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TRANSITION TO A CAREER CALLING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

ELAINE F. BUCKLEY, B.A., M.A.

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

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DEDICATION

For my sons, Samuel and Luke, in hopes that you utilize your unique and extraordinary gifts in your life work.

TRANSITION TO A CAREER CALLING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Elaine F. Buckley

University of the Incarnate Word, 2013

This phenomenological study explored the experience of eight adults as they perceived, recognized, and transitioned (from valued work) to their career callings. The central phenomenon of this research, callings, is defined as “inner directives towards meaningful life pursuits” (Wall, 2010, p. 7). The response to a calling was explored using William Bridge’s model for moving through life transitions.

The research participants were teachers in midlife who had taught in grades K-12 for a minimum of five years after participating in an alternative teacher certification program. Semi-structured interviews included the use of expressive arts providing rich descriptions of the lived experiences of participants. The use of a visual representation facilitated the communication process by providing increased fluency and clarity of the interview responses.

Themes from the study included three characteristics of teachers having responded to a calling: (a) integrity or wholeness in the role, (b) innate ability for the work, and (c) a focus on others. Furthermore, six of the eight research participants identified God as the source of their calling. Evidence also illustrated that participants were willing to pay the price of reduced salary, increased responsibilities, or less prestige in transitioning to the career they perceived as their calling. Six of eight of the participants’ childhood experiences were influential in the eventual recognition and transition to their calling with four individuals’ experiences involving childhood difficulties in school.

Weaving emerging patterns from interviews and arts-based research within a frame of the contextual constructs of transitions and midlife, provided a unique perspective into the complexity of adult development for these eight research participants. Although no expectation of generalizability exists for the results of qualitative research, as leaders and learners, we all have the opportunity to examine patterns and reflect on applicability in our work environments. It is the hope that individual insight into the prospect of discovering alignment and meaning in career choice will positively impact satisfaction levels and effectiveness for participants in alternative certification programs and other adult education transitional programs.

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Chapter 1: The Study of the Phenomenon of Career Calling

“By all appearances, things were going well, but the soul does not put much stock in appearances” (Palmer, 2000, p. 2).

At first glance, work is recognized for quantifiable compensation: income, insurance, and health benefits. Work provides the financial power to obtain what is needed to survive: nutrition, shelter, medical care, and clothing. From a systems view, members of communities rely on each other for specialized work, freeing individuals to focus in specific areas of expertise, enhancing the likelihood for survival. Historically, civilizations moved from tribal societies of interdependence and shared responsibilities to bartering with those outside the tribe, later exchanging currencies of beads, precious metals, and paper, for goods and services. Work provides what is needed to survive and much more.

Securing physiological needs is frequently the initial reason for working but is often not the most important. The intangible outcomes of working are essential factors. Gini and Sullivan (1987) reported 74% of male and 64% of female respondents would continue to work without a financial imperative to do so. Individuals work for a variety of reasons: (a) expression of skills and talents, (b) social connections, (c) contribution to the community (Lopes, 2011), and (d) in response to a deep and personal yearning (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Lopes, 2011).

Work is a critical domain for individuals to draw meaning for their lives due to the number of hours in a day and years in a life people spend working (Dik, Duffy, & Eldridge, 2009). As individuals age and longevity increases, encore, or second careers, emerge in response to changing needs. By description, individuals choosing to switch careers or embark upon an encore career elect to make a major change late in their work life to a different type of employment and for various reasons. Approximately half of individuals interested in *encore*

careers (51%) identify the pursuit of greater meaning as the motivation, almost two-thirds (64%) desire to use their skills to help others, and 38% wish to be a part of an organization with a positive social purpose (Hart, 2008). The identified motivations do not supplant needs met from previous employment including income, health benefits, and flexibility with schedules (Hart, 2008).

Encore careers are relevant to this study as research participants were individuals in mid-life who left valued work to respond to a calling to teach. In addition to encore careers, individuals change to the field of teaching at higher rates than in the past. To accommodate the growing trend, all 50 states have alternative certification programs (McCarty & Dietz, 2011) compared to only six states with programs in 1983 (Feistritzer & Chester, 2003). In addition to the number of alternate certification programs in the country, the age of program participants was highlighted. Within the last 10 years 17 states were identified as having significantly high numbers of participants age 30 or over in their alternative teacher certification programs. Three states reported 80%, eight states reported 60%, and five states, including the two most populated, California and Texas, reported 50% of alternative certification program participants were age 30 or older (Feistritzer, 2007).

The frequency of individuals leaving a profession, looking for encore careers with more meaning, is presumed to be significant as evidenced by the respondents of the 2008 Encore Career Survey: 31% identified teaching as the most appealing field to move toward from their current work, following wanting to work for an issue of importance at 36%, and wanting to work with children and youth at 32% (Hart, 2008). Each participant in this study completed an alternative certification program, became a licensed teacher, and has taught in a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade classroom for a minimum of five years.

A growing number in today's workforce seek personal development and the pursuit of greater meaning in their work (Avolio & Sosik, 1999; Schein, 1996). As a result, the relationship of work and life satisfaction has become an area of increased focus. The question of this research explored how eight individuals who changed careers have aligned themselves closely with the work and the impact that choice has made.

Callings by their essence involve a high level of engagement. Schueller and Seligman (2010) investigated the positive relationship among an engaged life, meaningful work, and increased life satisfaction. Findings indicated that more effective than pleasure-seeking activities, life satisfaction increases from generating meaningful work and encouraging engagement with life. When an employee has a positive identification with his or her work, a connection between the worker and environment is established, loyalty for the work increases, and worker creativity is enhanced. In addition, viewing themselves as valued contributors to the community enhances meaning for employees (Marques, 2005).

Whether work is paid or unpaid, it is inextricably linked to identity. In a fundamental description, work meets the needs for survival, relatedness, and self-determination (Blustein, 2008). Meeting the obvious need for goods, services, and safety, work increases survival rates. A less obvious result of work comes from relatedness, enhancing access to work and energy for cooperation with the need for community and belonging. Lastly, self-determination speaks to the competency and autonomy developed in individuals through work. Self-determination refers to the importance of directing one's life, generating and fulfilling the details (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Almost a century ago, John Dewey (1916) commented on recognizing congruence in life work and suitability:

To find out what one is fitted to do and to secure an opportunity to do it is the key to happiness. Nothing is more tragic than a failure to discover one's true business in life, or

to find one has drifted or been forced by circumstances into an uncongenial calling. (p. 308)

Although freedom of career choice is often assumed, the reality of cultural and familial expectations, gender, and legacy fulfillment may inhibit freedom (Kniveton, 2004). The choices might result in a misalignment between talent and job requirements resulting in compromised potential of the individual. Whether attributed to luck, self-knowledge, or broader access to career options, individuals finding work in sync with their passions are more likely to reach mastery in their profession (Amos & Weathington, 2008; Robinson & Aronica, 2009).

Dewey (1916) referred to destined life work. The Latin term *vocatio* was originally used when referring to men and women in religious life called away from the ordinary world to a life of prayer and service (Dawson, 2005; Dik et al. 2009). The Latin root *vocare* meant an action, “to call,” and required one to be called by someone (Peck, 1993, p. 61). The *someone* has historically been God and callings were referring to individuals with vocations in religious life. Palmer (2000) described how being an active recipient of a calling illustrates the Latin root “voice” in vocation:

Vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity, not the standards by which I must live – but the standards by which I cannot help but live if I am living my own life. (pp. 4-5)

In the literature, vocation and calling are often used interchangeably, as well as distinctively. In both terms, meaningful work exists with a focus on an outer object. However, vocations are unlike callings in that the source of motivation for the work originates within the self, a personal goal or interest. In contrast, according to this research team, callings originate from external sources: (a) God, (b) societal needs, or (c) family legacy (Dik et al., 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Callings are fascinating forces. Great religious texts and literature have referenced callings, acknowledging their unique and personal nature. Individuals experiencing a calling report less stress and higher job satisfaction (Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997), fewer missed work days (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), and overall positive health (Berg et al., 2010). Forty percent of college students identify themselves with a calling and self-report greater career decidedness, self-clarity, and adaptive coping (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010). Yet, callings do not appear on demand, cannot be forced, or purchased.

