceiling in his career. Desiring a new challenge, he left the bank and returned to school to earn his Master's and PhD, with the goal of becoming a professor at a local university. Currently writing his dissertation, he plans to begin his job search once he has completed his doctorate.

Two years into graduate school he ran out of money and had to return to work full time to survive financially. Taking a job that John felt was "beneath him" was a difficult task and involved swallowing his pride. John did not feel that someone with a Master's Degree, nearing the end of a doctoral degree, should be working at his current place of employment. "Why did you stay?" I asked. "Because it is good money, and I am able to get some of my dissertation written at work. It is a very flexible job." John is holding on to the position until he finishes his dissertation and can begin applying for teaching positions.

John's Advice

Don't wait as long as I did to make a change. Move ahead with your life. I was always worried about finances and being able to make it and I have learned that if you want something bad enough you will sacrifice what you need to. Returning to school is difficult and I wish I would have done it earlier in my life, but it is better late than never.

Would he do it again?

Yes, I would do it all over again. I would have been smarter in how I went through my career change, but 20/20 is always hindsight. I guess I did the best that I could at the time.

#014 Pete

Pete is a single, self declared gay male in his late thirties. A manager for the medical records department at several hospitals over the last 12 years, Pete knew early on that this was not the career that he wanted to retire from. A cautious, frugal and self reflecting individual, it took Pete nearly two years to make the decision to leave the hospital and return to school to become a Physician's Assistant. Money issues, relationship issues and starting a new career in his late thirties were all roadblocks to Pete's decision to change careers. Nonetheless, Pete decided to follow his dream and entered Physician's Assistant school.

The departure from the hospital system was extremely difficult for Pete. He struggled leaving his position more than any of the other Still Becoming participants. Pete attributed this difficulty in leaving to his dislike of change and repeatedly spoke of his desire for his life to be calm and without surprises. Changing careers was a big decision and one that created fear for Pete. Stimulated by change and fear, he spent months reflecting on his decision and made sure he was extremely prepared before he initiated the career change. Some of Pete's preparations included paying off his bills and car loan, living as minimally as possible to save money and taking out loans to pay for the cost of schooling.

Pete's dedication to saving was astonishingly disciplined as he did not take a vacation, travel, or eat out during this time. He cut out every extra expense during the two years prior to the start of his transition. This saving mentality did have an effect on family and friends who became annoyed at his obsession to save every

dollar possible. Pete became known as a hermit due to the fact that he would only

spend money on videos for entertainment and would never eat out. Reflecting back

on his preparations prior to his career change, Pete remembered it as an extremely

happy time.

> I knew that I was saving or hoarding [laugh] for a reason. I had to do it for
>
> myself. I found that my happiness was not dependent upon the things I owned
>
> or bought. I spent a lot of time walking around the lake, my neighborhood and
>
> at the mall. . . .I also enjoyed being at home watching movies and reading
>
> books. It was surprising how many of my friends soon started to join me. We
>
> had more fun at my house than we ever did going out. It was a great lesson for
>
> me to learn.

A few months after Pete left his position, the hospital had lay-offs and outsourced

his entire department. This instigated a new outlook for Pete; he never wanted to be

in a position where someone else decided the fate of his career and his ability to

make a living. Pete took on a new self-confidence and devoted himself to excel at

school where he is currently ranked near the top of his class.   He is enjoying his

schooling and is excited to begin his career upon graduation. Pete has decided he

will leave the state when he graduates and start fresh in a new location.

After hearing about the lay-offs at the hospital Pete no longer had any regrets

concerning quitting his job.

> It could have been me, and the decision would not have been mine. My life
>
> would have been in the hands of some idiot supervisor and the decision about

whether or not to keep me. It's insane. From that moment on I have never looked back. I do feel bad for all my friends who worked there and aren't able to say the same thing right now.

Pete had a very strong support system that provided encouragement throughout the beginning and the process portions of his career change. His immediate family, friends and life partner were all encouraging of his decision to change careers, even though many of them did not understand his desire to transition to another vocation. Pete's father had worked for the same company for his entire life and had enjoyed the work and the associations this brought, but also he understood his son's need to find a vocation that he enjoyed. Speaking of this transition time and his father's thoughts, Pete reflected, "my father never let me know how he felt until after I was back in school."

Pete also had a very strong connection with his community of gay friends, and they supported his ambition to change and assisted him when possible. The only road block to his transition was his partner who resided in another state. Once Pete went back to school he was busy attending classes, studying and conducting practicums at the local hospital. This gave Pete very little time during the week to take care of normal household and personal responsibilities. He spent most of his time on the weekends studying and catching up on personal errands and household duties instead of spending time with his partner. This took a toll on the relationship, and within four months of starting school it ended. Pete was not particularly upset by the events, knowing that as he changed careers and returned to school he would

have little time for a personal life so the break up was inevitable. He plans on not

having another serious relationship until he has finished his schooling.

Pete's Advice

Changing careers is not as difficult as I thought it would be. If you make

preparations and plan for the change it is not scary. If you are in a career that

you don't like and you know you have another thirty years to work, you need

to make a decision to change. . . . you have time on your side. Use the time

you need to get ready for the change that you want to make. Just make sure

that you don't wait too long and use preparing as an excuse not to change.

Would he do it all over again?

Yes, I would. I wouldn't have waited as long as I did to change the first time,

but yes, I would make the same choice again.

#015 Ben

Ben is a sports fanatic and admits that he doesn't own a shirt that doesn't display

a sports team or athletic logo. An athletic trainer for nearly 16 years, Ben loved his

job, but knew he needed to make more money to support his family. Ben attempted

to hold on to his training job when he returned to school to earn his Master's and

PhD in Physiology. However, near the completion of his Doctorate Ben decided to

leave the University and start a business in the medical field.

Ben pulled together all of his contacts in the medical field as well as his colleagues in athletic training to create a protein sports drink which is marketed towards University athletic teams. The drink took close to a year to make, and once finished, Ben acted as salesperson for the company, travelling throughout the U.S. to sell the new drink. Within a few months three universities had signed on to use the drink during athletic practices and games, and the company was in business. This quick start was a surprise to Ben. He found himself playing numerous roles within his new organization, including salesman, manufacturer, product packager and order deliverer.

Ben's wife is a physician's assistant and works only part-time to stay at home with her two young children. Admittedly patient with Ben during his long years of schooling and the start of his business, she is now more concerned with Ben enjoying his job rather than working exclusively for financial reasons. Expressing that he and his wife are closer than they have been in years, he said the changes that stemmed from his decision to leave athletic training have benefited his marriage and assisted in his success as a father.

Financially Ben is able to survive, and the family lives in a modest home where they do not spend excessive amounts of money on cars or extras. They live on a budget and spend their money judiciously. Nevertheless, Ben has moments when not having more financial security bothers him. After spending time with other friends who are more financially well off than Ben, he shared, "I think that I feel worse for my wife than I do for myself. I want her to have all of the nice things that

some of her friends have. I know she says that it doesn't matter, but deep down inside I believe that it still does matter to her."

Ben participated in the formal learning process by returning to school to earn his PhD in Physiology. He also took part in the informal learning process when he started his company without knowing any specific information concerning the making, selling and distributing of protein drinks or running a company that sold protein drinks. Realizing that the success of the company depended upon his knowledge of business, as well as product creation, manufacturing and sales, he pulled from every available resource to learn what was needed for success. He gathered his medical colleagues and pulled them together with his sports trainers to assist him in researching how to make a sports drink. They created research teams, visited local sport drink makers, and met with businesses for local manufacturing and distribution contacts.

The company continues to grow slowly, and Ben is positive that word will spread about his sports drink. He hopes that this will increase his business enough that larger companies such as Coca Cola, Gatorade or Pepsi will want to buy him out, but if this does not happen his Plan B is to have Wal-mart begin to carry the sports drink.

Ben's Advice

> Now that I am in the middle of transition I realize that you really don't understand it until you have gone through it yourself. You really learn a lot about who you are and what you can accomplish. You also realize that life is

there for you to take. I had pretty much become a comatose individual going

about my regular activities day after day.

You have to be open for the change and all that it will bring. You also have to

have a clear vision of where you are going and what you are going to do to get

to that goal. You have to take your family and friends with you on the

journey, it is something that you can't do alone. Drag them if that is what it

takes, but the more you involve them the better it is for you in the long run.

You have to trust that the right thing is going to happen and if you work hard

and do all that you can do things will work out positively.

Would he do it all over again?

You only get to be on the merry go round once in this life so you might as well

ride it your way. No matter how this turns out I would make the same choices

all over again.

The Change and Transition Experience

The participants in the Still Becoming group were determined from the start to

complete a successful transition and progress to their second career. The Still

Becoming had a defined vision of their career transition and knew what they wanted

to accomplish. The men left little to chance in preparing for every aspect of the

career transition.

The process of the transition began well for the men, who expressed excitement about new career opportunities. Unfortunately, the excitement did not last as the men faced the challenges and obstacles associated with the process of a career change. The loss of identity, financial concerns and the prolonged time required to start the second career were just a few of the challenges the men faced.

Similar to the other groupings, the men in this group will be organized and categorized into a framework of motive, process, and lessons/reflections. Each of the sections will be addressed in depth to examine the experiences of the participants. This will include an analysis of the learning, both formal and informal, that took place within each grouping.

Motive for Change; New Beginnings, Tired Endings

The Still Becoming group possessed unique motives that initiated their career change; they had a defined vision of what they expected from the career change, they had an idea of their second career, they desired increased control over the direction of their professional lives and they aspired to a personally fulfilling and satisfying career. Their aspirations for a more fulfilling career were not all based around professional and personal development, but included problems and dislikes encountered in the first career that they sought to move away from.

The ability to look forward towards the next career was an asset to the men as they prepared to exit their career. This forward view assisted in their planning as they moved into the transition process.

Preparation for the Exit

The initial leap from the first career into the pool of transition was easier than the men expected. They found themselves experiencing a new sense of "freedom" and "control" over their ability to choose a new career and decide their future, both professionally and personally. One of the reasons for this feeling of '"freedom" and "control" was based on the planning and preparation they had made previous to exiting their career. The men's clear goals and defined vision as to what they desired from their career change empowered them.

A majority of the men had spent over a year planning their departure and the ensuing steps they would take. This preparation included research on the next career and the possible need for education, financial preparation to carry them through the process aspect of the transition and searching to uncover any obstacles they might encounter. Three of the men knew the job they wanted to secure before they left their first career, while the other two knew they wanted to pursue more education and would make the career decision closer to the end of their education.

The major concerns of the Still Becoming during this time of exiting were focused on what the new job would specifically entail on a daily basis and who they would work with and report to. The men wanted to know if any education or certifications would be required for the new position and if this would increase their income. The answer to these questions provided the men with knowledge and information to make sound decisions concerning their future career.

The two participants who did not know the job they desired after leaving their first career decided to return to school for more education. The men knew they wanted to leave and had taken the necessary steps in preparation to exit, but they were not sure what specific vocation appealed to them as a second career. The men were not "running" from their first career. Rather they were searching for a more challenging and fulfilling second career but did not have the self-knowledge or information to know what that career would be. These two individuals along with a large portion of the Still Becoming group described the time when they were deciding what career to pursue as exciting. They allowed themselves to finally pursue a career they had always dreamed about. John, reminiscing about that time, said, "It was like I was a senior in college. I had all the choices and opportunities available to me" (#009 John).

This career planning process was an enjoyable time, because the men were giving themselves permission to daydream, envision and plan about their dream job. The men planned for the change, seeking to make the transition as smooth and comfortable as possible.

> I talked about it for a long time with my wife. Do I want to make a complete
> career change? I thought about it for close to two years knowing that as I
> reached the end of my thirties it would be more difficult to start a whole new
> career. (#002 Kyle)

The clear vision and determined goals of the career change made a considerable difference in how the men reacted and maneuvered the transition. Knowing where

they were headed made the obstacles that arose throughout the progression more

manageable in terms of emotions, dealing with family and friends and enduring the

time frame of the transition. The idea of "going to" the new career versus "running

from" their past occupation made a significant difference in the meaning of the

transition for the Still Becoming. They experienced the job progression quite

differently than the other grouping of men.

Exiting the First Career

   Exiting the first career was not a momentous event for the Still Becoming, given

that they had planned for the event and were prepared. The last day of work and the

time that shortly followed were never considered significant moments for the men

during their career change. They looked forward to their last day of work and the

opportunity to begin their career transition. This emotional detachment from the first

job was initially surprising to the men; they spoke of little sadness in regards to

leaving and the ensuing changes, which was due in part to the length of time spent

preparing for the decision and choosing the appropriate timing to leave.

   The extended time frame during which the men prepared themselves to quit

allowed them to deal with most of their emotions prior to the actual exiting of the

career. The men were ready to begin the journey of transition to their new careers.

Kyle recalled his 'quit' day:

> It was pretty much a normal day. I think I had some fear, but I don't
>
> remember it as overwhelming. If I had any, it was more of, "Am I going to

127

like this step that I am taking? Is it going to be as fun and fulfilling as I think

it will be? (#002 Kyle)

The only identified sadness was the loss of daily contact with friends and colleagues,

as shared by Marcus, "I know I will miss some people, but it was the will of God and

I knew that it was right to do."

Sense of Control over Change

The men were determined to have as much control over the career change as they

could. The sense of being in control was dependent on several underlying issues; the

first was the ability of the participants to plan out their career exit, when and on what

terms they would leave. The men wanted to be as informed as possible concerning

all aspects of their new career, which accounted for the significant time they took to

plan, prepare and think about the choices they were making. The time during which

the men continued to work while still planning the career change gave them a sense

of control and empowered them to initiate the exit process in a positive manner.

The second issue was that the men wanted a sense of control over the financial

aspect of the career change. The men wanted to have their financial affairs in order

before beginning the vocational change to give some security as their income

declined. They were concerned that a change in income could impair, prolong or

possibly halt the transition. This topic will be discussed in detail under the finances

section.

Further, the men were adamant in being the decision makers in the course of the career change. Their planning, attitude, and drive to succeed empowered them with a feeling of control over their circumstances and assisted them in dealing with the challenges of the career change. The issue of controlling what was controllable provided a sense of peace to the Still Becoming. They had done all they could to prepare for the issues the transition would bring.

Timing as Critical

Timing of the career change was critical for the Still Becoming, as the topic emerged during nearly all of the interviews. The men became aware of their need to make a change based on the culmination of several experiences and events which brought the issue to the point of taking action. This culmination provided a "correct" timing for the men to initiate their career change. From the initiation of the planning and process stage the men gradually became aware of the impact the job was having on different aspects of their lives. The changing environment of their current career, the realization of the importance of family, friends and home life, as well the increased responsibilities and time commitment were all motivators to take action. Each independent aspect was not motivation enough to initiate the change, but the culmination of all the factors brought the men to the awareness that "it's time to change" (#014 Pete). Kevin spoke about his motivation to leave by saying, "I don't remember any specific epiphany. . . I think it was more of a cumulative affect. . .that gave me the feeling it was time to leave" (#002 Kevin).

Constant Corporate Change

Corporate America is in a constant state of flux, and all five of the participants expressed that the changing environment of the workplace was one of, but not a defining, reason behind their decision to leave. The changing work environment impacted the relationships the group had with other individuals in the workplace; some co-workers began to work from home, others began a job sharing program and the camaraderie that once was felt in the workplace was quickly diminishing. The past work experience of going to an office and working with the same individuals 8 hours a day for numerous years was no longer occurring, and the ability to build and maintain work friendships was increasingly difficult. Sharing the same sentiments about corporate change, Ben said, "as corporate America changes and people jump more from job to job you don't have as much energy to build relationships with those you work with." A majority of the Self Becoming group shared Ben's view of corporate culture when he stated, "It's not worth the effort because most likely they are going to be gone within a year or so" (#015 Ben).

The longer their tenure with the corporation, the more responsibility the men held. Through the years corporations have demanded increased time and commitment from its employees. This increase in workload had been noticed by the men over the past few years, as working longer hours decreased enthusiasm and a sense of job fulfillment. The men were constantly working and had little time for anything else as they became consumed by their careers, positions and job titles. They could rarely get away from work and found themselves working many nights and

130

weekends. With the advent of email on cell phones and Blackberrys it became more difficult to leave work at the office. Remembering how many family events he missed for work, John shared, "I don't know how it happened, but through the years I have spent more time at the office. . . . and less time with my family. I have missed many important family events" (#009 John).

A further issue the men experienced was a lack of devotion and loyalty for the company among themselves and their coworkers, and the companies tended to show the same sentiment towards the employees. Corporations no longer have a desire to employ individuals for 35 years, and in the same vein, workers no longer desire to work for the same company for 35 years and retire. This lack of trust and loyalty was a detriment to how the Still Becoming viewed their companies. The companies would not look out for the employees' best interest like they had done for their fathers and grandfathers in the past; instead increased lay-offs and job difficulties became the norm and caused this strong distrust of the corporations.

Family Becomes a Priority

The men experienced increased motivation to change careers as they reflected on the importance of family time. They desired to assist more in the raising of their children and take a more active part in their lives. This realization generally emerged during the planning and decision making process of exiting corporate America. The decision to increase time with family was due in part to a sense of guilt from the men, as they faced pressure to be more active dads. The men also

wanted to "make up" for time lost during their children's formative years when the company expected employees to travel and attending meetings.

The men had in-depth discussions with their spouse, significant other or immediate family on the effects of the career change. The Still Becoming did not want their children to experience a change in their normal routine or emotional distress about whether or not the family would have the basic necessities of life such as food, home and clothing. The men wanted to be able to provide lessons, birthday parties, events with friends and vacations as they had done previous to the career change. Two of the five participants had children that still resided at home, and they took all efforts to minimize or make completely negligible the effects the change would have on their children.

Lack of Personal Fulfillment

Each of the participants described a lack of personal fulfillment in their current positions and the desire for a more meaningful career that would offer challenges, professional development and a sense of importance in their daily work. It was difficult to stay in a position when they were not progressing as individuals. Their former occupations became monotonous and boring, which caused them to feel restless, uneasy and unproductive.

Personal interests began to emerge as the men desired to take up old hobbies or begin new ones. The Still Becoming sought both to reconnect with old interests and try something new. These interests became paramount to the type of second career

they sought. The men were inclined to seek a position that in some way incorporated a hobby, a lifelong interest, or a "dream" job. They desired to generate income by doing something they already enjoyed, with the major motivators constituting not money, position, title or power, but rather self fulfillment, increased personal and family time and enjoyment of the job.

It must be noted that income, prestige, and high ranking positions were not completely set aside for the Still Becoming. The men are a very motivated and determined group who seek success and ways to lead; but at this juncture in their lives the men had more desire to balance their different roles and responsibilities.

Financial Tensions

How the career transition impacted the men and their families was considerably related to the financial issues that arose as a consequence of the career change. Three of the five participants did not have more than $25,000 in the bank at the time of exiting the first career, one individual had roughly $50,000 in the bank, and one participant's wife was a medical doctor who was the main source of stable income for the family. The financial impact was of considerable concern to all of the participants in the Still Becoming group. Four out of the five participants wanted to accumulate more money in the bank as a buffer in case of financial hardships, while the fifth individual worried that something might happen to his wife's income stream. The more money the individuals had, the less stress and anxiety they seemed to experience during the transition.

The time period prior to the exiting of the first career was increased for four out of the five men due to financial decisions, i.e., trying to save money, pay off debt and gain greater financial stability. Four out of the five required some type of further education and certification as part of their career change. All four of the individuals were paying for their education out of their own pockets and did not receive corporate reimbursement. This educational expense increased stress for the individuals as they had to generate income while participating in both formal and informal learning. Two of the men who returned to school had to ask family for financial assistance to continue their schooling.

The financial aspect of the planning process included some type of financial plan to make it through the career transition. The families found ways to downsize their spending habits and learned to do without certain luxuries in order to make the career change achievable. The more secure the financial plan, the better the men were able to deal with the stress created by the career transition. The Still Becoming group put their finances in order or saved as much as possible to prepare for the loss or decrease of income.

Summary

The Still Becoming group had a clear and defined vision for their career transition. They spent at least a year planning and preparing for as many aspects of the career change as they could while still researching their desired career, building relationships, and making financial decisions and plans. The men sought out

positions that would challenge and motivate them while enabling them with a sense of personal fulfillment. Personal fulfillment became increasingly important in their professional as well as their personal life.

   The financial issues were significant to the motivation of change and played a strong role in how deliberate the men were about when and how they would leave their first career to make the transition as easy as possible for spouses, significant others and children.

<div align="center">Process; Stuck in the Mud</div>

Transitioning to the second career was more difficult for the Still Becoming than they had expected, yet this realization did not come until the men were months, and sometimes years, into their change. Initially, leaving the first place of employment was an exciting and ego boosting experience. Numerous work colleagues and friends noticed the change in behavior and expressed feelings of jealousy and a desire to switch careers as they witnessed the participants' initial transition. However, the length of time between leaving the first career and fully starting their second career was a difficult obstacle for the men. They had held an expectation that the career transition would happen in a shorter time frame.

   The length of time in transition made it difficult for the men to redefine their work identities. Initially, they were not bothered by being a new student or employee, but this changed as the identity became more permanent. The men desired to be identified by their work title and wanted to move to the second career

and the title that accompanied it.   In sum, the extended transition time between careers emerged as the most significant shared theme amongst the Still Becoming and also led to other challenges.

A further challenge for the men concerned the loss of identify as they redefined their sense of self in the face of losing the "boss" title. No longer the boss, the men's positional power was gone and they now had to report to others. This switch in roles was difficult for many of the participants as they were no longer able to assist others with problems and began to feel less important when they noticed the silence of colleagues and associates in regard to asking their opinions and advice. In this time period, a strong support system was needed.

With respect to the work itself, the men were not progressing as individuals, just as they were not in their personal lives. As a consequence, their occupations became monotonous as they repeated the same type of work day after day.   The men became increasingly restless and uneasy with their current positions, and they wanted careers where they were involved, challenged, and could find opportunities for personal and professional development.

First Few Steps

Transitioning from first career to the beginning of the second flowed relatively smoothly for the men. This ease of change was due in large part to knowing what the next planned step would be. There was little downtime from the "quit" day to the beginning of the next step for the participants, as they did not vacation, take time off

136

to relax, or seize the opportunity to indulge in personal interests. On the contrary, they immediately initiated their planned course of action. Four of the men started schooling within a month of leaving, while the final individual started another career within a week of leaving his former position. The feeling of excitement and the opportunity for a new start enveloped the men during the first few weeks and months of the change. The men had scrupulously planned for this time and were now experiencing the opportunity to put that planning into action; the change in schedule, daily environment, work and school responsibilities provided the Still Becoming with a variety to their lives. They enjoyed the change of pace and the "new lease on life" (#014 Pete). Marcus described the initial part of his transition by a river metaphor:

> My change has been like a river. If you just relax and let the river take you where you need to go, you'll end up where you need to be. Sometimes the river looks like it is moving slow and going nowhere, but the river is always going somewhere, because there is always water coming in. Often times you can only tell the river is moving when you watch a piece of brush or a stick and the river slowly builds around it and then the river gets strong enough to move the branch. I was the branch and everything and everyone was moving and going around me and I wasn't going anywhere, I was just building up the momentum to move, because when I did I was able to start to move towards where I wanted to go. (#008 Marcus)

Fears did arise at the outset of the change, but the fears were different from the Strugglers who were concerned with whether or not they would like the new job. Those who returned to school were apprehensive about putting a large amount of time, finances and effort into their education. What if they started working and it did not fulfill their expectations? One of the individuals had based his career change on faith and the desire to work in a field that he felt God wanted him to. What if he despised the job that God wanted for him?

An additional fear was the financial impact a career change would have on the family. As previously discussed the men had made preparations for the loss or decrease of income. Nevertheless, it weighed heavily on their minds as they did not want their personal decision to have any negative repercussions on the lifestyle of their family.

A further fear was that they would not be as successful as they had been in their previous career. This view was not limited to finances, as they were also concerned about status within the work environment and their ability to have an effect on those around them. A majority of the men had prior leadership and management experience and had managed direct reports for several years. They knew how to be successful in their prior careers, and having to start over caused angst and apprehension. As stated by Ben,

> I look around and wonder why I am starting over in my late thirties. Most of
> my other friends and family are established in their career at my age. In fact, a

majority have been in their careers for close to a decade. I wonder if I am

behind the eight ball? (#15 Ben)

It was difficult for the Still Becoming to be the new person or "rookie" on the job.

To transition quickly from a managerial position supervising numerous individuals

to the new person on the job or new student in school was hard on their egos. They

lacked the skills and knowledge for the new job or new student role and had to

accept the feelings of inadequacy. It was much easier to give direction and be the

boss than to be a subordinate and take direction and supervision from another.

Many positive experiences occurred during the first few steps of the career

transition that assisted the Still Becoming and reaffirmed their decision to make a

change. The network of friends and associates were amazed and impressed by the

dramatic change the men were experiencing. Ben (#015) noticed jealousy by his

friends and associates when discussing the beginning of his career change.

At first no one could believe I quit my job and went back to school. I know

that they considered me crazy. As time has gone on most of my friends have

shared how they wish they could change jobs and pursue something that they

enjoyed more. My wife and I have decided that they are jealous. Imagine

that, they have careers that make a great living, a nice home and cars and I

have none of that and they want to do what I am doing. It was a good wake

up call for me. (#015 Ben)

Another positive experience for the men was a renewed self-confidence that most

of their associates and friends were unwilling and afraid to do what the Still

Becoming were doing. This empowered the men to move confidently towards their second career and continued education. They were in the "fishbowl of life" (#015 Ben) and everyone was watching to see if they would succeed or fail, which increased their desire to succeed and prove to others that they could make a career transition and be successful.

Further, the men described their past careers and experiences as a benefit to the new career and schooling. They had acquired life skills that set them apart from others in their new work and school environments. The men were appreciative of past work experiences that now assisted them in their new endeavor.

Redefined Identity

Faced with the issue of redefining their identities, the Still Becoming group experienced a wide range of emotions. They had identified themselves as individuals who were changing their career based on their own choice; they were chasing after their dream job and doing what few other men would ever do, which became a badge worn with satisfaction. "I was willing to do what few other men are willing to do," Ben shared (#015 Ben). This part of the transition process had empowered Ben, as well as numerous other participants.

The excitement of the career change and the feeling of uniqueness lasted for several months to a year. The immediacy of moving from their first career to another job or to schooling facilitated the length of time the men experienced these feelings. Many factors contributed to this sense of elation. As described by one of

140

the participants, "I had a new job with new colleagues, new responsibilities and a new environment. This was my dream job. I had dreamed as a boy that this was what I would do for work" (#02 Kyle).

The men who returned to school were busy integrating into life as a student; they were now attending class, being on campus, writing papers and learning. This precipitated a sense of progression and fulfillment. Sharing his feelings about school, Pete related, "I love school. I love learning and knowing that I am learning something that I am going to use on a daily basis. I love feeling like I am now actually starting the career I will probably work in for the rest of my life" (Pete #014). The new job and life as a new student were initially easy for the men to wear as identities, and there was no shame or embarrassment about what they were trying to accomplish. Each of these individuals enjoyed the learning that they were engaged in and took pleasure in the discussion and mastering of knowledge in their chosen fields.

The issues of redefined identities commenced for the Still Becoming at two different junctures in the transition process. The first issue presented when the newness of the job and schooling wore off. Originally the men were satisfied with their current situations, but they soon realized that their current title of "coach" or "student" was not as prestigious as their former titles. They men also dealt with the loss of positional power to affect as many individuals as they had in their former career. The second identity crisis took place when the transition process took longer than the men expected and the transitional identity became more permanent.

The excitement that accompanied the new job, new friends, new responsibilities and a new environment proceeded to reinforce the initial thoughts of the Still Becoming. They had made a right choice in changing because they were happy with how their choice was progressing; they were challenged by the job, new roles and responsibilities to learn. The classroom and university experience enhanced the transition as the men made new friends, participated in learning and experienced a change in how they viewed themselves. Nevertheless, the routine of life began to set in and the concern of occupational identity began to emerge as exemplified by Kyle who related, "I am very proud of what I do, I just realized people now saw me as a wrestling coach. You just get different reactions from people" (#002 Kyle). Marcus said, "Going from a pastor to someone who teaches sex education is interesting. I do miss the feeling of making a big difference in people's lives. I guess I am now, just on a smaller scale" (#008 Marcus).

The challenge for the men was coming to terms with leaving their past occupational identity, where they held a position of authority and directed large numbers of employees, for a position that did not encompass those traits. The men were clear that they were not unhappy in their current circumstances; they just needed to readjust to how others defined them, and even to how they now defined themselves.

The men who returned to school faced a different problem. The schooling and education that was needed to begin the second career was taking longer than originally anticipated. The main complaint of those who returned to school was

friends and family asking, "Aren't you done yet? It seems like you have been going to school forever." The men did not take issue with being identified as students, as this was a part of the process they had planned and were prepared for. The difficulty emerged with the loss of their work identity and the permanence of the transitional identity. The men could no longer claim their first career identity, could not yet claim the second career identity and were not comfortable with the transitional identity. At this moment in the transition process the men were only viewed as students, which was difficult for them due to the sense that the men who had returned to school were in "limbo" until they finished their schooling. As Ben said, "I felt like everything slowed down while I was in school. After a few semesters I wanted to finish and move on with my career" (#015 Ben).

The Still Becoming were confident about their decision to change and were enjoying the sense of freedom from their former occupational identity. They prided themselves on being the ideal of an individual who was seeking their dream career. The Still Becoming who returned to school found deep satisfaction in learning and progressing towards their second career, although being a student for an extended period of time was difficult.

Stuck in the Mud

Starting the transition was not an overly difficult process for the Still Becoming. It was the progression of the change that became a challenge for the men as they left their old careers and moved into the middle of transition. They literally got "stuck"

143

in the transition. As described by Phil, "I feel like I am headed in the right direction and I know where I want to go, but I feel stuck in between career worlds" (#014 Pete). This luminal space or the feeling of being in flux between two different points was very stressful for the men. They expressed that they struggled to feel at peace within themselves and were anxious and often confused during this time period. They described the feeling as being lost in a woods right near your home. You know where you are, you are so close, but you still feel lost.

The feeling of "being stuck" was due to several factors. The first was that the men found it difficult to be in between careers for such an extended amount of time. The men wanted to begin their new careers and felt that the preparation time was a hindrance to them, even though they realized that schooling was necessary for their career progression. This was the most difficult obstacle for the men to face.

Another factor that led to the men feeling "stuck in the mud" was the emerging feelings of wanting to be sure that the future job they were spending so much time preparing for was going to satisfy the expectations that they had set. The sense of "unknowing" was hard for the Still Becoming to process, and they worried that the new job would not be what they expected.

Furthermore, the men did not like the strain the transition had on their spouses, family and significant others. The men did not want to be the cause of this strain and desired to return to work as soon as possible to increase the revenue coming into the home.

The Difference of Support

   The family and friends of the Still Becoming provided a varied support system

before and during the career change. (Many of the men are still in the process or

'middle' of their career transition). The men were cognizant of the impact that a

career change has on families. While the families were supportive of the change, the

men were concerned over the financial and emotional impact of their decision on

loved ones. The men were reflective during the transition time and observant to the

effects on their family and friends.

   For the men who were married, their spouses played a markedly stronger role in

the decision to begin a career change. If the spouse was positive towards the change,

the Still Becoming was more likely to make the change and also found it much easier

to leave the first career. If the spouse was not supportive or positive towards the

transition, it became very difficult to move through the process. The need for

support from the spouse through financial issues, family issues and role changes

strained the relationship.

   For the men who were not married, their families played a key role in the decision

making process. The men spent time with members of their family whose opinion

they trusted to gain information and support concerning the decision to leave. For

both groups the men needed support in two areas. They sought out support in the

decision to leave their careers and start a new vocation. They also desired support

and assistance in their decision making concerning their new career choice.

Finding the New Career

Two of the participants left their corporate jobs having an idea of what type of job they wanted but unsure if this was their chosen second career. The other three men knew their second career at the time of exiting the first. Finding the second career presented several concerns for the two men. They wanted enough income to cover their financial needs and responsibilities, yet still provide the self-fulfillment, challenges and opportunities. Both men wondered if such a career existed.

The theme of finding a job that sustains financial needs and wants while still fulfilling all the aspects of a "dream" job was related by nearly all of the participants. The struggle to find this type of a career is one that many of the participants in each of the groupings faced.

Summary

The beginning of the process was a positive experience for the men, as they were prepared for the initial change. The difficulties and challenges arose as the men dealt with the time required for the change and the identity issues that arose during the process portion of the transition. The Still Becoming were eager to move ahead with the process, but they were bogged down in schooling and learning the new job. It was difficult to stay in the "middle" of the transition and feel like they were moving forward and progressing due to the length of the change.

Reflections & Lessons from the Still Becoming

Throughout the transition process the men experienced significant moments of reflection and learned many valuable personal lessons, which brought meaning and understanding to their personal job transition. It was during these "moments of meaning" that the men examined their personal values, their desired second career, their own mortality and the legacy of their careers. Changing careers was more than just getting another job; it was the progression and growth of each of the participants, both professionally and personally. This section is a compilation of their reflections and lessons that brought meaning and significance to their career change.

Reflections

As the Still Becoming men reflected on their career change and the impact of their decision on those around them, distinct themes emerged. The men were occupied with the desire to find a career which could make a positive difference for themselves and others. They sought out self-fulfillment in their positions and realized the importance of feeling the job they performed every day had significance. As the Still Becoming progressed through the career change, they learned that corporations were able to replace employees quickly and that a job was more about the individuals you come in contact with and make a positive change in their lives than it was about goals, getting things done and being the top employee. The longing for a career that met these learned expectations was evident in Kyle's comment,

I don't know if I have ever had a job that I loved, where I popped up in the

morning and, you know, ran straight to work. I wanted to find something that

I was passionate about that I got up in the morning and looked forward to my

day. I feel like if you love what you do most days, you are ahead of the game.

(#002 Kyle)

The Still Becoming men portrayed themselves as a generally happy group. They

were glad they had initiated a career change and were content with their decision.

Their contented attitude was only displaced by the length of time it was taking to

move from the first career to the second. The men wanted the transition to progress

faster; they found it difficult to deal with the time frames and the obligations that

needed to be met before they could "begin" their new lives and careers.

Lessons Learned

The men spoke of several lessons they learned up to this point in their transition:

they learned the importance of support from families and friends, the value of self

fulfillment and happiness in their work place, the importance of relationships both

professional and personal and the need to reflect on their lives and reevaluate their

path. Looking back they were glad for the change and decided that it helped them

understand how to better live life.