As few as 23% of Americans report satisfaction with their work (Saad, 2004). For individuals in mid-life, only 10 to 20% report moderate or high satisfaction with their jobs (Levinson, 1996). This disparity raised questions regarding the causes.

Literature addressing how individuals think and feel regarding their work, referred to as job satisfaction, identified variables influencing its level: compensation, respect from supervisors, age, education, gender (Connolly & Myers, 2003) as well as variables associated with well-being and mattering, positive climate with co-workers, participation in decision-making, and importance to the work (Gazioglu & Tansel, 2006). Positively correlated with an increase in age, satisfaction levels rise to 32% for individuals 50 and older and drop to 19% for 18 to 29 year-olds (Saad, 2004). Job satisfaction is primarily constructed from affective responses to one's job, but largely measured by examining cognitive variables (Fisher, 1998). Acquiring insight into the internal processes of individuals who experience job satisfaction after responding to their callings is an important addition to the knowledge needed for career development. Understanding the relationship of job satisfaction to an individual's sense of

calling will help establish the importance of developing and supporting this internal call to purpose. Exploring the relationship between one's experiences with job satisfaction and calling is minimally represented in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experience of eight adults as they perceived, recognized, and transitioned (from valued work) to their career callings. The central phenomenon of this research, callings, is defined as "inner directives towards meaningful life pursuits" (Wall, 2010, p. 7).

By understanding how managing life transitions affects physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of meaningful work, clarity can be gained regarding the internal and external process experienced by individuals as they identify and respond to a calling. The response to a calling was explored using Bridges' (1980, 2004) model for moving through life transitions.

Research Question

What were the experiences of eight adults as they perceived, recognized, and transitioned from valued work to their career calling to teaching in midlife?

Theoretical Framework

Although change is initially navigated amenably when timing and direction is perceived to be controlled by the individual, it is impossible to accurately anticipate the consequences resulting from inner reorganization. Despite the anxiety accompanying the unknown, the longing from a calling is difficult to ignore. In situations of regular function, a transition calls for newness and growth. "I assume that a change that enables further changes is developmental" (Zittoun, 2008, p. 167).

The research in this study was framed by Bridges' (1980, 2004) theory on personal development realized through transitions. Bridges (2004) explained transitions as

the natural process of disorientation and reorientation marking the turning points in the path of growth. Throughout nature, growth involves periodic accelerations and transformations: Things go slowly for a time and nothing seems to happen – until suddenly the eggshell cracks, the branch blossoms, the tadpole's tail shrinks away, the leaf falls, the bird molts, the hibernation begins. With us it is the same. Although the signs are less clear than in the world of feather and leaf, the functions of transition times are the same. They are key times in the natural process of development and self-renewal. (pp. 4-5)

He presents transitions as the ever-changing inner landscape that ultimately leads us to a more accurate representation of our true self. Bridges specified terms when explaining, "I would say most people do not resist change. They resist transition. Transition and change are words that are often used as though they were synonymous, but they really aren't" (Bridges, 2001, p. 2). Change includes situational events: retirement, marriage, graduation, moving to a new home, being deployed, or having a child. Psychological in function, transitions are an internal process following a loss of some aspect of identity: (a) status, (b) health, (c) security, or (d) belonging.

Bridges (2004) referred to the initial phase of the transition process as Endings. Endings may occur abruptly as one might experience after winning a lottery, or the sudden loss of a loved one. Also possible is an anticipated ending when change is anticipated. Children leaving home for college, voluntary relocation, or retirement provide an opportunity for preparation. Even with advance knowledge, the change is almost always external rather than the inner work required for coming to terms with the aspects of self, which is forfeited during the change process (Bridges, 2004).

After acknowledging the ending for what no longer exists, the individual in transition moves to the next phase referred to by Bridges as the Neutral Zone (Bridges, 1980, 2001, 2004). Characterized by waiting, confusion, disenchantment, and disillusionment, this phase has no map

and an unknown duration resulting in disorientation and discouragement. It is also a fertile time for processing the loss accompanying the endings and allowing the possibility of new perspectives. It is the discomfort of the Neutral Zone that causes an individual's desire to move through quickly. By resisting the eagerness to abbreviate the Neutral Zone, an opportunity for reflection, meaning-making, and renewal occur.

If adequate time is allowed to clear the old, a new reality and perspective emerges and a Beginning is possible (Bridges, 1980, 2001, 2004). It is important to note Beginnings are not inevitable after Endings. In the absence of adequate time for reorganization of self, the tendency to re-create what is familiar is strong. Consequently, growth and reorientation required to move forward is not guaranteed. With the acknowledgment of Endings and clearing away of Neutral Zone, the individual builds a new way of being. Bridges' model for transitions is represented graphically in Figures 1 and 2, identifying emotions associated with the three stages.

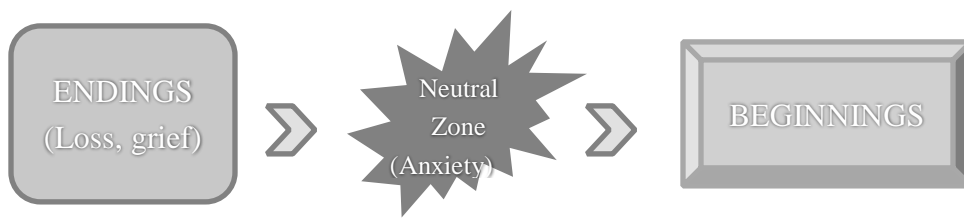


Figure 1. Bridges' transitions model. Adapted from Bridges' model of change and transitions in *Transitions: Making sense of life's changes* by W. Bridges, 1980, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press. Copyright 1980 by W. Bridges.

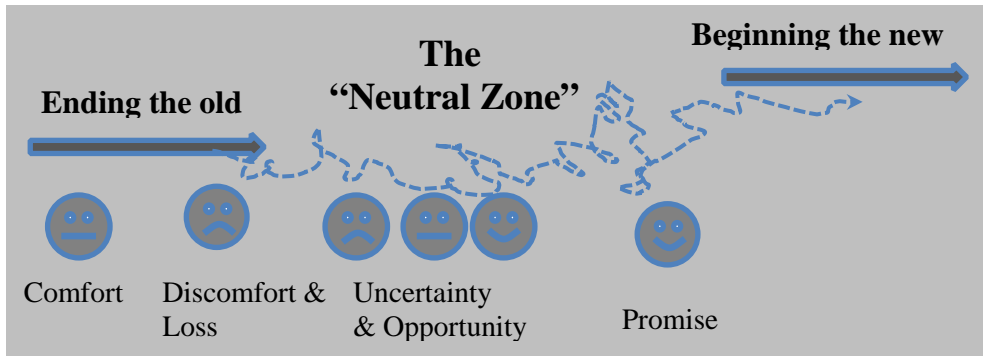


Figure 2. Transition model identifying emotions. Adapted from Bridges' model of the transition process and associated emotions in *Transitions: Making sense of life's changes* by W. Bridges, 1980, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press. Copyright 1980 by W. Bridges.

An awareness of letting go of what is lost is not painless and not easy. Protection of self, involuntary and voluntary change, and a resonance with earlier loss, may result in arduous transitions. Each person experiencing a transition (or series of transitions) enters with personal history, economic and health circumstances, temperament, and different abilities for adaptation, multiplying the uniqueness of the experience (George, 1993). Complicating transition further, removal of only one component from our identity is rare (Fouad & Bynner, 2008). More commonly found is loss cascading into other losses. A career promotion leads to a geographic relocation requiring attendance at different schools possibly isolating individuals from a network of social support. The added responsibility and opportunity offers financial rewards but also provides less time for recreation and community building. Essential to transition is change in the "social, material or symbolic spheres of experience" (Zittoun, 2008, p. 166). Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks (1996) compared a theoretical framework to a map:

Yet good maps also offer choice; they are not mere formulas. And while developmental theories do imply direction, none insists that the journey can be taken in only one way or, indeed, that it be completed at all. Just as a map frames the setting for a journey, so does a developmental theory offer a context for growth. It indicates landmarks, points out dangers, suggests possible routes and destinations, but leaves the walking to us. (p. 46)

It is with this spirit the current research explored the experience of eight participants who have transitioned from previous work to what they consider their calling. Bridges' (1980, 2001, 2004) theory of life transitions provided a rich map in which to explore the individual experience of transitions to career calling by the research participants.