Numerous times the men told me they could not have made the change had it not

been for the support of family and friends. The support most often referred to was

emotional support. As described by Pete, "when I felt like I couldn't be a student

anymore, and that I was far behind other men my age, my family and friends would remind me of the reason that I was doing this. They kept me going" (#014 Pete). This support taught the men the value and importance of relationships. The men were surprised by the increased contact with friends and family during the time of transition, which, in turn, resulted in stronger relationships. Kyle, sharing his desire for support, said, "I needed my family and friends more than ever. I didn't expect this to be the case. I usually am an individual who can handle stress and change, but I found it reassuring to speak with those who really wanted me to succeed" (#002 Kyle).

The men involved in the transition were very aware of the reasons they were changing their careers. They had placed a value on self reflection, to learn what they wanted from their work life and the possibilities that were available to them. The process of reflection was the main tool that the men used to get to the place of "knowing." And once they were in that place, the decision to leave became much simpler.

The men were clear in their feelings and thoughts that the career change was one of the most important decisions they had made up to that point in their lives. They perceived that it was one of the defining moments in their lives, and this heightened awareness and sense of importance directly related back to the decision to make the career change voluntarily. The men were intensely set upon the outcome of this important decision, and their words and actions accentuated the magnitude of the decision.

149

Another lesson that emerged for the men was the desire to live life to its fullest and to find out more about themselves and their capabilities through growth opportunities such as a career change. The men wanted to challenge the norm that society had placed upon them to stay in the same career. Ben, looking back at his perception of society's norm, said,

> I felt like this was where I needed to stay and that I should never want to change jobs. But deep inside I knew I wanted something more. I wanted to attack new challenges. I couldn't just do the same job for the next 20 years. I couldn't imagine a worse life. I refused to confine myself in a self-made prison for the rest of my life. (#015 Ben)

The further the men were from the initial transition, the more impressed they were with their decision and follow through in making the change. They saw themselves as different from most of their friends and family, and they made a personal decision to change the status quo of their lives and to change direction. They desired more experiences to gain fulfillment and satisfaction from their jobs.

During the process of the transition, the men often reevaluated their personal values, though none of the men in this group sought out a career counselor. The men did speak about a constant inner dialogue which increased immediately after leaving their first career and continued throughout the transition.

More than any of the other groupings, the Still Becoming were aware of what was happening and thought often about their own mortality in relation to their professional lives. The men were compelled to analyze what they desired from a

second career and how they wanted to spend the rest of their lives working. The men turned their attention towards weighty matters of job fulfillment, work satisfaction and colleague relationships and let go of more trivial job situations.

The strong memories and sense of meaning during the change came from the formal and informal learning that took place. Since a majority of the men in the Still Becoming group returned to school, they acquired new knowledge and skills, not only about the subjects, but also about themselves. The experience of returning to school was positive for the men. They were better learners because of their work and life experiences. They were able to contribute more to the classroom setting and recognize the value of learning and education in their lives.

The men also benefited from informal learning. They made new friends who helped to see them differently than they viewed themselves. They were also able to assist younger students by sharing their stories of work experience and the decision process to make a career change. Pete, who shared his stories to increase youth awareness of his plight, said,

> I was able to help some of the younger students in a way that I wished
> someone would have helped me. No one ever takes time to let these kids
> know what the real world is like and what is ahead for them. I told them to
> take their time and find something that they really enjoyed doing and go after
> that. (#014 Pete)

The men experienced profound meaning during their job transition. Through self-reflection, inner dialogue and experiences with family and friends the men were able

to examine and gain understanding of the meaning behind their career change. The men examined their personal values, their own mortality and what they desired from their second career. They wanted to find self-fulfillment, a sense of happiness and the ability to assist others from their workplace. The men were unique from their friends and associates in taking action to get what they desired from their career. The overall experience for the men was a positive one as they developed as individuals throughout the transition process.

Chapter VI

The Successes

Introduction

    The Successes as a group had strong ties to each other with regard to the subjects

that emerged. They were distinct from the Strugglers and Still Becoming in the

motives that drove them to leave their first career, the process by which they

transitioned and the meaning they took away from the whole transition experience.

The similarities within the grouping were surprising, taking into account the vast

range of ages and careers.   The motives to begin a new career were based on the

Successes' desire to further their career goals. This was not directly linked to money,

position or type of industry, but rather the men's ambition to develop their career

experiences and increase their knowledge base. The Successes were similar to the

Still Becoming in their desire for increased self-fulfillment and career challenges.

Further, the men wanted more control over the daily aspects of their lives.

    The men had a clear vision of what they wanted from their second careers. They

took the responsibility to achieve these needs and did not expect the new career to

provide the opportunities. The transition for the men was not a start and stop

process; they did not view their change as leaving one job, beginning another and

then the transition was complete. The Successes viewed the second career as a

stepping stone to learn and successfully master. The transition was a continuous

journey, most likely never ending as they did not expect the second career to be their final career, but a step ladder to increased success and career enjoyment. The group was averse to feeling stagnant and staying in a repetitive job that had already been "conquered."

The Successes experienced a tremendous amount of support from family and friends which was a large and diverse network compared to the other groupings. This support system provided needed direction and assistance when challenges emerged. The Successes' paradigm for their challenges was vastly different than the other categories of men as they did not view their hardships as obstacles, but rather as normal occurrences that arise when trying to accomplish a difficult goal or task. The men's outlook was positive, but not unrealistic. They had a strong grasp of what they might face during their transition and grounded their expectations in reality. They expected tough times and were not surprised when they came along.

The Successes did not spend an inordinate amount of time preparing for their career change. They did plan, prepare and take the necessary steps to make the transition a smooth one, but they did not hold back the process as it moved forward. They had concerns about their financial situations and thus prepared the best they could, but this was not one of their major concerns. This may be partially due to the seamlessness of the transition from one career to the next. The men's income was not always stable and secure, and a few of the men struggled in this area. Nevertheless, it was not an overwhelming obstacle.

Numerous other obstacles developed during the transition for the Successes. Similar to the Still Becoming, the time between leaving the first career and feeling satisfied in their second career took much longer than expected. The impact on immediate family, spouses and significant others was also more dramatic than the men had expected, and often times a move was required during the transition process, which proved difficult for some of the family members. Other challenges included the change in relationship dynamics with spouses, significant others, and children. Increased time at home, decreased time at home, new responsibilities and changes in how others (family and friends) viewed the identity of the participant all proved major obstacles. The outcome for the Successes was surprisingly similar, as all the men expressed satisfaction their current situation and the direction of their new careers.

Participant Profiles

#003 Aaron

Standing over 6 foot 4 inches and surrounded by an office full of basketball trophies and paraphernalia, Aaron is obviously a basketball fan and player. A college basketball star, Aaron always dreamed of coaching collegiate basketball but did not want to follow the normal path of a college basketball coach. Aaron threw his name in the hat for a coaching position at a junior college that he had played for after only finishing his college career earlier that year. After two years as head coach, Aaron realized that to advance his abilities as a head coach, he needed

experience as an assistant coach at a larger school, so he decided to apply for other positions. Knowing that he lacked knowledge of how to raise money, how to work within an institutional environment, and how to get the right people involved in his basketball program, he recognized his faults and changed course to accommodate his goals.

Aaron returned to his home state and became an assistant coach at one of the local universities and also enrolled in a Masters program at a different university. The job did not pay well, so Aaron started teaching in a public school part-time and also worked at a local fitness center in the evening. Single at the time, Aaron could work long hours, and after three years he finished his Master's Degree. Soon after finishing his degree he was recruited to become the head basketball coach and the athletic director at a small university in another state. Three years into his tenure the President of the College contacted Aaron about becoming his assistant, while still maintaining the position of head basketball coach. This new position became a turning point for Aaron as he realized he enjoyed academic administration more than being a head basketball coach.

Aaron resigned his position as head basketball coach and Assistant to the President of the university returned again to his home state to pursue a doctoral degree and teach at the college level. During the next six years Aaron finished his PhD and also was married. Now with the right credentials and some strong experience, he began searching for leadership positions in the state in which he lived.

Three years and numerous promotions later, Aaron is the assistant dean at a local university and very happy with his career.

One year into the position, Aaron loves his job and the opportunities that his new career is providing. He feels challenged in every aspect of this job, although he mentioned difficulty with work-life balance. He has no desire to leave his position at the current time. However, he does have aspirations to be dean in the future.

Aaron has no regrets about leaving his coaching position and returning to school to earn his PhD and move into academic administration.

> The whole transition was a relatively smooth one. It seemed that as soon as I made a decision to change or do something different the right opportunity would appear for me. Making the decision was not always an easy one, but I just knew what I wanted to do, and when the right opportunity came along I would take it.

He has few complaints about his current position, just what Aaron felt were "normal issues that everyone has to deal with at their jobs." He also felt his transition was much easier due to his single status. "I didn't have to worry about anyone's jobs, feelings or whether or not they liked the state I was moving to. I only had to worry about myself," he said. Since marrying, Aaron has restricted the areas in which he will take a position as dean. His wife's family lives in the same town as Aaron and his wife, and she does not want to move to another state. Aaron has no problem with this request and knows that he can secure a position as a dean in the state he resides.

Aaron had to participate in both formal and informal learning to accomplish his goal of working in academic administration. He has fond memories of his schooling and the motivation and fulfillment derived from learning.

> If you don't have an education, especially an advanced degree there is a ceiling to what you can accomplish. To have the right opportunities open up to you, you have to have an education. If I didn't have the three little letters PhD behind my name I would never be in the position I am today. Education also brings respect.

Aaron's Advice

> Why do individuals never go after the career they really want? Because life gets in the way, you get married and have kids come along. You rack up house and car bills, someone in the family gets sick or dies and you have to help others. You lose your desire when all those other things happen. It is easy to get distracted by all the things that life throws at you and then quit trying to get to where you are going.

Would he do it all over again?

> I would! I am having fun and I have been able to see and do a lot of really neat things.   It was the right move for me.

#005 Phil

Phil is a cowboy who lives on a ranch and raises miniature horses with his wife and children. His cowboy dress of Levi's and boots do not give away his previous career as a corporate executive and CPA. Immediately after graduating from college, Phil went to work for one of the large public accounting firms, which he describes as consisting of "long hours on top of more long hours." After he couldn't take it anymore, he decided to switch to a smaller corporation in which he could make a bigger impact and move up the corporate ladder more quickly. "I really wanted to run a small to mid-size corporation," he said. After working as comptroller for nearly four years, Phil was promoted to CFO of the small corporation. He remained in this position for nearly nine years.

The corporation was growing significantly and the small piece of ownership that Phil was given as CFO turned into 15 percent ownership. Phil enjoyed his position and the opportunity to have most of the organization report to him. He enjoyed the quick pace and the monetary success that went along with his position and title. However, the increasing responsibilities and time commitments became a challenge for him and his family.

> I was very busy, in fact [too] busy and it got to the point where between my
> wife, my family, my church/religious responsibilities I couldn't juggle all of
> those. In the beginning when we had two or three children it was not as big a
> deal. But as the company grew and became more of a national company than a
> regional one I had to travel more. This combined with having more children

became quite an inner struggler for me. I wanted to be fair to the company and

to my family. It made it worse because the other members of the leadership

team were traveling more than I was.

The corporation dictated a large amount of Phil's time. If clients were in town or

business needed to be completed in another state, Phil had to make arrangements to

be there. This was difficult for him to deal with.

My heart was always with my family. It was at the ball game or at the music

recital, all the family things. The other issue was when I was home my mind

was often caught up in what needed to be completed at the office. Even

though I never brought a cell phone or laptop into the house my mind was still

on.

During his eleventh year with the corporation, things changed drastically for Phil.

The leadership group tried to talk Phil into becoming President/CEO. Phil told them

he was not interested so they hired someone else for the position. This individual

turned out to be different than how he had portrayed himself in the interviews, and

things became so bad that Phil decided to leave and sell his ownership in the

company, its building and stock options. The company agreed to his proposal if he

would stay on payroll for a short time, to which Phil agreed. As soon as this time

period passed, Phil took his money, left the corporation and headed to a new farm

with his family.

Phil had grown up on a farm and loved that lifestyle. He wanted to give his

children the same experiences he had as a young man. Phil wanted to have a farm

with cattle and exotic Icelandic horses. Nevertheless, the decision to leave was made with mixed emotions. Phil had strong ties to the individuals he worked with, and he was emotionally invested in the company that he had helped build. He stated, "It was hard to leave a company that you spent 11 years of your life working." Phil was reflective about his decision to leave the company and the implications for his life.

> All the reasons for me to stay were about me and all of the reasons for me to
>
> quit and go were about my kids, my family, my wife and my religious beliefs.
>
> Every time I got the feeling of what am I doing I kept on thinking of the
>
> reasons that I left.

After deciding to leave his job, Phil put his house up for sale and moved 15 minutes out of town to a horse and cattle ranch where he and his family would raise and sell exotic Icelandic horses. The move was both positive and negative for Phil's family. One of the difficulties was the adjustment for some of the children, as being further away from friends and the increased time driving back and forth to school activities proved arduous. The change from city life to a more rural setting was also an adjustment for the family as the children had a change in the typical chores they were expected to complete. Nevertheless, the children enjoyed certain aspects of living in the country. They were able to have motorcycles and four wheel ATV's. According to Phil, the family environment and happiness did not significantly change, but increased with time.

Phil has few regrets about leaving his corporate job. He misses the interaction and friendship with his fellow co-workers. He also misses the challenges that his job

provided, so noticing this absence he decided to replace it with other interests. Phil knew nothing about raising and taking care of exotic horses, but he knew that he could learn and wanted his children to learn also. He attended workshops and brought trainers to the ranch to teach him how to take care of and raise the horses. He immersed himself in challenges and learning opportunities involving the ranch.

Phil was surrounded by a strong support system throughout his whole transition. His wife and family were very supportive of his decision to leave corporate America. Phil related that his family desired to have more time with him, and the opportunity for increased involvement in parenting and daily family and home activities was one of the largest factors behind him leaving. A large majority of Phil's work associates were very supportive of his decision. They went to all lengths to change his mind and get him to stay but were supportive once his decision was made.

Phil was the most reflective on his experiences and the meaning that emerged from the change than any of the other participants in the study. This can be attributed to a strong relationship with his wife and the desire to be a more involved father. Reflecting on the involvement of his family and close friends throughout the transition, Phil was aware that his successful career change was due in a large part to this network and support group. This topic will be discussed in length later in this chapter.

Phil's Advice

My career transition has been successful because it is constantly evolving. I
am always looking at what I am doing and looking if I need to be moving in
another direction. In other words, will I be doing the same thing in two years?
I bet not. My two oldest boys graduate from high school and move on and
then I have all girls. Am I going to want to be spending as much time out of
the farm doing farm things? Probably not, so I think that it will still be
evolving as time progresses and as I progress.

Would he do it all over again?

Yea, I think so. It has been a great learning and growing experience for me
and my family. I think that the decision I have made is what life is about.

#007 Scott

Scott is in his late fifties. Scott is a serious individual who ponders every
question that is asked and takes time to formulate his thoughts before answering. He
is married with two older children. In the early 70's Scott worked in the oil and gas
industry as a land man buying leases from landowners. Through the nine years he
worked for the corporation, Scott was promoted several times. He ended up
reporting to the Vice President of Exploration and managing seventy employees.
Travel was a major portion of the job, and he was away from home nearly fifty
percent of the month. Scott enjoyed the job and the responsibilities that

accompanied his position, but after nine years he realized he had other goals that he wanted to accomplish.

At nearly the same time Scott was contemplating a career change, his brother was in his last year as a Psychology Doctoral student, and one of his brothers-in-law was Dean of the College of Health and Sciences at a large university. This played a large role in Scott's decision to make a career change. "Their careers really got me thinking about a career in academia and all the positives of such a job," he said. Scott had been a finance major in college and always liked economics better than finance, so he decided to return to school and get a doctoral degree in the Economics of Natural Resources. He knew his experience in the oil and gas industry would give him an increased opportunity to be accepted into the program, so he chose to apply to a university where many of the staff were experts in the field of oil and gas.

Scott was excited to leave his career in oil and gas and begin his doctoral studies, but he did express trepidation about entering academics because it had been so long since he had gone to school. He also felt relief to have made and acted on the decision to start a new career. He realized the difficulties of the road ahead. Nevertheless, he was happy to begin a new chapter in his life.

Scott moved first and spent a semester at school by himself before moving his wife and two children. Initially, he stated the reason for the delay in his family moving was "the kids had to finish up school. My wife was wrapping up some business she had and also selling the house amongst other duties." Later in the interview Scott stated that the reason for the delay in the family move was,

It was good for me to be there by myself where I had a single focus and that
was concentrating on school work. Frankly, I was unprepared for the
academic riggers involved in that program. I had to spend more time studying
than other students did that first year. I don't think we knew at that point if I
was going to make it.

The children were not excited at the thought of moving and knowing they would
be gone for at least four years. However, they adapted quickly, and the family grew
to love their location which included warm weather and a nearby beach. At the time
of his leaving Scott went from making $75,000 a year in the oil and gas industry to
$800.00 as a graduate assistant. "The first semester I ate peanut butter and jelly
sandwiches everyday for lunch," he said. "I had no money, and I also didn't know
how to cook." However, the family did not experience a large change in their
finances. His wife, who worked in communications and networking, did not make a
significant income at the time of the career change, but upon moving to a larger state
she was now in the Number 7 market in the U.S. compared to their home state which
was 142. "All of a sudden my wife was in a larger market and she was now
compensated accordingly," Scott said. This alleviated any serious financial
concerns.

Four years later Scott graduated and was offered a teaching position at a private
university in the same state that they had left. Scott was relieved to have finished as
the program was rigorous and out of the 19 students that started only four completed
their dissertation and degree. The move back turned out to be harder on his family

than the initial move to start his schooling. "We grew to love the town and the University," he said. "My kids made great friends and enjoyed attending the high school. I was very close with many of my fellow students."

Scott had an extremely strong support system. Both his father and his brother had made similar career changes, his father in his fifties and his brother in his thirties. At the outset of the career change both his father and brother assured him they would assist his family financially if the need arose. Scott's father had worked in the banking industry for 25 years. Prior to that he had completed one year of law school right out of his undergraduate studies. He decided to attend law school at night while continuing to work his banking job during the day. The bank paid for his law degree, and upon graduation Scott's father left banking for a corporate lawyer job in the oil and gas industry.

Scott's brother graduated from high school and went to a semester of junior college before dropping out to play in a rock band. After 14 years of playing in a successful rock band, his brother decided to return to school to earn his PhD in psychology. This was one of Scott's main motivators. If his brother could make such a drastic career change, Scott figured he could do it as well.

Scott maintains that the success to his career change was due to his work experience in his twenties and early thirties:

I had a wealth of knowledge in terms of data sources in the oil and gas business. My dissertation and research was in the area of oil and gas which gave me a large advantage. Many of my fellow students had to research and

study their fields of research, while I had spent years in the industry that I was

writing about, which made my schooling and writing much easier.

Scott has one regret concerning his career change. Having returned to the same

state where he worked in the oil and gas industry, he is in contact with many of his

previous colleagues.

I look at guys that I was in the industry with 20 years ago and they are all

presidents of companies and are in senior positions. It doesn't really bother

me, but I think about it and wonder what kind of job I would have or where I

would be had I stayed on the career path that I was on.

Scott is happy with his current position and shared that he would not want to change

his career in any way. He currently works as the dean of his college.

The issue of a career change is now one that Scott has discussed with his son, a

third year associate at a top law firm in Atlanta. He is working 80 hours a week and

has a wife and a new child. His son recently called Scott and shared that he can't see

himself doing this job forever and is not as happy with his career as he thought he

would be. Scott can relate to that notion and is excited to assist his son with his

career advancement or changes.

Scott's Advice

Our family got really close during the time I was in school. They appreciated

what I was going through. The kids were in high school then and we had a

bond because we were always working on school work together. We also

participated in many of the campus activities. We went to football games and other sporting events. We used the pool during the summers, so it was a really good deal for us. I don't know if our lives would have been as rich if we had stayed in my corporate position. If you feel like you want to make a career change do everything you can to make it happen."

Would he do it all over again?

Yes, no question that I would.

#010 Brady

Brady is impressive when you meet him. He looks like he walked off the cover of a GQ magazine as he has polished manners, is dressed impeccably and looks the epitome of success. In his mid-thirties, Brady is married with four young children. He graduated with a degree in Commerce specializing in accounting. After graduating Brady worked for three years as an auditor, but did not enjoy the boring work of sitting in a room and crunching numbers. Brady was also bothered by the ethics of many of the organizations he was working with. Large scandals like Enron and Bre-X had just occurred, and Brady was witnessing similar accounting techniques in the companies he worked with. He was uneasy about what he was finding.

After three years Brady felt like he wasn't doing anything valuable or significant with his daily work. He also knew he didn't want to be an auditor for the rest of his

career. The only progression for an auditor is to move to a controller and manage a company's financial statement. After realizing that this step would not offer any change in his current situation, Brady switched his focus to finding another career that he would enjoy. Brady began interviewing with different companies, seeking a career that would suit his personality. At this point Brady had no idea what type of career he was looking for, and after interviewing for close to six months Brady was unsuccessful at finding anything that he thought he would enjoy.

Near the same time an opening came up for an accountant in personal taxes. Brady decided to take advantage of the opportunity to work with individuals. He enjoyed the job and spent six years in the department, but as time progressed Brady felt stagnant. It was the same thing year after year, and he felt as if he was not progressing or learning anything new. He did not feel challenged by the position even though he was making a six figure salary. Brady had an experience one day near the end of the work day. He remembers getting ready to leave work and watching his boss meet with other corporate executives.

> I looked at them and thought, do I want to be like them? Do I want to give up what they have given up to get to that position? They were spending more time at work than with their families. I just found the lifestyle that they were living, the hours they were putting in at work, their interests didn't fit who I was. I discovered that I don't fit the typical accounting role.

This was a significant point in Brady's career change. As he stated, "It was the start of the end."

It got to the point where Brady was "reflecting" [his words] daily about a job change. "I felt like I was coming to a crossroads where if I didn't get out now, that I probably would never get out," he said. Brady began discussing his desire for a job change with a friend who was a real estate lawyer. A year earlier he had assisted Brady in purchasing a rental home. After discussing it for nearly six months and working on some other rental homes, they decided to go into business together. Brady would return to school in the evening while still working his accounting job to get his real estate license so they could sell the rental homes once they were fixed up. His friend would find the properties and get the homes fixed and ready to sell.

The four months of evening school gave Brady time to reflect and go through different scenarios of whether or not the real estate business would take off and sustain his family if he quit his job and did it full time. This was the time that Brady felt his transition to real estate really began. Brady's main concern about his career change was the financial aspect of being able to provide for his family. "The financial aspect was my only concern," he said. "I knew that I would be successful, I just didn't know how long it would take. To go from a salaried job to 100 percent commission is a scary thing." Brady waited a couple of months to quit the accounting firm to make final preparations and pay off some remaining debt. Looking back now, Brady wonders why he was so worried about financial matters.

Brady had a very strong support system. He owes the success of his transition to his wife and his business partner. Brady's wife was supportive from the outset. She wanted him to be in a vocation where he was happy. An interesting twist in Brady's

departure from the accounting firm is that his wife's father was a partner in the firm and had assisted Brady in securing his position there. Brady was surprised by the support his father-in-law gave him in finding a career where he would be challenged and happy.

Brady's last day at work was not what he expected.

> I had always dreamed about quitting. Walking into my boss's office where you think you are so important and you think the world is going to tumble down without you. I thought it would be more fun than it was. I must say it wasn't quite as fun as expected. My boss just said, you are going to do what you are going to do, and I wish you the best of luck.

Brady has no regrets in leaving his first career. He does miss his former colleagues, but he tries to have them over to his home once or twice a year to maintain the relationships. After getting together with his former colleagues, Brady's decision to change careers is solidified. "I hear what they are doing everyday and I know that I made the right decision," he said.

Brady's Advice

> I had close to thirty interviews over a couple years period. I almost quit so many times. I would get the job offer in my hands and it just didn't feel right. Nothing actually felt right. I knew that I always wanted to run my own business and start my own company. You have to do what you feel is right

171

and work hard with it. Success is not always determined by money, but if you

are happy with what you are doing and where you are in your life.

Would he do it all over again?

Yes, no doubt I would do it all over again. I just wouldn't worry as much.

#011 Rob

When I walked into his 6th grade classroom, the décor introduced me to Rob. He

had rock and roll albums from the fifties and sixties lining the walls with concert t-

shirts mixed in between. A child of the sixties, Rob is a connoisseur of music, and it

would be surprising if his students knew any of the musicians lining the walls. In his

mid-fifties, Rob has been married to his wife for nearly thirty years, and they have

four children. Rob has a casual nature about him and is very thoughtful and

deliberate in his communication. After spending time with Rob, I can see why

students flock to his teaching style and parents want their children in his math class.

At the age of eighteen Rob started working as a draftsman for a

telecommunications company. Nearly a year later his boss began looking for an

engineer and Rob said he would like the job, so he was promoted and began on the

job training. Rob spent the next nine years working as an outside plan engineer, but,

knowing that he could make more money on his own, he made his first career change

and started an engineering company. He traveled the country working and building

his company to the point where he needed to hire help. The company was growing and everything was going well and until he attended church one Sunday.

   The sermon was on living a purpose-driven life, one that was full of challenges, fulfillment and working your dream. As he sat in church Rob decided that his dream was not being an engineer, but instead teaching. At dinner that night he brought up the idea to his wife. Initially, she was shocked; they had one son in college and another one two years away from college. She was unsure how they would afford to pay for everything that was necessary and was worried how things would turn out. Several days later after discussion with Rob and thinking about the situation on her own, she was behind him 100 percent. Her change in attitude and support of Rob came from living with him for so many years: "She knew that I could provide for the family. I had made a change once before and we did fine. I could do it again."

   Rob enrolled at a local college to earn his bachelors degree in education at near the age of forty, never having attended any college before this time. A week before Rob started school he shut the doors to his company. This was a difficult thing for Rob to do; he had built the company for nine years and put his "blood, sweat and tears" into its success. To so quickly shut the doors and move onto something else was not easy. "I was excited to start school and a new phase of my life, but sometimes it is difficult not to look back and not see all the work I put into that business," he said. "There were positive things as I did look forward to taking some classes with my son who was in college, actually two years ahead of me."

Rob enjoyed his school experience and had a positive attitude about being the "old man" in his freshman and sophomore classes, which he shared with the statement,

> I was old enough to be most of the student's dad. I actually was older than most of my professors. I just jumped in there and loved every minute of it. I really liked going to the math lab. Most of the students thought I was an instructor who worked there. I also enjoyed the education classes. I loved the whole college experience.

The change had positive effects on the family. Rob's wife worked while he attended school and took care of the family finances. In between studying and classes, he would take care of the family. The children enjoyed the change, and Rob felt like it was good for him to have the extra time with his children to strengthen their relationship.

Nearing graduation Rob knew what school and grade he wanted to teach. He only applied at one school and was hired two weeks before the start of the semester. Rob has loved the job ever since. He has been in his current position for nearly eight years and swears that the only way he is going to quit is if they take him out in a pine box. His feelings are best expressed by a comment he made near the end of the interview, "There has never been, and I am honestly telling you that there has never been one single day that I did not want to get up and come to school."

Rob has no regrets about leaving his company. He has struggled with a few aspects of the teaching position such as dealing with students who are facing major

struggles in their personal lives. "I have had to learn patience, and to be more aware of no matter who or where you are, there are children who go through some real struggles and issues," he said. Rob expressed that life should be fun and easy at that age, but due to the choices of parents and siblings the lives of some of his students are wrought with difficulties like divorce and numerous other issues. It is also difficult for Rob to deal with teachers who are not as excited and positive about teaching as he is. Rob has no intentions of making any more career changes and expects to be a teacher until the day that he dies

Rob's Advice

It is hard to give a blanket statement. I think it depends on the person and their attitude. If they are in a job that they don't want to be in, then they need to quit and find something different that they enjoy doing.

Would he do it all over again?

Yes, I wouldn't change a thing.

#012 Nathan

Nathan is a self-admitted geek. His love for reading, learning and chess are apparent when you talk with him. Nathan is very deliberate in his speech and always took time when answering my questions. He wants to make sure that he is correctly portraying what he wants to communicate. A fan of comic books since he was a

young man, he has been a collector ever since. In all reality Nathan is a very intelligent and educated individual. After graduating from Harvard with a PhD in psychology, Nathan immediately joined a prestigious hospital and opened up a practice in New York City. He was married two years later. Within ten years Nathan had four children and all the responsibility that goes with having a family. He had a mortgage, private school costs, car payments and yearly vacations. Thirteen years into his practice Nathan decided that he no longer wanted to be a psychologist. Although he loved his job, the 10 hours a day of listening to problems was wearing on him. He wanted to wake up in the morning and be excited about his work and career.

Nathan's hobby for years had been writing storylines for a new comic book series. He would pencil out stories on vacations, plane rides and whenever he got a chance. Nathan decided to turn his hobby into his career. He went part-time with his work as a psychologist and devoted the rest of his time to launching his new comic book. Nathan initially did not realize the large task he had taken on. Launching a new comic book series would cost millions of dollars. Nathan reached out to his former college associates, his friends and family as well as colleagues at work. Within one year Nathan had raised 18 million dollars to launch his comic book franchise. With the needed funds Nathan set out to find the best individuals in the comic book industry to assist him in getting his business up and going.

Nathan's Advice

> This career change has been the best thing for me and my family. I feel like I
> am alive and progressing as a person everyday. The secret is easy: Find what
> you love to do and make a career out of it. Then you don't mind when things
> get tough, because you enjoy what you are doing.

Would he do it all over again?

> Yes, I absolutely love my life. Don't get me wrong there are still difficulties,
> but I love what I am doing.

Motive for Change; Career & Personal Development

The Successes are a driven association of men, similar to the other groups, who want to successfully transition to another career. They had traits similar to both the Struggler and Still Becoming Groupings in that they encountered obstacles during their transition that, for a time, impeded their progression. Parallel to the Still Becoming, they also had clearly defined goals for what they wanted from their career change. However, the Successes were distinguished by their reflective considerations as to "why" they wanted to change careers and their own personal views of what constituted the new career.

Clear Vision leads to Defined Goals

When initially comparing the Still Becoming and the Successes, both groups had a clear vision to move them to action in changing vocations. They understood what they desired from the career change and what they wanted to accomplish through the process. The separation of the two groupings occurred with two distinct differences. The first is the approach to "why" they were motivated to change careers and the second separation element was how they viewed their career throughout the process of change. These two differences in approaching the vocational transition played a paramount role in the success of the career change.

Attaining Understanding

The Success grouping initiated their career change with an advantage over the other participants in that the men had carefully and painstakingly reflected on "why" they wanted to change and what they wanted from their career change. It is important to note that in reflecting on "what" they wanted from the next career, participants were not specifically looking outward. Rather they were more inwardly focused. The men were not searching for specific careers; they focused on particular elements they wanted the next career to encompass such as particular challenges, an increased knowledge base and new opportunities and experiences. Noting that these characteristics were imperative for their next career, the participants actively sought positions with these factors in mind. This change in thought and paradigm aligned them for success during the transition.

The Successes first reflected on what they wanted from the next career, the

characteristics, traits and opportunities that it could afford them. The men reflected

on these elements, received input from family and friends and attempted to hone in

on and gain further information regarding the specific attributes and traits:

> I would sit for hours and hours at meetings and think about what I wanted.
>
> What my perfect career would look like. The more that I thought about it the
>
> more I realized I was   just making lists of things that I liked to do and most of
>
> the items on the list did not match my accounting position duties and
>
> responsibilities. (#010 Brady)

The Successes matched the desired characteristics to the vocation only after spending

the necessary time to reflect on what they wanted from their work life and how their

vocational goals matched their personal goals. Once this was understood it vastly

changed the Successes' paradigm for reaching their personal vocational goals.

Financial Aspects

The Successes did not significantly differ from the other groups in terms of

financial stability. Only one individual amongst the six was independently wealthy

enough to subsist without working. The other members all needed monthly income

to maintain their standard of living. Although finances were a concern during the

transition, they played a minor role in the decision making process compared to the

other factors.

Career View

The Successes were motivated by the desire to create their career, even if the career did not exist yet. The view of "career" was considerably unlike the other groupings. The perception of career was not linked to their current job, or even a specific job. Rather it was the accumulation of experiences, knowledge, opportunities, relationships, and challenges that each vocation could provide. This was pivotal to understanding the thought process of the Successes. They were not chasing the "perfect" career that encompassed all the attributes they desired; instead they wanted to acquire attributes, traits, capabilities and experiences (both personal and professional) that allowed them to have the ideal job. As Aaron stated, "I couldn't have the career that I wanted unless I knew the reasons I wanted that career" (#003 Aaron). This self-reflection developed a clear and defining vision for what they desired from their career change. It was by this realization that the burden of "finding" the next career was lifted. The men understood that it was not a specific career that they were looking to match the expectations of a "successful career." Rather it was the parts of the job that held the fulfillment and sense of accomplishment.

The other groupings took the opposite road as they looked at specific careers and jobs and then proceeded to make a decision of what specific path would lead to that career. There was little to no reflection as to what job characteristics would provide

the satisfaction they so desired. Their focus was outward towards the second career instead of inward to discover what job characteristics would match their motivation.

Control

The men had a different view of control within the framework of their career transition. The Successes viewed their career and transition as completely within their control. They did not perceive their current supervisor, current economic trends or other factors as playing any role in the success or failure of their career and its subsequent change. This view strengthened their position as they searched for new careers; fear of failure and not reaching their next career was not felt by the Successes. This mode of thinking allowed the view that change would continue, even through the next career. All of the men except for one felt that they would most likely change their career again. (#11 Rob was the only one who felt he would not change from his current position)

Summary

Two strong themes run through the initiation and motivation of the Successes' career change. The men had a clear vision of "why" they wanted to make a career change, which was for most not motivated by the first career, but rather an inner motivation arising from what they wanted to accomplish. Second, the definition of a "career" or "career change" was much different than their counterparts in the other groupings. The men viewed their career change as an ongoing process and not as

one that started with leaving their corporate job and stopped with their new position; they expected to change careers again in the future to match the personal and professional growth and development they desired. The differences in how they came to view these factors made a large impact on their success.

Process – Self Discovery through Experience and Reflection

Experience followed by reflection was one of the Successes' greatest tools in successfully moving through the transition into another career. The time period of reflection was different for each of the groupings, and for some it unfortunately never occurred. The Strugglers did not begin a serious reflection of their decision and actions until after the career transition had started, if at all. This was a difficult place to begin thinking about "why" they decided to change careers, "how" they were going to accomplish the transition and finally, "what" they wanted at the end of the career change. The Still Becoming included some individuals who reflected prior to the start of the transition, but the majority of reflection occurred during and after the transition process, which explains the lengthening of the process portion of their transition.