Researcher's Assumptions

Fundamental to the construction of research are the choices and perspectives of the researcher. Operating from assumptions about the world and the knowledge of research, this study was designed to access qualitative data with a phenomenological approach.

Phenomenological traditions explore how individuals have directly experienced emotions, relationships, or phenomena. "From the philosophy of phenomenology comes a focus on the experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness" (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). Potency of the phenomenological approach is in providing a "lived experience" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Well suited for affective inquiries (Merriam, 2009), phenomenology is the appropriate qualitative methodology to understand the process of perceiving, recognizing, and transitioning from valued work to a career calling. By respecting the individuality of personal journeys, the core of the experience surfaces, reflecting both our distinctness and connectedness as humans. It is this shared essence we seek to understand.

The researcher's assumption included the view that individuals are innately equipped with an inner drive toward purposefulness. Global challenges continue to grow in complexity, increasing the need for individuals with knowledge of their purpose and direction. Communication and cognitive skills, combined with personal courage and commitment to one's purpose, are needed when addressing the complex global questions resulting in harm and neglect

to humans and the environment. Understanding the essence of callings has the potential to provide insight into how individual purposefulness is nurtured.

The integration of purpose, meaning, and talents with choice of work inspires hope as a researcher. Whether embracing or surrendering to a calling, individuals are placed on a course for engagement in their life work. With the manifestation of a calling, efficacy is enhanced in meaningful ways. Discovering the circumstances that have fortified individuals and increased the impact of their work provides hope to the researcher. It is possible the outcome of the research will be different than the assumptions of the researcher. In an effort to reduce bias, the researcher employed journal writing before and after participant interviews, sought input from peers regarding intended communication from participants, and triangulated data for accuracy in data collection. The use of these strategies assisted in safeguarding against imposing values, blind spots, and confirmation bias. As a result, the researcher gained “meaning perspectives that permit us to deal with a broader range of experience, to be more discriminating, to be more open to other perspectives, and to better integrate our experiences” (Mezirow & Associates, 1990).

And finally, it was the belief of the researcher that supplying individuals with the information on others’ callings will produce possibilities and lend credibility to the pursuit personally. Information begins the process of growth, even if it is solely illuminating dissonance. The consequences of not being in sync with one’s true nature can lead to confusion, discouragement, and in the extreme, depression. “Depression is the ultimate state of disconnection, not just between people but between one’s mind and one’s feelings” (Palmer, 2000, p. 62). Palmer (2000) identified his difficult experience of major depression as a spiritual journey:

The figure calling to me all those years was, I believe, what Thomas Merton calls “true self.” This is not the ego self that wants to inflate us (or deflate us, another form of self-

distortion), not the intellectual self that wants to hover above the mess of life in clear but ungrounded ideas, not the ethical self that wants to live by some abstract moral code. It is the self planted in us by the God who made us in God's own image – the self that wants nothing more, or less, than for us to be who we were created to be. True self is true friend. One ignores or rejects such friendship only at one's peril. (pp. 68-69)

The assumption held by the researcher is that in deepening understanding of the essence of transitioning to work perceived as one's calling, insight garnered may help individuals optimize change and find work of meaning and purpose. Development with insight and personal accountability has the potential to fortify the mental health of individuals and by positively impacting employees, work environments are enhanced in problem-solving, productivity, and civility (Ludlum & Mascaloinov, 2004). It is the assumption that knowledge and insight offer personal applicability and increase overall well-being in the world of work.

Overview of Methodology

The intention of this research was to understand the essence of transitioning from valued work to work considered a calling. A qualitative approach was used to explore how meaning was constructed of participants' experiences. "The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience" (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). Insight gleaned from participant interviews provided the researcher with rich, thick descriptions of the lived experiences of participants. Interviewing allowed the researcher an opportunity to clarify statements and pursue relevant paths of inquiry with depth (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Using phenomenology, the researcher provided the reader a thorough description of the core elements (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is not the researcher's opinion of what an experience means to the research participants, but, instead, "seeks to convey a meaning that is

fundamental to the experience no matter what specific individual has had that experience” (Schram, 2006, p. 99). “The method of reflection that occurs throughout the phenomenological approach provides a logical, systematic, and coherent resource for carrying out the analysis and synthesis needed to arrive at essential descriptions of experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). Eliminating predetermined conclusions and suspending judgment is embedded in the methodology protocol. To guard the data from contamination, the researcher integrated the systematic use of journaling, art, and peer review, in an effort to remain cognizant of bias and projection.

Phenomenology, established as a study of the essence or experience of knowledge-building, is particularly well suited for the use of art (Noe, 2000). Participants visually represented the personal experiences of the transition to their callings using expressive arts. The expressive arts for this research were drawings as part of arts-based research (ABR). Having acknowledged each approach has its strengths, McNiff (2008) discerned artistic from empirical processes used in the scientific method:

Artistic inquiry, whether it is with the control of research or an individual person’s creative expression, typically starts with the realization that you cannot define the final outcome when you are planning to do the work. As contrasted to scientific methods, you generally know little about the end of an artistic experiment when you are at the beginning. In the creative process, the most meaningful insights often come by surprise, unexpectedly, and even against the will of the creator. (pp. 39-40)

Jung proposed four dominant modalities for experiencing life: (a) thought, (b) intuition, (c) feeling, and (d) sensing. Western school systems emphasize verifiability of thinking as the primary function and relegate the other three ways of knowing to lesser positions (Wall, 2010). Despite historical tendencies in this direction, the current research project is intentionally designed to activate the remaining three modalities of intuition, feeling, and sensing through the use of expressive arts.

Significance of the Study

This research study intended to provide insight into the essence of what an individual experienced before, during, and because of transitioning to work personally perceived as *one's calling*. In understanding how transitions manifest in the refinement of career alignment, this knowledge offered information for anticipating and traversing the often challenging choice of following one's calling. Adding to the body of literature on the intersection of meaning in the workplace, the intention of this study was to provide depth of understanding of these eight individuals as they verbally and literally illustrated their process of transitioning to a calling.

Appreciation of the role of callings in work may help individuals optimize transitions as they honor personally meaningful work. Development with insight and personal accountability has the potential to fortify the mental health of individuals, positively impacting them as employees. With improved employee work experiences, job environments benefit with enhanced problem-solving, productivity, and civility (Ludlum & Mascaloinov, 2004). These possible outcomes may be mitigated by the following research limitations.

Limitations of the Study

Research participants experienced different levels of comfort with self-disclosure required in the reflective and introspective structure of the interview questions. In addition, the research design includes a visual representation of career transitions expressed through participant-generated art. Self-consciousness about art skills and disclosure of personal information through the expressive arts may inhibit and limit some responses. Finally, disconnection between ideas and manifestation of images may limit the accuracy of art as communicative vehicle.

The research design limited data collection to one interview. The depth of conversations may have been enhanced by a follow-up interview after providing participants time to reflect on the process, benefiting from the process of internal reflection.

Regardless of limitations, the exploration aimed to investigate an important component of middle-age workers' lives. With additional understanding of the career journeys of these eight research participants, insight may be gained to how individuals transition to a life better suited for purpose and meaning. With the use of expressive arts, additional information may be provided. "Artistic knowing complements and enhances what we can know by reason alone" (Anderson & Braud, 2011, p. 263).

Summary

Work provides for our basic needs and for many, it also offers the prospect of esteem, satisfaction, goal attainment, belonging, and purpose. As adults move through the lifespan, the question posed regarding work often shifts from "the question of how to the question of why" (Bridges, 1980, p. 76). For some adults, the merging of work and purpose is manifested in work they feel called to do. This study focused on individuals finding their calling as teachers and the transitions they experienced in making the internal and external changes from previously valued work to careers in education.