The Successes were vitally different in the timing of their reflection as most of the reflection took place prior to any action or decision making and lasted from a few months to numerous years depending on the individual. This time of reflection gave the participant a period in which to understand the motives behind the desire to make a career change as well as formulate what the next career step would be and how

182

they would get through the entire process. Only one individual (Rob #011) did not

reflect prior to his decision to make a change. (Three months passed from the time

the decision was made before he took any action.)

Every participant voiced the need to "work things out" before taking any action,

and the methods were different for each. Some of the participants reflected in an

inner manner, not sharing their thoughts with others or writing them down. As

shown by Brady, "It seemed that for months and possibly a year or so my mind was

always mulling over what I really wanted to do with my life. If there was ever dead

time in a day, or when I was in meetings I would think about my next career" (#10

Brady). Others wrote notes and lists of their thoughts and expectations about their

next career. "At times I found myself sketching comic books while listening to a

patient," Nathan said. "I would force myself to stop, make a few notes and then in

between patients I would develop story ideas and ways that I could move my comic

book business forward" (#012 Nathan). Numerous participants turned the reflection

outwards and shared thoughts with family and friends wanting to gain valuable input

and insight into how they should progress: "For a while after I heard the sermon and

was closing my business the topic of career change was all my wife and family

talked about. I admit we had to get use to the idea of the career change and that

needed some time" (#011 Rob).

Whatever the manner in which the reflection took place, it always occurred before

any action was taken and most of the time did not become concrete plans of change.

Instead the opposite occurred. The men would focus on why they wanted to change

183

and what they wanted from the new job, thus gaining a clear vision and understanding of what they desired from a vocational change. Their motives were not so shallow as to "just" finding another career they would enjoy; instead they were seeking to find a career that matched with their goals, values, workplace strengths and personal enjoyment factors.

Changed Perception

The Successes' perceptions of a career and their role within that career changed dramatically throughout the process of the transition as they developed their reasons for desiring a career change. Equipped with this knowledge, they were able to grasp a more comprehensive understanding of what they valued and wanted from the next career. Their approach to the new career was constantly being adjusted as the men discovered more about themselves.

Having reflected on the reasons they desired a career change, the Successes were better equipped to handle the changing perceptions they encountered during the process of change. It was difficult for the participants to answer the always asked career change questions, "what is your next career?" or "why are you changing careers?" The motives for the change were more personal than "I just didn't like the job" or "I needed a change, something more challenging." The desire for personal fulfillment, personal development within the workplace, a workplace that used the strengths of the participants and provides challenges, opportunities and experiences is difficult to describe in a two to three minute conversation over a drink. These

184

motives were difficult for many of the participants to share with acquaintances, let alone with close friends.

The perceptions of what the participants valued and desired from the workplace setting was a strong theme through the process portion of the interviews. Initially, the men put this responsibility on the chosen career, but as the transition process progressed they placed it back upon their own shoulders. They knew it was their responsibility, not the company's, to find a job that encompassed all the factors and elements that they desired. Many believed that no such company existed that could fulfill all of their wants, but the reality of what a company could provide in combination with what they wanted could bring the growth and development they desired.

This change in perception swung the pendulum of control back to the participant. He was responsible for finding a career that matched his attributes and desired elements; it was not the company's responsibility to find him. He was also in control of his career and future, not the corporation. This sense of control assisted the men in gaining a clear vision of what they wanted from their second careers.

Enhanced Identity

All of the men in the Successes group experienced some degree of a positive enhanced identity during the career change process. The men felt varying degrees of personal satisfaction and a new sense of identity as they progressed through the career change: "I felt better about myself and what I was doing, even through the

185

difficulties of changing careers" (#007 Scott). The men were proud of their choice to change careers, and as the transition progressed and the men started new careers and businesses they were eager to share their experiences with others and more importantly to assist others through their transition.

Two of the men had conflicting viewpoints on their own measure of success. Although happy with their decision to move on to the next phase of their career, they determined that others would not view them as successful until they had attained monetary success.

> It was a driver for me to prove to my former co-workers and managers that I could be successful on my own. Looking back now I may have felt (at the time) that I needed to prove that I could do it to others, but also prove it to myself. Unfortunately the only marker I had was money. The marker now is not money, but how I feel about what I do every day. (#010 Brady)

The Successes group had a few issues dealing with redefining their identities. Each of these situations was directed toward the change in their home lives. Increased time at home and the ability to assist more with family duties did cause some problems both for the men and their immediate families as roles were redefined. The men expressed that the issues were transient in nature and did not have any lasting effects.

The men did not exhibit or share negative experiences when leaving their former companies. In fact, little mention was made of the last week and the last day.

Instead most of the conversation was directed towards the thoughts and actions leading up to the transition and what was ahead for them.

Not the End, the Beginning

The process of the transition proved to develop and change the Successes more than any of the other groups as the men came to the realization that their "career" would take them through numerous transitions and jobs/positions. A majority of the men reasoned that they would gain what they could from the position, enjoy the process or journey of that new job and then continue to look forward towards other opportunities. As Nathan stated, "A career is mostly about development, development of skills, capabilities and having experiences. The more you have of all three of those the better employee that you are going to be" (#012 Nathan). Brady made a statement that I heard most of the participants within the Success group communicate, "Once you have made one career change you realize it is not as dramatic as we make it. I would probably not quit cold turkey like I did, but instead find a way to ease from one career to the other" (#010 Brady). Phil expressing his thoughts on the same subject said,

> I am always looking at what I am doing and looking if I need to be moving in
> another direction. In other words, will I be doing the same thing in two years?
> I bet not. My two oldest boys graduate from high school and move on and
> then I have all girls. Am I going to want to be spending as much time out of

187

the farm doing farm things? Probably not, so I think that it will still be

evolving as time progresses and as I progress. (#005 Phil)

Continuous Journey

The view of how and when the transition would occur and when it would be

completed was foreign to the Successes; they held a long-term view of their career

transition. The men described the process of transition as a continual one, not a stop

to one career and start of another career, but a continual journey taking them from

destination to destination gathering up as much as they could along the way. Each

career was seen as a stepping stone to experience, to learn from and to successfully

master and then to begin the whole process all over again. The transition was a

journey that was continuous and most likely never ending. Phil (#005) stated this

concept perfectly, "My career transition has been successful because it is constantly

evolving. I am always looking at what I am doing and looking if I need to be

moving in another direction. In other words, will I be doing the same thing in two

years? I bet not."

The men did not expect the second career to be their final career, but a step ladder

to increased success, new experiences and opportunities. This mindset changed how

the men viewed their next job. The Successes were averse to feeling stagnant and

staying in a repetitive job that had already been either "conquered" or was not

providing the challenges, stimulation and fulfillment the men wanted. They

expressed that this was counterproductive to their development as individuals in both

188

the workplace and in their personal lives. Nearly half of the men later spoke that looking back they were surprised they had stayed in their first career so long and they would be quicker to change careers now.

Career vs. Job

In follow up discussions with the men the language of their transition had altered significantly. A majority of the men did not speak of their new job as a "career." Rather it was their current place of employment. When speaking of their career, the men referred vaguely to the larger explanation of their work. Brady, who worked in real estate, referred to his career as owning his own business. Rob referred to himself as a teacher and Aaron referred to his job as an administrator. Nathan also called himself a business owner. They did not view their career as, for example, "being a sixth grade math teacher at Washington Middle School." Rather he was a teacher and could teach any grade, at any school, anywhere. This language described their work in broad terms and did not lock them into a certain work environment. This verbiage confirmed the view that the participants considered the career transition as a continual journey not linked to a particular position or job. Their careers could not be described by their current title or place of employment.

Challenges

The Successes' view of challenges was unique from the other groupings as the men did not see challenges in a negative light. They knew that they would face

189

obstacles and difficulties in the transition but understood this was a normal part of any change or learning process. "You are going to have challenges and obstacles in all aspects of your work life," Nathan said. "If I stayed in my former profession I would be dealing with obstacles there as well. It is a normal part of life" (#12 Nathan).

The men said that each and every experience prepared them for their new occupation. They learned something from each challenge and obstacle that better prepared them for success. Most of the challenges occurred for the men during the process portion of the job change, as they had to go back to school, move to a new state, find funding for the new business, etc. Four out the six men in the Successes grouping faced the challenge of returning to some type of schooling, while the remaining two faced the challenge of opening their own business.

The greatest challenge for the men who created their own business was the struggle to initially launch the business. The challenges of obtaining funding and finding new clients were high stress points for the men. This was the most difficult aspect of the career change. Nathan stated, "If I was going to fail anywhere, it would be in this area. I had no idea how to find funding so I just started with my friends and worked from there" (#012 Nathan). Without past experience in opening a business, the men had a steep learning curve. This required long hours and the support of friends and family.

The challenge faced by the other four individuals was the stress and obstacles associated with returning back to school. Although the men enjoyed the learning

190

experience and the role of student, the administrative aspect of being a student was a

major challenge for them. As Rob said, "Having to go back to the long lines, the

bookstores and the enrollment process was a major difficulty for me" (#011 Rob).

The men who returned to school differentiated the two processes from each other.

The first process of learning and studying was enjoyable though accompanied by the

normal stresses of tests, quizzes, reading and assignments. The second process of

dealing with administrative tasks was the most stressful. This was due to the maze

created by the universities in enrolling, buying books, finding classes, learning new

computer systems and taking on-line courses.

Positive Outlook & Feelings

The men all had varying degrees of a positive outlook related to their job

transition and spoke to the excitement of starting a new career and a new phase in

their lives. The departure from the first career was not a sad time period for the men,

and they spoke to the importance of timing the departure so that it was the right time

for them to leave their first career. The men never spoke of having any sadness or

separation issues related to leaving their careers but said it was a time of growth and

development for them both professionally and personally. The time of reflection

prior to their transition changed their view of the first career; if any negative feelings

were discussed it was aimed towards the company and not at leaving their job.

Nathan (#012) explained this sentiment when he said, "The job really left me, I did

not leave the job." The men had emotionally left the job much earlier than than the

191

physical departure, as shown by Brady's day dreaming of what he would like to do

during meetings, Nathan's scribbling of cartoon ideas during sessions and Scott's

envy of his brother's career.

The men did miss their associations with coworkers and tried to maintain those

relationships as best they could through phone calls and occasional lunches. Not one

of the men missed his former position or wished that he could go back. The men did

report strong feelings and reactions directed towards them from their colleagues.

Some colleagues were excited for the men and expressed their own desire to change

careers; others responded in what the men described as a "jealous" reaction. Their

former colleagues would take a negative view of the career change in conversations

or would totally cut off communication with the men. "It is hard to watch someone

actually change something in their life, when you may also want to do the same

thing, but don't have the fortitude to do it" (#003 Aaron).

New Job

Beginning the new job was not difficult for the Successes other than the normal

feelings of starting a new job and beginning a new role. The Successes moved

smoothly into the new job and did not have overwhelming issues with their new

roles. If the transition was to a field unrelated to their first career, there was a time

period of learning the new job, meeting new colleagues and figuring out how the

new "system" worked. This was not seen as negative to the Successes; instead they

expected the learning curve of a new job and were not negatively affected by it. The

fit of the men's expertise, experience and desired elements to the new career created

a smooth progression, as shown through follow-up conversations with each of the

participants where they all spoke to the theme that they were more competent and

better equipped for their new position because of their former career and

experiences. They said this would translate again to their next position if they

decided to change jobs again. The ability to learn new skills, increase their job and

industry knowledge and have experiences better prepared them for their next job.

Not one participant in the grouping acknowledged that their former career was a

hindrance to their new position. The time, experiences and knowledge from the

former job were preparatory to their success in their current positions

    The new job was also less stressful than their first career, and after the initial

learning curve the participants took a more active role in balancing their work, social

and family life. The participants were working the same amount of hours in their

new position, or in some cases more, but they experienced less stress. The choice of

the new career, the maturity in certain decisions of the job such as work hours, the

taking on of new tasks and responsibilities, interaction with colleagues and upper

level management were more controlled by the men. The men were also not as

motivated to impress others at the new job or seek after promotions. This appeared

to be a large stress reducer for the participants.

Support

The family, friends and social networks of the Successes provided a strong support system before and during the career change. Although the men were extremely busy with their new roles as students and business owners, their family and friends found ways to work around and support the participant's new roles and responsibilities. It was important to the men to maintain their relationships with their spouses, significant others and families during the transition process, and most of the men had more time to spend at home with their families due to their change in roles and the decrease in business travel.

More than any of the other groupings the Successes had a strong support system. All but one of the men were married during the transition process, and their wives played a markedly strong role during the career change. All of the spouses were positive towards the change and did all they could both financially and emotionally to support the men during their transition.

The Successes also had a very strong network of friends and associates. This network played a pivotal role in not only supporting the participants in their decision, but also listening and providing feedback, contact and networking. Many of the obstacles that the men faced were overcome through the assistance of a friend or associate. When Nathan first approached his close friends about his comic book idea and asked them for financial support, they decided to go to dinner that evening and brainstorm how they could all provide support to Nathan. At the dinner Nathan's college friends wrote down a list of all the names and contacts they could think of

who could support the project financially. This blossomed into start-up revenue for Nathan as friends networked with friends and associates to raise the capital needed for the business.

This type of networking and support was the key to the success of the launch of Nathan's business. The participants were better able to overcome obstacles and troubles if they rallied their support system around them to assist in solving the challenge or problem.

Reflections and Lessons from the Successes

Reflections

The Successes as a group were very similar to each other and were more similar than any of the other groupings as they were distinct in characteristics from the Strugglers and Still Becoming in their larger view of the meaning and purpose of their career transition. The motives to begin a new career were based on the Successes' desire to further their career goals. They had a clear vision and goal for what they wanted to accomplish with their "life" career. To them it was about more than a job. They were not enticed or driven by money, position or prestige, but rather by their own ambition to develop and to create a career that they would enjoy and that would provide them the opportunities they desired.

The men's long term vision and goals played a strong role in their success. The vision of their careers was one of a fluid process throughout their working years. A

career was not specific to one job but was the compilation of experiences, challenges and opportunities throughout different positions. The group also navigated through the transition process in different ways than the Strugglers and the Still Becoming. The Successes saw their challenges not as obstacles but as growth and learning opportunities. They were disheartened, frustrated and stressed as much as the other groups, but they approached the difficulties with a different mindset, thus allowing them to move through the obstacles more easily.

The men had more sense of control over the change. They took the responsibility for their careers and the events that happened surrounding their transitions. It was their decisions and actions that perpetuated the events of the change. This sense of control gave the men an increased positive outlook on the changes and events that surrounded the transition. This positive outlook and sense of control also assisted the men in having a realistic expectation of the career change. Unlike the Strugglers they did not expect the next job to provide them the opportunities, challenges and experiences they desired. The Successes decided it was their responsibility to search out a job/career that encompassed what they desired.

The Successes tended to be more driven by a sense of helping others in their work environment. A very altruistic group, they knew that their job satisfaction was heavily based on two components: first, that they assisted others in their daily work routine and second, that they enjoyed the work they did on a routine basis. When the men were able to match both elements, they found themselves to be headed in the right direction in regards to their career transition.

Lessons

The men learned several lessons throughout their transition. One was the importance of family, friends and a social network in the success of their transition. The men were cognizant of the important role that these individuals played. For the Successes the support was evenly balanced between emotional as well as networking job support. Second, the men knew that the transition was not going to be a start or stop process, but one that continued through many job changes. The men were fine with this outlook and showed excitement about continually progressing in their career development.

The men were clear in their feelings and thoughts that the career change was one of the most important decisions they had made up to that point in their lives. It was a defining moment. The heightened awareness and sense of importance directly related back to the decision to make the career change voluntarily. The men were intensely set upon the outcome of this important decision. Their words and actions accentuated the feelings of the magnitude of this decision. All of the men wanted to be successful with their career change and be able to provide assistance to others who also desired a career change.

The Successes experienced deep meaning and growth during their vocational transition. Many decided they were now much different and better individuals than before they began their change. It was a deeply meaningful time period in their lives. Each of the participants also said they were overall happier because of the

197

career transition. One of the participants described himself as more patient with his

family because he felt more at peace with where his was in his life. Each of the

participants acknowledged that they were more involved with and passionate about

their current work, and they were aware that they enjoyed their jobs more than their

previous work.

Chapter VII

Summary, Discussions & Recommendations

Introduction

The view of midlife career change and the correlating midlife crisis have been extensively studied in men ages 40+, whereas little research has been conducted on career transitions involving men in their thirties, specifically those who did not transition due to a crisis event. Recent events in the global economy have radically changed the world of work. The progression of technology, global communication, inclusion of women in both the workforce and leadership positions, and the changing landscape of the work office have provided opportunities for individuals to pursue other career options. The changes in the global corporate landscape have impelled men to reflect on their personal motivations to choose their place of work.

The purpose of this research was to further the current knowledge on men who make a self-chosen career change and the lessons they learned through their changes and experiences. The study focused on the motives, processes and outcomes of the career transition and the

Information was collected through individual interviews with men who had made a self-imposed career change in their thirties. The collected data were used to identify the motivations, processes, learned experiences and reflections associated with a self-imposed career change undertaken not due to a crisis event. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the findings of this research, their implications and

applications as they apply to individuals, corporations, education, career change counselors and society. A further intent is to identify future areas of research regarding career change.