A phenomenological study, utilizing the arts, was utilized to gain additional understanding of the essence of the experience for these eight individuals. The exploration of work and its place in adult identity is a complex subject with many dimensions to consider. The use of art is an ideal tool for integrating the complexity of layers and "making the invisible, visible" (Malchiodi, 2002, p. 17).

A review of the literature provides context for the relevant subject areas: adult development with a highlight of the issues of mid-life, career development, career counseling, callings, the world of work with a consideration of spirituality in the workplace, career change to teaching, alternative certification, and expressive arts in research. In the next chapter these key areas of research are examined.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Within the broad fields of career and personal development, a review of the literature focused on nine content areas. For this study the relevant content for examination includes: (a) adult development focusing on mid-life and spirituality, (b) career development, (c) career counseling and callings, (d) transitions, (e) the world of work (spirituality), (f) callings, (g) career change to teaching, (h) alternative certification, and (i) art-based research (ABR). It is the intersection of these issues where synergy in callings emerges.

Adult Development

Recognizing the infinite number of possibilities when life circumstances, temperament, and free will ignite, some predictability is still evident in the trajectory of development. Spanning from adolescence until death, many theories exist on the course of adult development. In this section we review several theories of adult development (with an emphasis on midlife) and the intersection with spiritual development (as it applies to callings).

Theorist Perry (1999) offered a nine-step hierarchical process outlining cognitive development from dualistic thinking to multiple, often contradictory considerations and sources of self-identity. Conducting interviews with college students while enrolled at the university and 12 years beyond their graduation, Baxter Magolda (2009) revealed thought processes from certainty, to uncertainty, followed by the ability to integrate suffering, and often opposing views. Finally, the application of this multi-dimensional knowledge was applied in a multiplicity of situations. Following students for more than a decade post-graduation, Baxter Magolda (2009) observed individuals willingly taking responsibility for their own lives in the form of integrating and co-constructing knowledge from life experiences, context, as well as with those in authority.

Although primarily a cognitive developmental view, obtaining information and taking responsibility for self, also demonstrates aspects of psychosocial maturity.

Erikson's (1987) model of psychosocial development proposes the resolution of polarities not as a "threat of catastrophe, but a turning point" (p. 598). Resolving trust versus mistrust, the first stage of psychosocial development, results in the "psychosocial strength" of hope. It is the assurance that one's needs be attended to, which results in resolution of the first stage. The stages are developmental and met sequentially so the psychosocial task requires the working through the tensions of autonomy and doubt. When resolved, one acquires willpower, allowing the individual to exercise will and free choice without guilt.

When attempting to resolve the tension between initiative and guilt, the positive resolution will yield a sense of purpose, the critical familiarity of being a contributor in the world. The phases of industry versus inferiority, usually during the school age years, determine the internalized perception of being a capable contributor in this world. Approaching adolescence, the turning point centers on the challenge to live one's true identity and have the true self be an accepted member of society. In young adulthood, the sense of self, so difficult to solidify in the previous stage, is now negotiated for love (of person or cause) if intimacy and isolation can be resolved successfully. In the seventh stage, generativity versus stagnation, the potential exists for care to be extended beyond self to others. At the risk of stagnation or self-absorption, the mature adult assures care for other generations. Old age is successfully resolved by emotionally integrating one's life history. The tensions of despair versus integrity require an honest emotional integration of history and if successfully resolved, produce wisdom.

Erikson's (1987) eight stages of the life cycle are sequential; however, they are not inevitable. Individual life stories may inhibit the resolution at any point. Applying Erikson's

theory on the resolution of life stages, Munley (1975) contended career choices made with successful resolution of the psychosocial crisis result in successful development of abilities and psychosocial skills. However, if stages are unresolved, the tension reverberates across many aspects of an individual's life, including career decisions. Munley suggested making a career change is unlikely the singular focus. Successful resolution of Erikson's developmental stages is required in mature occupational decisions or the changes will not provide the foundation of behavior and commitment to produce successful results.

Adding chronological alignment to phases of development, Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978) also addressed the significant tasks to be mastered at age-related points in adulthood. Levinson et al. used the seasons as a metaphor in his artistic description of moving through stages of development. In addition, Levinson et al. (1978) acknowledged the seasons are not instantly changed but rather, transition gradually from one to the next:

To speak of seasons is to say that the life course has a certain shape that it evolves through a series of definable forms. A season is a relatively stable segment of the total cycle. Summer has a character different from that of winter; twilight is different from sunrise. To say that a season is relatively stable, however, does not mean that it is stationary or static. Change goes on within each, and a transition is required for the shift from one season to the next. Every season has its own time; it is important in its own right and needs to be understood in its own terms. No season is better or more important than any other. Each has its necessary place and contributes its special character to the whole. It's an organic part of the total cycle, linking past and future and containing both within itself. (p. 7)

Levinson et al. (1978) viewed the seasons as equally valued, and each "has its own time and understood in its own terms" (p. 7). One important task proposed by Levinson et al. (1978) and Erikson (1987) is separation and individuation of adult male development. Gilligan (1982) challenging the assumptions of male adult development as synonymous with adult development, indicates women's journeys through the life cycle are to be recognized as distinctive.

Acknowledging male development as only one branch of adult growth, Levinson et al. (1978)

conducted additional in-depth research of women during mid-life. Their findings include the movement through the seasons of life, overlapping through the years. Similar to Bridges' model, the transitions are not always sudden, but unfold gradually beginning with an ending or termination of a prior life circumstance. Levinson et al. (1978) identified the new part of self revealed as critical and the evidence of growth. They acknowledged the opportunity for reconstruction of self and beliefs occur in the space between the two. Complicating each of the three stages is the individual's context in which the stages are experienced, which are elucidated next.

An additional component necessary in resolving life stages is the navigation of cultural expectations. Life phases are expected trajectories influenced by gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Temperament, socioeconomic status, education, and mental and physical health are some of the many factors that collide to influence the outcome of role management.

Daloz et al. (1996) explained, "Rather than see intelligence as a fixed condition, developmentalists suggest that we all have potential to evolve toward increasingly integrated and differentiated ways of making sense of the world" (p. 48). In a 1988 mixed method study, Baum (1988) determined meaning was assigned individually. Knowledge combined with significance identified what was meaningful. In the same study, the quantitative data supported Freud's assertion of the components required for health: work and love. Respondents identified the categories of meaningful events: (a) work (73%); (b) love (69%); (c) birth of children (59%); (d) miscellaneous quests (49%); and (e) accidents/deaths/illness (47%). An unexpected finding from the data showed events of meaning occurred during the ages of 25-43. The researcher was unable to conclude whether the life events identified were most likely to occur during the ages of 25-43

or if previously meaningful events are no longer defined in the same way in later years. Spiritual development is multifaceted and changes within the context of people's lives. Generally speaking, as adults age, spirituality increases, a factor usually attributed to reminders of mortality accompanying the aging process (Wink & Dillon, 2002).

Developmental disciplines provide a broad view yet Bridges (2004) reiterated the uniqueness of individuals and "the underlying developmental rhythm of each one's constellation of life experiences, DNA, hopes, and issues" (p. 86). Goals, values, circumstances, and life experience make each individual's growth unique.

Adult development marks change in individuals from adolescence throughout the remainder of their lifespan. Change is at times anticipated and celebrated, at times expected but accompanied with unease, and occasionally change is initially unnoticed. The inevitability of change is hardly disputed; however, there is often a struggle to make sense of life events occurring out of an expected sequence, i.e., having children before planned, experiencing the harsh realities of life early (death of a close family member, serious illness, or injury), or a financial situation requiring employment earlier than planned. Unanticipated or out of order life developments require different adaptations (George, 1993). The order of life events is not guaranteed; however, a predictable order affords individuals an illusion of control.

External changes often set internal changes in motion and vice versa. The often used linear or ladder metaphor of development is countered by Fischer and Bidell (1998) who contend a more accurate representation of adult development is captured in a web design. Strands in one domain extend out further than others as domain specific development exceeds other areas. Development in one area is ultimately connected to other domains but not in an evenly

distributed linear progression. The irregular progression is continued as adult development enters the specifics of midlife.

Midlife development. In 1846, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck of Germany proposed age 70 as the mandatory retirement age. During the mid-nineteenth century, the lifespan of German citizens was 49 years and the Chancellor accurately anticipated payment of few pensions (Strenger, 2008). In the United States, the Social Security Law, passed in 1935, established pension benefits to employees after age 65; the average life expectancy of Americans at that time was 61.7 years (Shultz & Wang, 2011). By 2010 the average life expectancy for men and women in the United States was 78.7 years (Murphy, Xu, & Kochanek, 2013).

The significance of a lengthened lifespan is two-fold. First, from an individual perspective, mid-life in the early 40s results in a significant amount of remaining years with opportunities and challenges for growth and development. At the mean age of 53, the average baby boomer worker will live another 30 years (Strenger, 2008). Within the context of society, the possibility of an additional three decades makes the role of work, economic options (Shultz & Wang, 2011), and health and well-being interdependent variables for individuals, families, and the workforce.

Midlife is the phase in adult development where previous paths to well-being are reflected upon and alternatives are explored (Brim, Ryff, & Kessler, 2004). In middle adulthood, much has gone before and much is left to come. It seems a natural place to reflect on both (Lachman, 2004).

In this section, the broad scope of adult development narrows in focus to mid-life and specifically, the mature adult worker. After age 40, for many individuals, it is probable an overall perspective change toward work will occur (Bridges, 1980, 2001, 2004; Levinson, 1996). Men

undergo a major life change at age 40 or slightly after (Levinson et al., 1978); women experience midlife shifts of significance in the late 40's through their 50's (Harris, Ellicott, & Holmes, 1986).

During midlife, the stage Erikson considered the seventh stage, generativity versus stagnation, includes the charge to care for others, beyond self. If not successfully resolved, the result is stagnation or self-absorption (Erikson, 1987). Levinson et al.'s (1978) midlife season, the longest in duration, occurs during the ages of 45-60, with overlap in the phases preceding and following midlife. A most crucial time when questioning what one wants for an occupation is re-evaluated. In organizations, less options lead to higher disengagement, an issue in productivity in mid-life employees (Levinson et al., 1978). Ultimately, the question is being posed, "What is meaningful to me at this time?"

Sheehy's (1981) study of the life stages between ages 18 and 80, provided results from 60,000 respondents who provided input from life phase experiences. Resurfacing as a challenge in the 20s, 30s, 40s, and in some cases their 50s, individuals continued to work for a "firm sense of my own identity" (Sheehy, 1981, p. 98). The recycling of the search for identity, with additional information and experience, was a clear pattern.

After many years of balancing multiple demands, facing a spectrum of challenges and problems, managing numerous roles (often concurrently), and managing personal and professional problems, the mature worker has had the opportunity to develop organizing systems, problem-solving skills, time-management, and conflict-resolution skills contributing to their overall effectiveness as a worker. Managing multiple roles and responsibilities and gaining perspective from experience provides the mid-life employee an opportunity to increase productivity (Strenger, 2008).

Managing multiple roles, responsibilities, and challenges, the mid-life worker may be viewed as having many competing priorities (Strenger, 2008). In addition to the competing demands on time and resources are the shifts in goals of the mature worker. As individuals move into middle age and the need for external approval diminishes (Sheehy, 1981) and motivation for work achievement changes (Levinson, 1996).

Midlife spirituality. Spirituality also evolves across the lifespan, differing in manifestation and in need fulfillment. During the first half of life, the developmental stages of trust and predictability are established and spirituality provides a parameter in which to safely grow. Identity with a group, clear boundaries and rules, as well as positive mirroring of one's value, supports the developmental needs at the time. As the individual reaches maturity, demands increase in complexity. Rohr (2011) described the shift in dynamics:

There is too much defensive behavior and therefore too much offensive behavior in the first half of life to get to the really substantial questions, which are what drive you forward on the further journey. Human maturity is neither offensive nor defensive; it is finally able to accept that reality is what it is. (p. 7)

Spiritual development tends to grow in the second half of life although numerous variables and life experiences alter the trajectory (Wink & Dillon, 2002). According to Rohr (2011), the growth results from listening differently in the second half of life:

There is a deeper voice of God, which you must learn to *hear and obey* in the second half of life. It will sound an awful lot like the voices of risk, of trust, of surrender, of soul, of "common sense," of destiny, of love, of an intimate stranger, of your deepest self. (p. 48)

Whether the new awareness of self and of the world originates from a spiritual source or otherwise, previous life circumstances begin to look and feel different. The impetus for re-examination of a career path is not job specific but begins when the need shifts "from being motivated by the chance to demonstrate competence to being motivated by the chance to find personal meaning in the work and its results. It is the shift from the question of how to the

question of why” (Bridges, 2004, p. 84). With this change in perspective, often intensifying in mid-life, the world looks different and in order to continue to grow, individuals need to operate differently. In the next section, career development is explored including a focus on phases in teachers’ development.

Career Development Theories

Twentieth century career development theories were developed with populations no longer applicable to today’s workforce (Porfeli & Vondracek, 2009). A century ago jobs were acquired and maintained for the duration of an individual’s working life. The demographics of today’s work force are most accurately described as having “variability and unpredictability in pattern” (Porfeli & Vondracek, 2009, p. 412) to such an extent the original models are no longer appropriate. Career development theories recognize ongoing adult development, influenced by a wide range of variables and the multi-dimensional nature of humans, all of which influence individuals in making career decisions in current day (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010). Individuals’ ever-changing development is significant to health and researchers suggest the ideal job exists to the extent it meets the developmental needs of an individual at a given time (Savickas, 2002; Super, 1980).

Although “callings” are not typically integrated into career development models, theorists include and incorporate “meaningful life pursuits” (Wall, 2010, p. 7). Theories of career development originate from two perspectives. From trait and environment theory, the focus remains on the compatibility of the two variables, while developmental perspectives, assume career needs vary as people progress through the lifespan. The social cognitive view of career development integrates aspects of both perspectives (Patton, 2000).

Trait and environment compatibility emphasizes individual characteristics interacting successfully with employment requirements (Holland, Sorenson, Clark, Nafziger, & Blum, 1973), while the emphasis on development regards career and vocation as a process dependent of growth, similar to reading readiness (Dysinger, 1950). Some points of agreement and disagreement with these two theoretical bases will be discussed regarding Lent's (2005) social cognitive career theory (SCCT).

The model presented by Holland et al. (1973) suggested six personal types and six work environments organized in a way that produces a profile of the type of work and the type of work setting an individual would most likely be drawn to and in which one would experience success. In a follow-up study, individuals were found to remain in positions of employment similar to their original selection leading many in the field of career development to assume the model was accurate (Holland et al., 1973). However, issues regarding the validity of the model in predicting accurate types of work for individuals in the study emerged. Lower socioeconomic status possibly narrowed the range of options, restricting some from moving to professions with a closer alignment to their goals and desires, even as they developed through their adult years. Concluding goodness of fit may lack accuracy if an employee remains in a job assignment. Perception of employability and flexibility may alter the results (Holland et al., 1973).

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) incorporates information regarding traits and talents with the optimal fit for success in the workplace. In addition, SCCT acknowledges and utilizes change in individuals, the workplace, and the global society (Lent, 2005).

Super (1956) is one of several researchers contending career choice is developmental and occurs over a lifetime, not a singular decision made in a moment. By incorporating concepts of self-image, organizational and occupational stereotypes, family messages, value is assigned to

the profession from family, friends, and self. Each variable unfolds into the perception of identity as employee. Although tempting to see employment choices as a series of compromises, Super (1956) preferred to identify the developmental process as a synthesis of life experiences. The developmental nature of the worker is the conscious and unconscious meeting point of the needs and resources of the individual with the needs and resources of the culture at a given time (Super, 1956). It is the flexibility to transition to the variety of roles and expectations that encourage and demand growth in the worker. The demands of change are strong and often stressful. Career requirements may demand so much the individual is faced with questions of selfhood as well as work choice (Super, 1980). Support for the important transitions and choices can be helpful as evidenced by the research on the career cycles of teachers.