<center>Summary of Groupings</center>

The research findings are organized to address three aspects of the men's career change. The first concerns the specific motivators that pushed the individual to begin thinking and reflecting about a career change. The second is the process of change, which begins the moment the individual starts to think about a career change. The very act of thinking about a change, of 'doing' some different type of work creates a movement or action towards a transition. As the process evolves into decisions to create the change, the transition has begun and the ability to go back has ended. The day the individual actually quits his job and begins another is not the start of the transition; it likely started months or even years earlier.

The third aspect of the transition is the outcome and the related experiences and lessons. The answer to the question everyone asks, did the transition work out? Was it successful? The findings suggest that the answer to these questions is different for each of the participants in the three different groupings of the Strugglers, the Still Becoming and Successes. A summary of each phase of the change process are summarized and the main themes and findings that emerged from the interview are discussed.

Motive

Each of the three groups of men had significant motivators that brought them to the point of a career change. Although there was some overlap in the motivators to change careers, differences amongst the groupings emerged throughout the interviews around features that included: what was the motivation to change, how prepared the men were for the change, and clarity concerning the type of career they desired to transition to.

Table 1. An Outline of Motive for each Grouping

	Motive Themes	
Strugglers "Looking Back & Can't See Forward"	**Still Becoming** "New Beginnings, Tired Endings"	**Successes** "Career & Personal Development"
Lack of Clarity	Preparations to Exit	Clear Vision leads to Defined Goals
Running Away	Sense of Control over Change	Attaining Understanding
Doubtfully Looking Back	Timing as Critical	Financial Awareness
Vagueness of Vision & Goals	Constant Corporate Changes	Career View
	Family Becomes a Priority	Strength & Choice in Control
	Lack of Personal Fulfillment	
	Financial Tensions	

Strugglers

The Strugglers revealed at the outset of their change they had only a vague vision for their transition; no matter where they were in the process of their transition, they were unclear as to why they wanted to change careers. A majority of the men did not enjoy their current jobs and were focused on moving away from the current career instead of moving towards a career. This clouded view of their reasons to change led to consistent questioning of their decision to leave their first career, wondering if they had made the right choice in leaving. They also questioned the direction they were heading towards their second career. The men lacked a strong vision or goal for what they desired at the end of the change, and this lack of a defined goal made it difficult for the Struggler to communicate clearly to others where the end of the change was located or what it would look like. They had difficulty verbalizing the desired end result to those who were amongst their support group and network of friends.

Still Becoming

Differing from the Strugglers the Still Becoming group appeared to have a clear and defined vision for their career transition that developed during the planning and preparatory stages of their transition. The men spent at least a year planning and preparing for as many aspects of the career change as they could by researching their desired career, building relationships with individuals, and making financial

decisions and plans. The Still Becoming knew what they wanted from their second

career and sought positions that would challenge and motivate them and provide

them with a sense of fulfillment and importance they desired. These attributes

pertained not only to their professional, but also to their personal lives. The men

began to understand the relation between the personal and professional, wherein

success in one seemed to have an effect on the other. Personal fulfillment was

becoming increasingly important to the men; they wanted to be challenged and

fulfilled outside of the career and to take on a more active role with in personal and

family life.

The issue of financial stability was significant to the motivation of change, as the

men were deliberate about when and how they would leave their first careers. They

wanted the transition to be as easy as possible for spouse, significant others and

children and the men worried about providing for their families during the transition

or at least maintaining their same level of lifestyle.

Successes

The Success group initiated their career change with several advantages over the

other participants. The men had carefully and painstakingly reflected on "why" they

wanted to change and "what" they wanted from the career change. It is important to

note that the participants in reflecting on "what" they wanted from the next career

were not specifically looking outward at different career options, but rather were

more inwardly focused in order to gain an understanding of what they were

203

searching for in a new career. The men were similar to one another in what they desired from their next careers: they required challenges, opportunity to increase their knowledge base, skill and capability development and experiences. They wanted to be engrossed in their new jobs and to find it to be personally important to their life's work. Noting that these characteristics were imperative for their next career the participants actively sought positions with these specific factors in mind. This shift in thought and perspective positioned them for success during their transition, because it contributed to the situation of their initiating their transition knowing what they wanted and understanding how the next career might provide those things.

The way in which the Successes perceived their next job started with reflection about those features that provided them with a sense fulfillment, and that absorbed their time, energy and attention in their daily work. The Successes reflected about job characteristics, traits and opportunities that would provide them with their realized goals. The men reflected on the differing career elements and discussed these at length with family, friends and associates to fully understand their motivation and desire to change. The ability to seek input from family and friends and sift through others' input assisted the men in gaining as much information as possible regarding the specific attributes they desired from the next career. As one of the men recalled,

> I would sit for hours and hours at meetings and think about what I wanted, and
> what my perfect career would look like. Why did I want a new career and

what did I expect from changing careers? The more I thought about it the

more I realized I was just making lists of things that I liked to do (and didn't

like to do) and most of the items on the list did not match my accounting

position duties and responsibilities. (#010 Brady)

The Successes then tried to match their next vocation to those specific

characteristics, an activity that was able to occur only after each participant had spent

the necessary time to reflect and discover more about their desire to change and their

expectations for the future career. The ability to match work/vocational goals along

with personal goals was the desired end for the Successes, and once this was

understood it vastly changed how the Successes reached for and attained their

personal and vocational goals.

Process

Each of the three groups experienced the process of the transition differently. For

a portion of the men the process was longer than they expected and the increase in

duration caused the men to lose sight of their career goals and aspirations while

simultaneously prolonging their movement through the career change.   For other

men it was a learning and growing process that assisted the men in discovering what

was of most importance in their professional and personal lives.

Table 2. An Outline of Process for each Grouping

	Process Themes	
Struggler "Lost Identity"	Still Becoming "Stuck in the Mud"	Successes "Self Discovery"
Challenges of the Change	First Few Steps	Changed Perception
Quitting Day-A New Beginning	Stuck in the Mud	Enhanced Identity
Lost Identity	Difference in Support	Not the End, the Beginning
Relinquished Roles	Finding the New Career	Continuous Journey
Financial Distress		Career vs. Job
Subpar Support		Different view of Challenges
Unanswered Question & Concerns		Positive Outlook & Feelings
		The "Next" Career

Strugglers

The findings suggest that for the Strugglers the process of change began with a loss of identity. The men had equated their personal identity with their professional work and now that a transition was in place that identity was lost and was not immediately being replaced with a new one. Their identity loss was not the only challenge the men experienced as they took on new roles and responsibilities much

different from what they had done and who they had been in the past. The career

transition forced new roles upon each of the men including the role as a new

employee, the role as a new student and also the role changes with family and

friends. The men were uncertain how to redefine themselves in these new roles and

responsibilities accounting for feelings of discontent and uncertainty. Further, the

men began to comprehend the degree to which their career change would affect their

friendships and family. The support they expected to receive was drastically

different from what actually occurred after the transition began. Lastly, unanswered

questions came to light as the Strugglers faced doubts about their decision to change

careers and the effects of the transition including the length of time it was taking in

the process portion of the change. The men wanted to move quickly through the

process portion and move to the outcome stage of the transition which caused the

process of change to be more difficult than the Strugglers had expected.

Still Becoming

The Still Becoming enjoyed an excitement and renewed interest as they began

their transition. They had looked forward to starting a new chapter in their lives and

leaving the first career was easier than they had expected which was due, in part to

the planning and preparing the Still Becoming had done prior to their departure from

the first career. The length of time spent before the transition began was important

to overcome the challenges that arose during the process portion of the change. For

a majority of the men the decision to transition was not made quickly or without in depth planning and thought.

The process of transition was relative smooth for the men because they had planned and prepared and knew the next steps of the transition. Some of the men returned to school immediately while another started a new career, but all of these changes occurred within a month of leaving their first job. The first few months were free of most fears and doubt as the men enjoyed the changes and the "newness" of their lives, but the newness was not to last indefinitely and the men spoke of beginning to worry. The participant who immediately took the different job wondered if he would always be satisfied with the new position, while those returning to school were apprehensive about spending so much time in school and paying significant amounts of money to return to school only to start a new job. Would the job really meet and fulfill their expectations or would it end up as a grass is greener on the other side of the fence scenario? A second fear was financial as the men worried that they would not have as much financial success as they had in their previous career as many equated monetary success as a sign that their transition was successful.

An important factor in the success of the transition for all of the groupings was support from family, friends and professional associates. The participants received support from their family and friends that assisted them through the transition process; which support encouraged them and gave them a renewed self confidence in their decision to change jobs. This support was crucial as obstacles presented

themselves during the transition. One of the major obstacles faced by the Still Becoming was the issue of redefining their identities, although this occurred later in the transition compared to the Strugglers. The issues of redefined identities commenced for the Still Becoming at two different junctures in the transition process; the first identity issue presented when the newness of the job and schooling wore off and the normalcy of their situation settled. The men were satisfied with their current situations, but soon realized that their current title of "coach" or "student" was not as prestigious to others as their former titles had been. They missed the social prestige of their former career.

The second identity crisis occurred when the transition process proceeded on longer than the men expected. As the progression slowed, the difficulty with the new identity emerged because the specific identity of "student" was lasting longer than expected. This liminal space in between leaving their first job and starting their second was now becoming their identity and proved to be difficult to accept for the men. The men perceived themselves as "in between" working worlds and did not associate themselves with the new label and role they were given. They perceived themselves on the road to their new identity and desired to be attached with that position or career. This dissension between the participants own perceived identity and the identity others had of them caused them to feel "stuck in the mud."

Successes

Reflection was one of the Successes greatest tools in successfully moving through the transition. This time period occurred throughout all the phases of the transition and played a significant role in assisting them men to move from one aspect of the change to another. The men yearned to know "why" they wanted to change careers and also what they "wanted" from the transition, their motives were not to find another career they would enjoy, instead they were seeking to find a career that matched with their goals, values, workplace strengths, new challenges and personal enjoyment. The perceptions of the men were vastly different from the other groupings; as they contemplated their next career they looked inward to understand what they desired from their next job. This became increasingly clear the further into the transition they went. Aspirations for personal fulfillment, personal development within the workplace, a workplace that used the strengths of the participants and one that provided challenges, opportunities and experiences was what the Successes desired from their career.

The men all experienced some degree of positive enhanced identity and personal satisfaction as they progressed through the change. The sense of control over their lives was liberating and exciting for the men. This feeling of control originated from their view of the career change and the role they played in the transition. The Successes view of transition was one long fluid continuous journey where each job or change was a step to a different experience or challenge. Their career change was not defined as quit your job and find a new job, but find a job and learn and develop

210

within that realm and then as the thoughts and feelings reemerged that initiated the first change, these signs signaled it was time to transition again. This continuous change was accompanied by personal and professional growth and development through each transition. The men experienced a differentiation between their job and career; their job was their current place of employment and their career was the larger explanation of their life's work. The Successes identity was not tied into their current work, but the progression they experienced and the lessons they learned through the changes, which were never devoid of challenges.

The men faced challenges and obstacles during their transition nevertheless; they did not view these in a negative light. They were realistic in their expectations of difficulties during the change and were prepared to overcome them when they arose. The support offered by family, friends and associates was paramount to the success of each of the men where friends, family and associates played an active role in the career change and assisted in overcoming any obstacles the Successes faced. Some even played a pivotal role in helping the men acquire positions that they may not have been able to on their own, moving from the role of supporting to assisting.

Table 3. An Outline of Lessons/Reflections for each Grouping

	Outcome Themes Lessons & Reflections	
Struggler	Still Becoming	Successes
Leaving Unfilled	Search for Fulfillment	Time of Reflection
Difficulties in Change	Successful Support	Changed Perceptions
Realization of Change	More than Money	Ongoing Journey
Financial Struggles	Defining Moments	Support for Success
	Important Personal Values	Challenges as Opportunities
		Altruism & New Meaning

The lessons and reflections from the groupings will be discussed in the findings and recommendations portion of this chapter.

Summary

   All of the participants in the study had one common trait amongst them; they all wanted a profession or career that would provide a sense of fulfillment, new challenges, opportunities and development. The path and means differed for each individual, but the goal was the same. To change careers for each of the participants was not a decision that was made easily and involved change in every aspect of that individual's life. A majority of the participants in this study did not realize the

extent to which their career transition would affect numerous areas of their lives and for all of the participants but one; the motivation to change careers was not a one-time decision event.

The career change happened mentally long before the individuals decided to take physical action. To the co-workers, family and friends the decision to change may appear as if it was done quickly, without any planning and preparation, but this was rarely the case. The participants had been internally thinking about, pondering, reflecting, making plans and working things out in their minds long before they shared their thoughts with others. This quiet evolution of change within the individual's thought process could easily lead others to believe that their decision to change careers was one done in haste or that a single precipitating event triggered the beginning of a transition, of which neither were correct.

<div align="center">Discussion of the Findings</div>

The purpose of this section is to interpret the findings that emerged from the men's career change experience. The section is organized according to overall themes followed by a discussion of each one. The discussion takes into consideration the literature on adult development, personal and career transition as well as adult learning and the implications of how the findings add to and enhance the current understanding of career transition for men. Following are the eight themes generated from the interviews with the 15 participants.

The Need for Transition

From the outside of the window looking in, all seems well and in order for the man in his thirties, he is in the prime of his life; he is successful, has a well paying job, opportunities for promotion and is at the cusp of his career and possible promotions. Why then would he leave? If a crisis (defined as a major disruption in one's life) was not involved in the decision to transition careers, what motivates a man to change careers?

This study suggests the need for a career transition originates with experiences, awareness of one's life situation, thoughts, and questions. The men expressed that the desire to change careers did not occur overnight, but as a gradual feeling that became stronger over time, especially the more the men pondered and thought about it. Both Kegan (1982) and Schlossberg (1996) described the timing of a career change in their work and found that a career change is rarely linked with a single "large" motivating event, but rather a convergence of circumstances over a period of time. Similar to Kegan (1982) and Schlossberg (1996) findings only one of the studies fifteen participants was able to identify a "marker event" that led him to begin his transition, while the others described multiple experiences that combined to bring about an awareness the men did not have before. This awareness or awakening was varied for each of the men but, when realized, ignited thoughts relating to a desire for change and the inability to live as they had previously. It was the thoughts of change that continued for months and, for some of the men years, which created a need strong enough to compel certain men to action. This period of time

encompassed a "career change" gestational period as the men thoughtfully planned and worked through their transition process, usually unknown to other coworkers, who were later surprised by a sudden exiting of the career.

The circumstances and experiences related to the awakening or awareness by the men included both the work environment as well as personal factors. Relating to the work environment, a few of the men were motivated by negative aspects of their current career. Their corporations were changing, the landscape of job responsibilities and expectations had evolved, coworkers and associates had left or moved on to other positions, continuous management changes and unmet expectations at work all played a role on the corporate side of the equation. While some of the men were motivated by the negative aspects of their current career others were motivated through their unmet professional needs; they wanted more from their life's work. Their ambition for opportunities, experiences, job fulfillment and altruistic motives were strong contributors to the individual's motivation to change careers.

Personal factors also played a strong role in motivating the individuals to change careers, although a large portion of the men had achieved success in the workplace, some of the men had experienced a lack of fulfillment in their personal and home lives, ignoring their own values concerning their families in lieu of meeting company demands for time and results. The combination of both personal and professional factors started the reflective process of what might be possible for them to accomplish and what different careers might be available for the career changer.

They understood that they wanted something different for themselves in the future. Literature on career change confirms the premise that individuals who desire a career change often need to reflect on their "potential selves" and what can be accomplished (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

The myriad of small motivations, which consisted of questions of life, awareness of one's circumstances and work/personal experience, built up over time to create consistent thoughts of change. Thoughts of change were generated through different experiences and situations for the men; some men disliked circumstances within their workplace, creating thoughts of change, while others looked outward and began to ask broader questions of their life and circumstances. This questioning of a greater purpose and deeper meaning from their career demonstrated the need and desire for the career changer to find more meaningful work. This finding accords with the literature on career development (Schlossberg, 1984) and adult development (Levinson, 1978) which refers to the deeper questions individuals ask concerning one's life purpose, meaning and contribution to society and future generations.

The need to transition was not fully based upon professional experiences and awareness, but included personal experiences that compelled the men to change the direction of their lives. The career change was viewed as encompassing both the professional and the personal aspects of their lives. Levinson (1986) referred to the importance of the personal aspect of change with the individual's life structure, a central theme to his theory of adult change. This structure is the "underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time" (Levinson, 1986, pg. 6). Life structure is

explained by Levinson as the key components of our life including relationships with others, spouse or partner, children, social clubs and how they are affected by an individual's situations. Each of the men had both personal and professional motivators that became the root of their desire to change, which varied amongst the men to include being unhappy with their current work situation, to unfulfilled personal family expectations, to the opposite end of the spectrum in desiring a different career that created a workplace that was challenging and fulfilling.