Just as theorists offer some predictability in the stages of human development, researchers show “life cycles” (Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000) or “career cycles” (Eros, 2011, p. 65) in the work lives of teachers. Steffy et al. (2000) identified stages as novice, apprentice, professional, expert, distinguished, and emeritus that reflect the goals and needs of educators in tiered levels of development. Studies define progression through the stages based on mastery, age, or years in the profession. Critics warn against using age as an identifier of phase development due to the varied entry age-levels of teachers, particularly those entering through alternative teacher education programs who tend to be older adults rather than individuals recently obtaining an undergraduate degree.

Definitions and groupings vary; however, mastery of tasks within developmental phases is the essential element. But in addition, as individuals grow, their needs for occupational and educational enrichment become more specific. Eros (2011) suggested the teacher career cycle is critical in understanding changing professional needs that mirror development. Opportunities for

leadership, curriculum development, and policy development provide additional avenues in which to impact the classroom. Lack of responsiveness to the teacher's changing needs for experimentation and growth results in frustration, boredom, and unmet needs, contributing to the high turnover rate of experienced teachers.

According to SCCT, people's choices hinge on their cognitive processes. The pattern in which they process and assimilate information is a significant contributor to their outlook, establishing self-efficacy and the predicted outcome of endeavors (Lent, 2005). It is successful progression through the developmental stages that growth is seen as possible and when realized, makes for an improved sense of self-efficacy. Understanding the role self-efficacy plays in career development and satisfaction is demonstrated in the career cycle of teachers. Promoting individual interests, strengths, and developmental readiness optimizes the investment with the work and work environment.

Combining aspects from each theory of career development, the concept of learning agility applies (De Meuse, Dai, Hallenbeck, 2010). The flexibility and willingness to learn from, and respond to, the current work demands is considered by many as the normal expectations for work environments. Both knowing one's strengths and adapting to the needs of the environment result in an agile employee. Part of knowing one's strength is awareness of one's calling and job fit. Career counseling can be helpful in working through some of these questions.

Career Counseling and Callings

Early career counseling objectives focused on lifetime career decisions, however, current career determination theory cautions against long-range plans (van Vianen, De Pater, & Preenen, 2009). Researchers in career change suggest the best career is one supporting the individual's

current self-concept, recognizing continuous change as the standard in developing humans (Duffy & Dik, 2009).

Callings differ from careers in several ways. Callings are not an event or a single choice but a developmental process changing and evolving as the individual changes. “There are developmental steps, and vocational readiness is as valid a concept as reading readiness. Timing is of the essence of the process” (Dysinger, 1950, pp. 198-199). Although not a new concept in career counseling, it is often de-emphasized in search of a choice or defining moment of decision. Career counseling emerged at a time historically when career choice was made one time and was an event that established one’s direction for the future. Until recently, career counseling has remained focused on trait and factor, matching skill with person but unable to move with the changing needs of individuals in current society. Current society sees the need for adaptability and responsiveness to the changing external and internal world (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

Patton and McMahon (2006) proposed career counseling, a combination of counseling and career theory, serves individuals better by incorporating a systems approach examining career concerns in the context of family relationship, individual goals and belief systems, and developmental stages.

Transitions

Navy psychiatrists, Richard Rahe and Thomas Holmes, studied stress and coping in social and life events (Rahe, 1990). With increasingly complex research, relationships between stress, life events (transitions), divorce, job loss or relocation, and health were conducted with similar findings. Although hundreds of replications of stress and well-being studies have been conducted, Rahe and Holme’s early conclusions were predictive. The findings continued to

produce similar results; transitions take their toll on individuals physically and psychologically (Rahe, 1990). Transitions involve changes in roles or perspective toward a role and the process requires effort from the individual (Louis, 1980).

Adversity countered with strengths of the individual can serve as protective factors and mitigate the harm of early stressors, a concept referred to as resilience (Seligman, 2008; Werner & Smith, 1982; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). Effective resiliency factors include but are not limited to: (a) courage, (b) optimism, (c) work ethic, (d) perseverance (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), (e) humor, (f) social relationships, (g) economic resources, and (h) emotional support from significant people (George, 1993). An external societal event: (a) a promotion, (b) divorce, (c) a return to work, or (d) a modification in job responsibilities are all examples of changes requiring psychological adjustment from the individual.

Bridges (1980, 2001, 2004) emphasized how change is observable while transitions are internal and occur in response to change. The transition is personal and influenced by a kaleidoscope of factors with no two individuals responding in the same way to change and transition.

As one of life's few absolutes, change is a way of life. The need for internal adjustment to transitions is an unappreciated dimension, particularly in the realm of work and careers. Without successfully navigating through career transitions, individuals are left with inadequate strategies to manage identity change, change in status, and job insecurity. Left without skills to work through transitions, the economic, emotional, and career demands can become overwhelming (Fouad & Bynner, 2008). Work remains a fundamental factor in community structure and when unemployment increases, violence, crime, and drug use also increase. Fortunately, once the transition to a state of employment is fulfilled, the social problems again

decrease (Thomas, Benzeval, & Stansfeld, 2005). In summary, work is important to physical and psychological health, but change and stability are both necessary for growth and occasionally the location of change is one's work life. Some comfort accompanied pre-determined rites of passage and so did the forfeiture of some choices.

With many life transitions expected at predetermined times, individuals completed school, obtained a job, married, and remained employed at the same location or profession for the duration of their work life. It was in the predictability that the social support and coping mechanisms were embedded. Although presented by some theorists as linear, others presented the process as less so (Perren, Keller, Passaedi, & Scholz, 2010).

Erikson (1987) proposed the need to resolve stage crisis as foundation for the resolution of additional life challenges later. Munley (1975) suggested a strong linear relationship between career maturity and stage resolution. When the tasks of each stage are effectively resolved, individuals are better equipped to make the appropriate career choices. The inverse was observed in university students still struggling with Erikson's life stages. Munley reported a high number of problematic vocational choices and contended separating life transitions from role transitions is counterproductive. Munley (1975) addressed the interdependence of life transitions and careers decisions in the following quote:

In terms of supporting developmental conceptions of vocational behavior and development take place either and interact with broader aspects of development. In terms of offering support to Erikson's theory, the findings substantiate the claim that individuals who are more successful in resolving the stage crisis and developing positive stage resolutions attitudes are more successful in coping with age-appropriate decisions and developmental tasks. (p. 319)

Although growth and development result from transitions, Hopson (1981) suggested a cautious approach. Re-establishing a new identity may eventually result in increased well-being but initially the experience can be disorienting, requiring a great amount of psychological energy

from the individual. Transitions involve internal and external change. Reactions to the changes are unique to each individual. In understanding the predictable nature of what is highly individual, support and insight may assist individuals through the process of transition. Support, offered in a variety of ways, can be enhanced by acknowledging the meaningfulness of the process. Through the myriad of feelings accompanying endings, through the emptiness and potential of the neutral zone, and to the not always joyous beginnings, it is possible to identify meaning in the process.

World of Work

Temperament, experience, aptitude, and setting influence choice of work that impacts quality of life. Due to the individual choice of lifework and callings, employment may be a source of energy and renewal or a drain on one's outlook and energy. A positive example of integrating temperament and life work was reported in a mixed method research study conducted with zookeepers (persons caring for animals at aquariums, theme parks, and zoos). In Bunderson and Thompson's (2009) study, 82% of zookeepers acquired a bachelor's degree or higher yet received salaries in the lowest quartile of occupations in the United States. Zookeepers have little opportunity for advancement and most job descriptions require 24-hour emergency on-call for the animals in their care. Despite the restricted economic and advancement realities of the job, individuals often begin their careers volunteering as zookeepers with the hope of obtaining a paid position. The zookeeper study shows passionate individuals devoted to their work. They report feeling so compelled to do the work they cannot envision anything prohibiting them from continuing to engage in what they consider their calling.