The decision to leave a career, not influenced by a crisis event suggests the resolution to leave originates from within the individual and is devoid of outside motivators, while this research suggests that the compilation of small factors build until they create a strong enough desire within the individual to "think" about a transition. This reflection or pondering on what could be different professionally and personally over months or years then builds a belief within the individual that he wants to change and the individual takes action towards the change. Mezirow (2000) suggested this self reflection or the ability to reflect upon personal experiences is crucial for change to begin. His description of one aspect of his transformation learning theory the "critical assessment of assumptions" occurs when an individual questions the basis of what he has known to be "true" or "right", and initiates the beginning of change allowing him the ability to look outside of himself. Kegan (2000) describes this empowerment to take action in an individuals life occurs when they "develop an internal authority that makes choices about external values and expectations according to one's own self authored belief system." (p. 59)

This empowerment in the participants' thoughts pushed them to start "day dreaming" about other careers and speaking with others about their vocation. An information gathering began to take place as they searched for different opportunities, if for no other reason than to know what else was out there for them. It was a process that they could not stop once they started. "It is like a rollercoaster that once you are strapped in and they push the button there is nothing you can do. I felt the same way, once I started thinking about other careers and what I might want to do; the rollercoaster was already leaving the station." (#10 Brady)

The Stress of a Solo Flight

The career transition process can be a difficult journey to navigate by oneself. The men who changed careers discussed a wide range of emotions and feelings they experienced during the process and the intensity with which the emotions were felt. The descriptions included the range of fear, isolation, despair, grief and hopelessness to excited, relieved, enthusiastic and hopeful. Many of the participants experienced all of them, but one feeling recurred in nearly all of the groupings from the Strugglers to the Successes; a sense of loneliness in their journey. Even the Successes who were surrounded by friends, relatives and associates had a sense of isolation during their change process which appeared to be due to having little or no contact with others who were or had experienced a career change.

While many of men who self-imposed a career change in their thirties, there are few who speak about it and even fewer resources of those who have changed a career

218

in their thirties. The men could not find helpful books, magazines or internet sites

that deal with career change for those younger than the mid-life crisis age and were

discouraged by the lack of information available to them. The current literature is

mostly related to job loss through layoffs and this enhanced the sense of isolation

from others. "I didn't really know anyone I could talk to that would really

understand how I felt, especially during the tough times." (#012 Nathan)

   The loss of community at the previous place of work increased the loneliness felt

by the career changer as he lost a sense of belonging and being a part of something

larger. Although many of the men were excited to leave their jobs for new

opportunities, they missed certain aspects of their previous career.

Integrating New Roles

   As the participants exited their former careers and began the transition process

they entered new roles; some of the participants immediately returned to school,

others began a separate career outside of corporate America, while others started a

business. Each of the decisions forced new roles upon the men and they had a period

of adjustment in accepting the new role and the accompanying responsibilities

(Ebaugh, 1988; VanGennep, 1960). The adjustment of new roles and responsibilities

is supported in the literature on by Ebaugh (1988) who advocated that "an individual

must become an –ex" where one's prior role, or parts of it, are merged into a new

role. She also stated, "At the same time the individual is going through this self-

transformation, people in society are expecting certain role behaviors based on a

previous identity" (p. 150). This was a strong finding amongst the men throughout the study. The men not only had to take on new roles, but had to find new ways of redefining who they are based upon past roles and expectations of others, which caused feelings of doubt in the career change and confusion in the attempt to move forward. It was difficult for many of the men to "let go" of their previous identity and move towards a new one. As time progressed and the individual accepted the new roles the transition became smoother and the acceptance of the role seemed to propel the individual closer to their original goal.

A marker for the success of the transition was the ability for the man to change his self perception to match his new role. The ability for the men to self-actualize and come to knowledge of their authentic self was imperative to maneuvering the transition process. As the men faced new roles they had to evaluate each role and accept or reject that role, a process that is still ongoing for many of the men as they are unsure of their own self-perception. As previously noted, research on career change and transition has shown the capacity to embrace the perspective switch required by the new role assisted the men in settling into their new life (O'Connor & Wolfe, 1991). The change in perception may better be described as a transformational change where the men were inner directed and reflective of their process of change (Jung, 1964, O'Connor & Wolfe, 1991).

An example is Frank (#006) who quit his corporate job to return to school to get the required degree to teach. Frank who could not work full-time due to his school schedule had to take a night job stocking at Toys-R-Us. Frank could never get past

the idea that he had to take a minimum wage job to support himself and his son.

Instead of viewing himself as a student who had to work part-time while in school he

viewed himself as a minimum wage worker, a view that caused a hatred of the job,

and he quit. But then he had a hard time finding another job that matched his school

hours and allowed him the time to take care of his son. The job at Toys-R-Us

provided Frank with enough monetary support, time for school and his son;

nevertheless, he could not accept the new role as student and part time worker. This

caused him added stress due to the fact he could not find replacement work that

matched his schedule.

Understanding the transition and the identity and role changes that accompany

them was not expected when the men began their transition. The space between

leaving the former job and starting the new career served as a bridge to what an

individual was "before" compared to what they are "becoming." Along with the role

change there is often a switch in perspectives or how the person in transition sees and

perceives the world. The Successes were all examples of experiencing a change in

perspective and moving to a more inner focused reflection. They were able to begin

the journey of matching their own personal expectations and strengths to that of the

job. Consistent with career change literature, participants in this study had a change

of perspective or view of their career and surroundings, due to their career transition

(Hall, 1996, 2002; Holland, 1959; Super, 1957). Their personal internal dialogue

helped them to sort out goals, values and the direction of their lives; it also helped

them to come to an understanding of what they wanted from their career change.

O'Connor & Wolfe (1991) maintain that inner reflection and dialogue is necessary during the transition process.

All of the fifteen participants experienced personal transition as they maneuvered their career transition. As the men transitioned careers, their personal lives also began to change in numerous ways: their relationships evolved, their own personal view changed and they began to see their personal lives through a different lens. These new roles caused men to view themselves differently, whether positively or negatively. The findings of this study suggest that with a career change a personal transition will also take place. Career change and transition research supports the need to view occupational transitions along with personal transitions and life change, as they are so interconnected (Ebberwein et al., 2004; Savikas, 1997; Schlossberg, 1984; Scott, 2002; Stevens, 1996). To separate the differing transitions from each other would prove to be difficult as they are tightly woven together where the connection between personal and professional life is highly important. A majority of the men in this study identified themselves and gained self-esteem through their work. This self identification with their career provided the men a sense of purpose and identity. The decision to change careers altered the identity of the career changer and he then had to redefine himself through the change. In light of the current economic condition many individuals will be forced into creating a new identity as jobs are lost and changed through corporate lay-offs and restructuring.

The Lessons of the Journey

Transformative Event

A career change is a transformative event for the individual (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). To change careers involves personal transition, and as the participants transitioned into other careers they learned some imperative personal lessons from their experiences. The participants learned more about themselves, their likes, hopes, goals and dreams of what they wanted to accomplish in both their professional and personal lives. The meaning of the transition was two-fold, as it assisted the men in changing their outlook on the world as well as their own personal self perception. Relationships were strengthened, values were evaluated and personal/professional goals were appraised to match the new life that they had created up to that point in the transition.

Importance of Reflection

The men had the opportunity to reflect on their choices to change careers and the consequences of those choices. A majority of the men learned difficult lessons that affected more than just themselves, but also their families. The process of reflection for the participants occurred throughout the transition process. Reflection occurred in quiet moments of alone time, as well as with others in appropriate settings. The men would first reflect on their decisions, goals and plans and then would share them with friends and associates, taking the opportunity to speak their thoughts, feelings

223

and gain feedback from others. This process strengthened their resolve to continue forward, as well as gain feedback and input into the creation of other future goals, plans and dreams. The process was a transformative event or metamorphosis for the individuals as they experienced the difficulties associated with a career transition, overcame them and experienced the growth, meaning and development from the personal evolution.

The whole process of reflection, job transition, new career, and new roles was not a planned process as early researche surmised (Parsons, 1909, Super, 1957; Holland, 1959). Rather it is a non-linear, chaotic process that is influenced by numerous factors that all illuminate at different moments within the transition. There is much research that suggest unplanned moments play a role in getting a new job (Ibarra, 2003; Krumboltz & Henderson, 1998, 2002). Ibarra (2003) suggested that to "test-and-learn" is better than to "plan & implement." It was important for these individuals to have the opportunity to try different careers before making a decision and then have the ability to stick with that decision.

It was in the moments of reflection that the men started to understand the reasons for the transition and the motives behind wanting to have a more balanced work/personal life. It was in these moments that the men learned more the lesson of themselves than lessons they could share with others. It was in the personal lessons that the men learned the most and caused the increase in the desire to change. A few of the men "awoke" to the knowledge that they did not know their children and wanted to build relationships with them before they left for college in a few years,

other men realized that they had given their lives to their corporations and the pay-off for such sacrifice was not what they expected, rather an empty shell of expectations. Each of the men experienced these personal reflections in different ways and learned their personal lessons in different ways.

Strength Gained from Support & Relationships

A further lesson derived from the transition was the significance of support from others during the process of the transition. This was one of the most significant factors in relation to the difficulties the men experienced; as they progressed through the transition the more support the men had the easier the transition, the less obstacles they faced alone and the increased ease in finding the next job were all affected. The opposite proved to be true as the less support the men experienced the harder the transition, the more difficult it was to make it through obstacles and the longer it took to move to the second career. The lack of support also affected the ability of the men to reflect upon their experiences and learn from their previous mistakes to create a smoother transition

The relationships of the career changers were not left unaffected through the transition. The impact of the change had a polarizing effect in that it strengthened the relationship and brought the career changer and his wife or significant other closer together or it had a dividing consequence. Pete who was busy with school and had to study and take care of personal errands on the weekend had little time for his significant other and this soon drove a wedge between the two and the relationship

225

ended. Dave, who had to move back home with his wife and five children experienced a strengthening bond on their marriage as they worked through the obstacles of bankruptcy and dealt with the financial challenges.

Differences in Career Changers

Throughout the interview process it became obvious that there was a difference in the men who decided to change careers. Despite the opposition and difficult obstacles required to change a career, some of the men notoriously choose the more difficult road of change to accomplish their goal. They were individuals who took action for new opportunities, experiences and personal development, when they had the opportunity to remain in a status quo of a comfortable career and life style. I found these men were driven to accomplish in their lives, even when faced with failure.

Springboard to Further Change

All of the participants choose different methods and means for transitioning to a new career. Past traditional methods of career counseling, assessment testing, and searching for a new career have now become outdated and unused. Only the Successes took the approach of matching their strengths, skills and desired factors to a new career as written about by Parsons (1909). Only one of the participants saw a career counselor and took the myriad of assessment tests, but found them useless and did not use any of the information that was given. Numerous individuals went to

226

local bookstores and libraries to check out "career books" to gain information about different types of jobs and possible job prospects, but were unable to find useful resources to assist them in the process of their transition. The men found that a career counselor, self-help books or the battery of assessment tests were helpful, but did little more than give suggestions of different types of jobs and personal skill sets, which the men described as outdated and useless. For the individuals to find work that was meaningful to them they found all of the previously job search methods mentioned very difficult to maneuver and not helpful in their transition phase, due to the change in the world marketplace and electronic advances since they first joined the workforce. Most of the career development theories need to be modified to match the current state of the economy, employment and global markets. Past research (Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002; Krumboltz & Levin, 2004; Savickas, 2000) suggests that career development and career matching be updated to the current workplace environment.

It is important for career changers to be cognizant of their strengths, skill sets, likes and dislikes about the workplace. Certain assessment tools can be used to aid that discovery process such as the Strengths Finder 2.0, Meyers Briggs (MBTI) and other counseling methods. By fitting an individual's personal traits, skills sets and experiences with a career the likelyhood of a successful outcome is possible as supported by career change literature (Hall & Associates, 1996; Krumboltz & Henderson, 2002; Savickas, 2000).

The progression of the career change included the knowledge that change would be continuous for these men. As they neared the end of their transition, they realized that a certain job or profession would not provide all that they were searching for. The men began to define their life's work, not through their specific job at the time, but through the larger view of what they wanted to accomplish. It was the growth and development of the process and not the destination that provided the fulfillment, satisfaction and motivation that were searching for. A number of the Successes grouping referred to their next change, once they had learned and progressed as far as they could in their current position.

All of the men desired a better career no matter their varied reasons. They all had hopes and dreams they wanted to accomplish and always spoke earnestly and enthusiastically when speaking about the topic. These issues had deep seated meaning for the participants as the hopes and expectations were the driving force behind the career change.

Time/Timing

Time and Timing where consistent threads though each of the participants' narratives as the difference in meaning between the two words emerged through their stories. Time was spoken of in a linear fashion or in quantitative terms relating to the space between when the man left his career and started his next, yet still encompassed a deeper meaning for the men. All of the participants spoke of time relating to different moments of their transition process. They kept track of the time

it took them to leave their first career, "I worked for 19 years as Dentist and wanted to leave 18 of those 19 years," (#004 Larry) they kept time from when they departed, "It has been nearly a year since I left my company and decided to start my web page." (#004 Dave), they gauged their success as to the time they expected to be finished, "I should be finished with my Masters program within the year, which is a few months quicker than I expected, and then I can begin applying for jobs." (#008 Tim) They also kept time to specify how long they had been dealing with obstacles and challenges, "I have been broke now for a year, I can't believe it has been that long." (#004 Dave)

Time was also a part of their former career as explained by one of the men, "I know that I could not spend any more time at the job. I was done and needed to move." Time was marked by the significant moments of their career transition which proved to be monumental in the lives of these men as this was how they tracked time in their lives.

Time also assisted in beginning the career change for the men as they examined the course of their careers and the current direction of their lives. The men took note of the time they had left with their children, the time they had left to work before retirement and the time they had left to "do" what they had always wanted to do. This caused an inner dissension and the motivation to act and start the process they were reluctant in initiating.

The timing of the transition was a constant reference for the career changers. A significant portion of the men referred to "the right timing" in relation to quitting,

returning to school or finding a new job. The correct opportunity presented itself

when the participant was ready to take action. "It was time for me to leave and I

think others felt it as well." (#005 Phil) "I had thought about changing careers for so

long that one day I just knew it was time." (#010 Brady)

Importance of Finances in Career Change Success

The cost of a career change was expensive for many of the men as they returned

to school and paid the costs of their education, their decreasing income stream and

the effects on the change in lifestyle. Even the men who immediately started a new

career usually did not make the same amount of income as they had at their previous

job.

The issue of finances related to whether or not the men decided to change careers

was not as significant as expected at the beginning of the study. The financial

stability of the men prior to their career change was not a determining factor in

whether or not they decided to change careers even though over 90% of the men did

not have the financial resources to sustain them long term without full time

employment. Of the 15 participants one was independently wealthy and two had

wives who made significant incomes while the rest of the individuals could be

labeled middle to lower economic class.

The men who were financially prepared did not speak to the stress associated with

the financial aspects of the change, compared to those who struggled. Out of the 15

participants only one of the individuals was financially devastated through his

transition while the others were able to adequately care for the needs of themselves and their families.

Success through Learning

The requirement of continuous learning was a factor for a majority of the participants. Some of the learning was formal that required returning to an institution of higher learning to complete degrees necessary for their career progression while others participated in informal learning experiences. Phil (#005) had to learn how to take care of a rare breed of show horses, not having had any experience in this field. This informal learning provided new challenges and opportunities for Phil and the other men and also linked them to others in their new field so they were able to begin to build new relationships to assist in replacing former work associations.

The men were able to take advantage of many informal and formal learning opportunities as they progressed through the transition. They spoke of the excitement and personal sense of self fulfillment that accompanied returning to school or learning something new. Those who returned to school found this time of their transition to be full of happy memories and experiences. Rob (#011) was able to take college courses with his son as they both worked on their bachelor's degree together. "I was able to take college courses with my son, even though he was ahead of me." The only negative was the time it took to complete their schooling so they could step into their second career.

In switching careers all of the participants recognized the benefit of their previous career experience. The knowledge base, competencies, skill sets, work experience and relationships served to help prepare them for their career transition. All of the men were appreciative of their prior work experience and felt it helped prepare them for the career transition, while their only regret was that they would have started their transition process earlier in the career.

Learning throughout the transition process was a key aspect of the transition process as the men experienced different aspects of learning when they took on new responsibilities and careers. The role of learning played a significant role in the men's ability to progress through their career transition and provided them further opportunities for professional and personal growth.

Recommendations

This study offers a perspective on the motivation, transition and opportunity for new careers for men in their thirties, undertaken without a crisis event. The researcher offers 5 recommendations based on this study. First, career counseling needs to be updated to match the current work environment and global economy. The job market is in a state of constant change and the ability for individuals to understand how to find careers that match their interests, objectives, and strengths is imperative. It is also important for career counselors to the career changers in

reflecting on their motives to change, alerting them to the obstacles and difficulties they will face during the process and the effect of the change on family and friends.

Second, men who decide to change careers should spend the necessary time and effort to reflect on the motivational factors for their transition. They should be able to clearly answer "why" they desire a change and "what" their goal is at the end of the transition. Third, men who desire to transition to another career should match their strengths, personality, and likes to their next career. Numerous new assessments have emerged from the business world which would assist men in clearly defining what their strengths and career likes and dislikes encompass.

Fourth, men who desire to make a transition should have a support system in place to assist them through their transition. Fifth, adult educators and career counselors should offer career counseling, as well as support and understanding for personal transitions. If a person is currently going through a career change they are also experiencing a personal transition. Last, corporations need to identify and work to retain top talent through analysis of an employee's strengths, skill sets, promotional desires, job challenges and job likes and dislikes. It is the company's responsibility to offer challenges and growth opportunities through ongoing learning and growth development activities if they desire to retain their top talent.