Gini and Sullivan (1987) reported nearly three-fourths of men and two-thirds of women would elect to work even if finances did not require them to do so, thus illustrating that

employment offers value to individuals beyond income. In a similar study, researchers identified individuals with chronic back pain and investigated the motivations for continuing to work despite the difficulties associated with chronic pain and limited mobility. The responses included: (a) being a useful member of society, (b) job satisfaction, (c) recognition and approval, (d) social status, (e) distraction from pain, (f) energy producing, (g) life structure, (h) self-respect, (i) social contacts, (j) financial needs, and (k) loyalty to colleagues (de Vries, Brouwer, Groothoff, Geertzen, & Reneman, 2011).

Work affords the worker the opportunity to express creativity, contribute to one's community, be productive, improve circumstances, grow, change and experience life from a variety of perspectives while displaying talents, skills, and abilities. In addition, the opportunity for experiencing an ease with work, loss of time, a full immersion in the experience referred by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as "flow" as a non-material award of great value. Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) reported the experience of flow occurs more often within work duties than leisure. Effortless loss of time within the activity is experienced less than 20% of the time during leisure, but 47-64% of the time at work, 47% at blue collar jobs, and 64% at managerial.

Change is so common in organizations and in global relationships that Bridges (2004) suggested most jobs exist in "semipermanent states of transition" (p. 79). Historical events, unprecedented global economic interdependence, advancements in technological capabilities, and the rights and responsibilities of access and communication have modified what is expected from and available to employees. Some changes were introduced slowly and adjustments were made primarily by choice and comfort level (cell phone use) while others (post 9/11 airport security) were abrupt and non-negotiable. In the rapidly changing workplace, questions are raised regarding what is wanted and needed in current day work environments for safety,

belonging, stability, efficiency, fulfillment, and profitability. For some individuals, the needs and wants of the workplace include meaningful and purposeful work.

For some individuals, spirituality is the vehicle to find one's calling or the reverse, the calling in one's work brings spirituality closer to the seeker. For others, the source of the calling is God and the mechanism for answering the call is through the work one feels led to do.

Questions arise when our integrated spirituality accompanies us into our places of employment.

The next area of focus includes: (a) the history of spirituality at work, (b) the concerns within places of employment, and (c) the relevance to this study.

In 1920, Mary Parker Follett (as cited in Johnson, 2007), stated, "God is the perpetual Call to our self-fulfilling" (p. 432). Entwined with well-being, meaning and purpose in work, alignment with values, connectedness, and authenticity, spirituality is painted with a broad brush. Follett proposed the concept of spirituality at work was possible and necessary because society had attempted to separate human functioning into arbitrary divisions. Cited in Johnson (2007), Follett stated:

the divorce of our so-called spiritual life from our daily activities is a fatal dualism. We are not to ignore our industry, commerce, etc., and seek spiritual development elsewhere; on the other hand we shall never find it in these, but only by eternal influence and refluence....There is energy flowing from [our material progress] which, uniting with other energies, will create new men and new environment. (p. 430)

A related term for calling "spirit at work" is characterized as work in which individuals experience meaningful connections, make significant contributions toward a broader expanse than self, and result in an increased sense of well-being (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008, p. 319). Rohr (2011) indicated the importance of meaning, particularly in the second half of our lives. As the strict compliance with rules and order are replaced with seeing the connection with others, the meaning in paradox and projection, and the shadow aspects of ourselves, a new opportunity

for wholeness results. It might be argued, instead of opportunity, there is necessity for wholeness. “As the body cannot live without food, so the soul cannot live without meaning” (Rohr, 2011, p. 113).

Spirit at work allows for removal of religiousness from work environments while maintaining the deep need for meaning and purpose. Four approaches were identified in discovering “spirit at work”: (a) Always there—individuals cannot remember a time they have not had commitment to the task and work; (b) Coming together—a place where talents and gifts meet with passion for the work; (c) Transformative events—an event (positive or negative) resulting in a profound change in individuals and the way they relate with their work, and (d) The contextually sensitive path—a deepening of spirit at work only after a work environment where the spirit was influential (increased or decreased) and a conscious choice followed (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008).

When values and beliefs between individuals and their place of work are mutually beneficial, it is considered a good person-organization fit and organizational outcome is improved (Balazas, 1990; Posner & Schmidt, 1993). If, however, the work environment results in an identity not in sync with one’s calling, adjustments to the identity or work environment are necessary (Cardador & Caza, 2012). Adjusting personal or work identity can be painful for the person and or those who share the work environment.

A flexible work-identity is necessary to maintain a healthy relationship with self and others. Receiving feedback from peers and supervisors allows the individual the flexibility to modify their identity in relationship to work and their calling as necessary. In addition, allowing new information to surface as a result of reflective practice is critical to self-growth and is only possible when a flexible work-identity exists. Without receptivity, information threatening to

one's identity or perception of a calling results in a less effective employee and an individual more likely to have their core identity shaken (Cardador & Caza, 2012). An individual's identity is both indicated by and reinforced by the calling. Without the significant source of identity, a sense of self would be diminished (Dobrow, 2004).

These are some of the issues contributing to cautiousness toward spirituality in the work environment. In addition, research displayed contradictory conclusions. The relationship between spirituality at work and productivity was not established (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) or was a weak association (Riketta, 2002). Although an association between work effort and organizational commitment was found by Benkhoff (1997), causation could not be concluded.

In addition to the disagreement in research findings, questions exist regarding the effect of spirituality on the workplace culture. Changing organization culture in general is expensive and challenging. With inconsistent results on the influence of spirituality on an organization's bottom line, the use of resources to counter resistance and restructure the organization to support a spiritual culture is questioned (Ittner & Larchers, 1997; Riketta, 2002). In addition, developing spirituality in an organization is subject to individual perceptions and experiences. Personal histories with spirituality are impossible to predict possibly resulting in increased employee turnover (Dik et al., 2009).

An additional concern is raised in the literature regarding the integration of spirituality at work. This risk involves exploitation of employees. A culture of spirituality could be used by those with formal and informal power to manipulate individuals and groups. Under the guise of spiritual responsibility and duty, employees may be coerced into compliance and unquestioned duty. Although connectedness is a sought-after consequence of spirituality, the research team of Polley, Vora, and SubbaNarasimha (2005) cautioned that individuals must be allowed to

question group think, maintain a sense of personal responsibility, and exercise individual thought. Under the guise of unity in spirituality, formidable pressure can be imposed making this difficult. Caution is recommended so that questioning and personal ethics do not become collateral casualties of belonging and connectedness created in workplace spirituality.

The terms spirit and spirituality at work produce misunderstanding and a need for specificity distinguishing religion and spirituality (Badrinarayanan & Madhavaram, 2008). The difficulty surrounds the essence of spirituality, often a personal construct and by its nature, experienced differently (Bygrave & MacMillan, 2008). The resulting view for some researchers is studies lacking scientific rigor (Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008), as well as a lack of generalizability of research findings to cultures outside of the United States and diverse levels of social hierarchy (Dik et al., 2009).

The complex issues presented in the literature indicate the potential and challenges of understanding spirituality in the individual and in the organization and its appropriateness for the workplace. Callings are often spiritual in their origin suggesting an examination of the overlap of callings and spirituality in the workplace. As more individuals look for meaning through their work, illuminating the threads connecting the concepts is warranted. As Rohr (2011) explained: “Humans are creators of meaning, and finding meaning in our experiences is not just another name for spirituality but it is also the very shape of human happiness” (p. 114). The focus turns now to career callings.

Career Callings

Definitions of callings vary from poetic to pragmatic. Duffy and Dik (2009) described callings as:

a transcendent summons originating beyond the self, the pursuit of activity within the work role as a source or extension of an individual’s overall sense of purpose and

meaningfulness in life, and viewing other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation. (p. 35)

Buechner (1973) described a calling as: “that you most need to do, and that the world most needs done” (p. 95). For this research, callings will be defined as “inner directives toward meaningful life pursuits” (Wall, 2010, p. 7).