Implications

The Individual

The man who is planning on, in the process of or nearing his desired goal of a career change must be equipped with certain aspects of knowledge to ease the career transition process. The knowledge required by these men should include the five recommendations mentioned, as well as a partnership with clients that enhances self-reflection, and provides multiple opportunities and ways of redefining identities (Peavey, 1995; Savickas, 2000).

The literal adventure and challenge that a career transition brings presents individuals with opportunities for personal growth and development through their change. The discovery of one's self through voluntary change is one of the crowning achievements of a career transition. As one reflects on the "why" he desires to change, the opportunity begins to free themselves from self imposed restraints, as well as the expectations of others and provides a learning experience that cannot be replaced.

Education

Results of this study suggests that informal and formal learning occurs throughout the career change process, from learning new skills on the job, to returning to school for needed education in a desired field. Life experiences are an integral part of career change and provide valuable information and experience for the career

234

changer in their new occupation. The availability of both formal and informal

learning to those involved in a career change is important.

As the working world and education evolve adult educational opportunities need

to be tailored to individuals returning to school; internet classes, weekend classes,

night classes and other methods of non-traditional learning for working adults should

be made more readily available to assist in reach this growing population. Many

adults do not take advantage of formal learning due to full time jobs, proximity

restrictions to a learning institution, time constraints and funding issues. Increased

ease in enrollment for adults, simplified on-line classes and accredited requirements

will facilitate increased formal adult learning, as well as continuing to learn on their

own with the advantage of the numerous informal learning opportunities consisting

of community events, the internet, and local businesses.

Career Change Counselors

Current methods of career counseling are out of date with today's global economy

and changing work force. Self Assessment testing is still the most widely used

method of finding out skills, likes, dislike, strengths and weaknesses pertaining to

certain careers, but does not take into account the career changer's desire for

opportunity, personal growth, self fulfillment and other such attributes. Most of the

information found in self assessments for potential careers is 5-10 years out of date,

and does not include recent new careers and opportunities, especially in relation to

computer and technology careers.

Career counselors should offer support concerning all the aspects of career transition including both personal and professional development. This type of counseling should include assistance with personal reflection on decision making, the transition process, resources that will be required during the change, strategies to cope with obstacles and challenges that arise and resources to other individuals who are currently experiencing a career change.

Corporate America

During times of economic upheaval and financial strain on corporate America, it is important for corporations to understand that career changers have work and life experience that cannot be matched by younger workers entering the job market. Their knowledge and vast experience can provide corporate America with valuable employees.

It is important for leaders and managers within corporations to maintain a work environment that supports employee growth, commitment, learning and development. The employee who has the ability to continue learning on the job and experiencing different facets of development tends to stay at his chosen career because of the personal and professional development opportunities. Employers should strive to provide an upbeat, positive and motivating work environment while avoiding a stagnant environment that is not varied in its daily activities.

Employers should support colleague friendships and seek to develop a sense of community in their workplace environment as it is less expensive to retain

employees and support their development than to recruit, hire and train new employees. Corporations should also design with Human Resources an action plan to retain identified top talent within their industry and corporation. The ability of the corporation to openly and honestly address employee issues creates a culture of trust and accountability and provides the employees a place to voice concerns about the current work environment.

Society

The implication for society in relation to this study is the need to raise awareness and understanding for the man in his thirties who is currently undergoing a career transition. The stress that is involved, the changing roles, and decreased income are all aspects that go along with a career change. As the baby boomers increase in age and the birth rate declines in the U.S. the need for skilled workers increases and the opportunities for job change increase as well. It is important to provide information concerning men who are making a career change for those who are currently in a job change, those who are in a relationship with a career changer or those seeking further knowledge and understanding about the topic.

Future Research

This study is an introduction into the phenomenon of career change for men in their thirties not due to a crisis event. This study is only the beginning in a chain of continuous studies (Stebbins, 2001) on career change for men. The study is a

Narrative Inquiry that includes a small, purposeful sample of men in their thirties who made a career change not due to a crisis event. There are numerous research opportunities for continual study of career change. The first opportunity for future research should focus on a comprehensive study in regard to women and career change in their thirties and forties. Nearly fifty percent of the workforce is currently women and more than half of the freshman entering college are women which suggests that women in the next 5-10 years will be a larger part of the workforce then men. A study expanding the current knowledge base of women and career change will be needed. A second area of study would be minorities and career change. Do minorities experience career change differently? Does the socio-economic level of a minority affect their career transition? This type of study can provide important information and direction to a population that has relatively little research in terms of career and personal transition.

Finally the research that was undertaken contained fifteen participants who were self-chosen career changers. To explore this phenomenon further it would be useful to conduct a Quantitative study with a larger pool of participants to increase the generalizability of this study.

Conclusion

To better understand my experiences and also gain insight into others career transitions I decided to study men who made a self-imposed career change in their

thirties. Because little is known regarding life transitions for men in their thirties I wanted to conduct a qualitative study that would provide further beneficial research for others like myself who may need the information I so desperately sought about career transition and hopefully provide them insight and assistance as they began their own career transition journey.

I learned my own lessons through the stories of these men. I listened to their stories of heartache, fear, happiness, exhilaration and confusion as they "muddled, jumped, and sometimes flew" through one of the most difficult aspects of life; searching for a career that filled their own personal needs, whatever they were. I learned three valuable lessons from these men as they progressed through their career change. The first lesson I learned from the men was to always stop and reflect. Take a moment to think and ponder "why and what" am I doing. These small moments of reflection grant marvelous insights and lessons to the individual who takes the time to reflect. The second lesson I learned is to take the information, discovery and meaning that emerges from the reflections and share them with a spouse, family, significant other or good friend who are supportive during the change process. Let them listen and give guidance and advice, and then start the whole process over. The third lesson I learned is to maintain a smile and general happy persona when obstacles and challenges arise. One of the men stated,

> You are going to go through hard times no matter what you choose in life, why
> not go through them with dignity and happiness? Remember, you are still
> going to go through it, choose to be happy because it is a choice."

I talked with men who were at the lowest points in their lives and others who felt as if they had just been freed from prison and the complete spectrum in between. I watched as men described their challenging times with pain, anger and regret, while I watched other men describe the same experiences with a smile and a grateful attitude for what the lessons they learned. I learned to choose the latter as I seek to progress further down my own career transition.

REFERENCES

Bartlett, J. (1968). *Familiar Quotations.* Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co.

Bee, H. (1996). *The Journey of Adulthood.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Bridges, W. (1980). *Transitions.* Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Carroll, L. (1960). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* New York: Signet Books.

Casey, K. (1995/1996). The new narrative research in education. *Review of*
     Research in Education, 21, 211-253.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and*
     Story in qualitative research. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clandinin, D. J., Connelly, F. M. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative
     inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19* (5), 2-14.

Cortazzi, M. (1993). *Narrative analysis.* London: Falmer Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and*
     evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. New Jersey: Pearson
     Education.

Ebaugh, H. R. F. (1988). *Becoming an EX: the process of role exit.* Chicago and
     London: The University of Chicago Press.

Erikson, E. H. (1959). *Identity and the Life Cycle.* New York: International
     Universities Press.

Erickson, E. H. (1982). *The life cycle completed: A review.* New York: Norton.

Gillon, S. (2004). *Boomer Nation.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Gottfredson, L. (1981). Circumscription and Compromise. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 28,* 545-579.

Gould, R. (1978). *Transformations.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Hall D. T. (2002). *Careers in and out of organizations.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hall, D. T. (1996). *The career is dead: long live the career.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hall, D. T., & Associates. (Eds.). (1986). *Career development in organizations.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Holland, J. L. (1959). A theory of vocational choice. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *59*, 35-45.

Holland, J.L. (1985). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Hergenhahn, B. R. (1994). *An Introduction to Theories of Personality.* New Jersey: Simon & Schuster.

Hudson, F. M., & McLean, P. D. (1996). *Life Launch A passionate guide to the rest of your life* (2nd ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: The Hudson Institute Press.

Ibarra, H. (1999). Provisional selves: experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 44*, 764-791.

Ibarra, H. (2002). Managing yourself: how to stay stuck in the wrong career. *Harvard Business Review* (December, 2002).

Ibarra, H. (2003). Working identity: *unconventional strategies for reinventing your career.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Jung, C. G. (1933). *Modern Man in Search of a Soul.* San Diego: Harcourt.

Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: problem and process in human development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Krumboltz, J. D. (1996). A learning theory of career counseling. In M.L. Savickas & W.B. Walsh (Eds.), *Handbook of Career Counseling Theory and Practice.* Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black

Krumboltz, J. D. & Henderson, S. (2002). A learning theory for career counselors. In S. G. Niles (Ed.), *Adult Career Development Concepts, Issues and Practices* (3rd ed., pp. 39-56). Tulsa, OK: National Career Development Association.

Krumboltz, J. D., & Levin, A. S. (2004). *Luck is no accident.* Atascadero, CA: Impact.

Lancaster, L. & Stillman, D. (2002). *Why generations collide; Who they are; Why they clash, How to solve the generational puzzle at work.* New York: Harper Collins.

Lash, J. (1971). *Eleanor and Franklin.* New York: W.W. Norton.

Levinson, D.J. (1979). *The seasons of a man's life.* New York: Ballantine Books.

Markus, H., & Nurius, P.S. (1986). Possible Selves. *American Psychologist, 41* (No.9), 954-969.

243

Merriam, S. B., and Caffarella, R. S. (1999). Learning in Adulthood. 2d ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S.B., and Clark, C. (1991) *Lifelines: Work, Love, and Learning in Adult Life*. Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J., et. al. (2000*). Learning as transformation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Myers, I. B. (1998). *Introduction to type: A guide to understanding your results on the myers-briggs type indicator*. (6th Edition ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.

O'Connor, D., & Wolfe, D. M. (1991). From crisis to growth at midlife: Changes in personal paradigm. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 12*(4), 323-340.

Ollerenshaw, J. A. & Creswell, J. W. (2000). *Data analysis in narrative research: A comparison of two "Restorying" approaches.* Paper presented at the Annual American Education Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Peterson, G.W., Sampson, J.P., Jr., & Reardon, R.C. (1991). *Career development and services: A cognitive approach.* Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole.

Riessman, C.K. (1993). *Narrative analysis.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Savickas, M. L. & Walsh, W. B. (1996). Toward convergence between career theory and practice. In M.L. Savickas & W.B. Walsh (Eds.), *Handbook of career counseling theory and practice.* Palo Alto: Davies-Black.

Schein, E. H. (1971). The individual, the organization, and the career: a conceptual scheme. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 7* (1971), 401-426.

Schein, E. H. (1990). *Career anchors: discovering your real values*. San Diego,

     CA: Pfeiffer & Company.

Schein, E. H. (1996). Career anchors revisted: implications for career development

     in the 21st century. *Academy of Management Executive*, 10(4), 80-88.

Storr, A. (1983). *The Essential Jung.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Super, D. E. (1957*). The psychology of careers*. New York: Harper and Bros.

Van Gennep, A. (1960). Rites of passage. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Precipitating Event/Pre-Career Change
1. What was your corporate job prior to your career change?
2. To what extent did you enjoy this job?
3. Did you have any misgivings about the job?
    a. If misgivings (Why did you not make a change sooner?)
4. How did you come to the realization that you wanted to change to a career outside of corporate America?
5. Was your career change voluntary or not?
    a. To what extent was it voluntary?
6. Was there any particular event or events that precipitated your decision?
    a. Organizational concerns?
    b. Work or work role concerns?
    c. personal concerns?
    d. Was it something outside of the company…i.e. offered a better job or found another job?
7. Were there any other changes occurring in your life at the same time?
8. Did the decision to change happen in a day or did it occur over a period of time? When did you "know" that you were going to change careers?
9. Did you consider alternative careers?
10. If so, How did you find out about them?
11. Was any type of re-education, returning to school or retraining involved?
12. What feelings were dominant for you during this time?
13. What things got in your way or what were you most concerned about?
14. How did you cope with any uncertainty or fear that you may have felt during this period?
15. How much time passed between your making the decision and actually carrying it out?
15. Looking back now, what was the major reason for wanting to change to a career outside of corporate America?
16. What were the Secondary reasons?

Time Between Careers
1. Tell me about your last day at work?
2. What emotions did you go through?   How did you feel?
3. What issues arose in the months following your career change? (Loss of Identity/Belonging to a group)

4. How did your immediate family/friends/parents react to the decision to change and the actual change?
5. Who was supportive and who was non-supportive?
6. Tell me about any significant experiences that occurred the first six months to one year after leaving your corporate America career.

The New Career
1. At what point did you start the second career?
2. How did you find your second career?
3. What was your thought process during this time? What feelings did you have during this time?
4. What was the process of your transition? (Work, family, friends)
5. Did your new career work out?
6. How did your life change after the actual career change?
7. Did you need any type of education for your new career.

Down the Road
1. What significant experiences have followed related to your corporate career change?
2. Are you more or less financially stable since leaving corporate America? (Have there been money issues)?
3. As you look back upon the experience, what do you regret the most? What do you feel most satisfied about?
4. What impact has this choice had on your family, significant others, etc? Positive or Negative?
5. How has the view of your decision to change careers changed 1 year after the change, 3 years, 5 years, 10 years?
6. What have been some of the most meaningful experiences that you have had in the last 5-10 years related to your career choice?
7. What have been two of the most profound changes (personal, relational, geographic) in your life since leaving your corporate career and starting a new one?
8. Describe what you believe you have learned about yourself from this experience?
9. What types of learning, (personal/work) related contributed to your ability to complete the career change?
10. How have you changed as a person?
11. Would you describe this transition as successful?
12. If given the choice to go back, what would you change? Would you make the same decision again?
13. Looking back now, what was the major reason for wanting to change to a career outside of corporate America?

14. What advice would you give to an individual who is facing now the decision that you faced some years ago?

Appendix B

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Christopher Bray

University of Oklahoma

Please complete this form and email or fax to cgbray@coxinet.net or 405-216-0018. Please indicate the pseudonym that you would like for the purpose of this study.

PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CODE#   PSEUDONYM

The information you provide is only for the purposes of this research and will be kept CONFIDENTIAL in accordance with the Informed Consent Form, which you should sign prior to your interview.

AGE (today):

AGE at the time you left corporate America:

Former Career (at the time you left corporate America):

Management Level (circle one)   Employee   Mid-Mngmnt   Senior Mngmnt

Length of time your former occupation:

Current Occupation/Career:
        Length of time in new career (if started)

University of Oklahoma
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Career Change for Men in their Thirties not due to a
Crisis Event
Principal Christopher K. Bray
Investigator: Christopher K. Bray
Department: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

You are being asked to volunteer for this research study. You were selected as a possible participant because you left your corporate career in your thirties on your own accord, and not due to a crisis event

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is to increase knowledge concerning the process of change and the educational and life structure changes that occur for men who have made the decision to leave corporate America in their thirties.

Number of Participants

About 15-20 people will take part in this study.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in a one hour recorded interview.

2. Participate in a one hour group recorded interview.

Length of Participation

The length of participation will be about two months. The one hour recorded interview will take place first and then after all participants have been interviewed a group interview will occur.

Risks

The only risks with this study are those associated with you focusing on and remembering decisions made and on the outcomes that followed from those decisions. To minimize these risks the interview will avoid probing beyond what you desire to freely share, and every effort will be made to limit the questions to those posed in the interview guide

Benefits of being in the study are the opportunity for you to share your experiences about making a career change in your thirties.

In case of injury or illness resulting from this study, emergency medical treatment is available. However, you or your insurance company may be expected to pay the usual charge from this treatment. The University of Oklahoma Norman Campus has set aside no funds to compensate you in the event of injury.

Confidentiality

In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you without your permission. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers will have access to the records.

There are organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis. These organizations include the OU Institutional Review Board.

Compensation

You will not be reimbursed for you time and participation in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you withdraw or decline participation, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the study. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw at any time. .Audio Recording of Study Activities

To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty. Please select one of the following options.

I consent to audio recording.   ___   Yes   ___   No.

Contacts and Questions

If you have concerns or complaints about the research, the researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at:

P.I.
Christopher K. Bray
127 Lakeview Court Edmond, OK 73003
(405)314-8293
Cbray2@ucok.edu

Irene Karpiak
820 Van Fleet Oval Room 227

Norman, Oklahoma 73109

(405) 325-4072

Ikarpiak@ou.edu

Contact the researcher(s) if you have questions or if you have experienced a research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than individuals on the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records. If you are not given a copy of this consent form, please request one.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received satisfactory answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____

Signature   Date

Appendix D

Name	Participant Number	Age	Nationality	Education	Grouping
Jason	1	43	USA/Caucasian	Master's	Struggler
Dave	4	38	USA/Caucasian	High School	Struggler
Frank	6	44	USA/Caucasian	Master's	Struggler
Larry	13	56	Canadian/Caucasian	Doctor of Dentistry	Struggler
Kyle	2	42	USA/Caucasian	Bachelor's	Still Becoming
Marcus	8	36	USA/Caucasian	Master's	Still Becoming
John	9	38	USA/Asian	Master's	Still Becoming
Pete	14	38	USA/Caucasian	Physician's Assistant	Still Becoming
Ben	15	44	USA/Caucasian	Doctorate	Still Becoming
Aaron	3	41	USA/African American	Doctorate	Successes
Phil	5	39	USA/Caucasian	Bachelor's	Successes
Scott	7	56	USA/Caucasian	Doctorate	Successes
Brady	10	37	Canadian/Caucasian	Master's	Successes
Rob	11	52	USA/Caucasian	Bachelor's	Successes
Nathan	12	46	Kuwait/East Indian	Doctorate	Successes