In differentiating between a job, a career, and a calling, the relationship of the worker to the work is essential. Jobs offer extrinsic rewards, including compensation and some security benefits. Providing financial benefits, a job provides the resources for the worker to engage in the activities which in turn create identity, as the work itself does not in any significant manner. Careers by contrast provide opportunity for promotion, elevated status, as well as personal accomplishment and satisfaction. Each of these contributes to personal and professional identity. Callings, however, introduce a unique rhythm and energy, possibly even guiding the course of personal growth. In addition to development, the individual simultaneously honors the inner landscape (Lewis, 2006). Callings introduce something essential to identity and are “morally inseparable from [their] life,” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996, p. 66).

Just as callings evolve from a variety of sources, career choice theorists propose several explanations for how work is chosen. Most assume work volition (Duffy & Dik, 2009) where individuals exercise the opportunity and freedom to freely select a career path. Hansen (1997) questioned the plausibility of work volition by identifying external and internal barriers to choice. External barriers include: (a) family expectations, (b) economic changes, (c) educational access, and (d) gender stereotypes. Although internal pressures may have threads from the same external sources, they are compounded by personal self-efficacy or self-fulfilling beliefs (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). Regardless of the origin of the obstruction, internal and external factors rarely operate independent of each other (Duffy & Dik, 2009). When selecting a job or

career, these conscious and unconscious obstacles to work volition complicate the path to one's calling.

In Holland's person-environment fit theory (Holland et al., 1973), employment was considered a good match if an individual's workplace was well-matched for his or her skills, interests, and temperament. Person-environment fit is widely referenced in the literature and depends heavily on employee change and adaptation by the worker. The need for employee growth is well-documented, as is the inverse.

The concept of calling evolved from the root *vocare* meaning a beckoning or call coming from God to a life purpose (Peck, 1993). Although callings are most often associated with a spiritual request from God, Novak (1996) reported no difference in intensity between callings originating from God and those of a secular nature.

For some individuals, callings appeared early and life decisions were made in response to the call. For others, growth, maturity, and life events brought clarity and urgency to the calling. As mentioned previously, callings differ from jobs and careers because of the essential component to an individual's identity. The calling is "morally inseparable from [their] life" (Bellah et al., 1996, p. 66).

Articles written on the subject of callings have more than tripled since 2007 compared to the years prior to that date. In addition, the disciplines publishing articles on the topic of callings have broadened from theology, history, and philosophy, to include business, psychology, and sociology (Duffy & Dik, 2012). However, the ballooning interest in this topic presents an imprecise comparison since a consensus has not been reached regarding the definitions of key terms: (a) callings, (b) meaningful work, (c) work satisfaction, and (d) work engagement.

Partially due to the imprecision and lack of consensus on definitions, critics of research on callings cite the lack of a valid scale measure for empirical research. In response, the research team of Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2011) developed a scale to measure subcategories of callings in diverse settings (art, music, business, and management). Each subcategory was given a score from 1-7 on a Likert scale. The items measured were: (a) calling, (b) calling orientation, (c) neoclassical calling, (d) self-defined calling, (e) work engagement, (f) job involvement, (g) career orientation, (h) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, (i) optimism, and (j) religiosity. With the advent of a valid and reliable measurement tool, empirical research on callings is expected.

Just as quantifying aspects of callings will provide some insights, it will not provide all of the information needed to understand one's calling. Callings enhance life and work satisfaction, but they do not eliminate the challenges and conflicts of life. Palmer (2000) addressed the difficulty of competing needs, "What I learned about vocation is how one's values can do battle with one's heart" (p. 20). Leaving what was, to embrace something new, is often met with denial, resistance, and grief. In his model of change, Bridges (1980, 2004) explained transitions begin with Endings, where letting go of a way of life, perception of self, or life role clears the way for something new. Although often unrecognized and unacknowledged, letting go of the old comes with a cost. When initiated by the individual, transitions and their timelines are usually easier to manage; regardless, endings are commonly accompanied with loss.

The commitment binding an individual to his calling and destiny is "ennobling to fulfill and difficult to ignore" (Baumeister, 1987, p. 165). Even with internal and external forces applying pressure, change is not always easy. If a calling is to be perceived, recognized, then transitioned to, internal and external messages require thoughtful reflection. Gender roles, family legacies, economic status, talent, and worthiness of a call work through the difficulties of

competing loyalties, legitimacy of voice, and responsibility toward self and others. The only legitimate judge of the meaningfulness and alignment of a calling is the individual (Levoy, 1997).

Career Changers

Coupled with increased longevity, it is estimated by the year 2015 over a third of the United States workforce will be age 50 or older (Fullerton, 1999). It is this period of midlife that many stages of career and life roles occur, beginning with precontemplation and disengagement (Barclay, Stolz, & Chung, 2011, p. 390).

It is from this reflective period that many workers begin plans for changing careers. Relevant to this research are the findings on teachers' effectiveness after moving to the profession after previous work experience. Dieterich and Patton's 1996 study focused instead on the specifics in the decision-making phase of a career move to the field of teaching. Two sources of motivation emerged: internal and external. Internal motivation revealed a strong desire to make a difference to others and to increase a sense of self-fulfillment, while external reasons centered on career advancement. Internal motivation held more weight in influencing individuals to change careers to teaching.

The motivation for career change was reported as a significant force since the disincentives for committing to teaching as a second career were numerous: (a) tuition costs, (b) family and child care concerns, (c) work schedules (Waldschmidt, 2002), (d) bureaucracy of certification requirements, and (e) necessary support from family and friends (Valenciana, Weisman, & Flores, 2006). In addition to the internal shifts of mid-life acknowledged earlier, additional factors influenced a career move to teaching.

Factors contributing to the willingness to change to the teaching profession include: (a) resource availability, (b) latitude, (c) commitment, (d) readiness, and (e) program accessibility (Castro & Bauml, 2009). Models addressing transition (Bridges, 1980, 2001, 2004; Schlossberg, 1981) illuminated the possibility for challenge, as well as growth during times of transition.

Resource availability includes concrete and abstract resources available to career switchers making the move possible. Participants in the 2009 qualitative study conducted by Castro and Bauml determined the importance of having role models and friends as teachers to obtain firsthand knowledge of the practical knowledge necessary to enter the field, providing both abstract support and concrete knowledge and ideas. The resource assistance described varied from tuition assistance, navigating the bureaucratic mazes, modeling a balance of personal and professional responsibilities, and encouragement through the 12 to 36 month certification process.

The remaining three factors found to be significant in individuals changing careers are interrelated: (a) latitude, (b) commitment readiness, and (c) program accessibility. The authors of the study defined latitude as having “both the financial means and time availability” to pursue the career shift (Castro & Bauml, 2009, p. 119). It is with an intersection of latitude and commitment readiness described as “mentally prepared to endure hardships associated with this type of life transition” that the individual has generated enough momentum and purposefulness to transition (Castro & Bauml, 2009, p. 121).

Program accessibility, including physical proximity to their communities and trainings attuned to their current employment demands, was presented as an important final component. Teaching programs with multiple information sessions, flexible entry dates, and utilization of technology were essential to program success. Also included in program accessibility was the

need for program staff to be responsive to the needs of adult career switchers (Castro & Bauml, 2009).

The adjustments required in changing careers have the potential to send ripple effects throughout an individual's life. Whether the career change is sudden or planned, the process can be challenging. Most educational prekindergarten through twelfth grade education institutions require teachers to be certified as teachers, the subject explored next.

Alternative Teacher Certification

Introduced in the United States in the mid-eighties, alternative certification programs were designed to utilize the expertise of non-educators by by-passing the educational courses initially and allowing them to enter classrooms to teach. The program design involved a change in the order of obtaining education courses by placing individuals (having acquired at least an undergraduate degree) in classrooms as teachers first, followed by or simultaneously addressing the appropriate academic and practical skill-building necessary to teach. Preparation of first-year teachers included subject-matter mastery, classroom management, teacher support, and the necessary steps toward certification (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). Although criticism has been raised regarding the quality of training and applicants through alternative certification routes, the programs responded to a demonstrated need.

Due to retirement of veteran teachers, a growing number of emergency teaching certificates being issued (Feistritzer, 2005), high turnover in the field of teaching (40 to 50% of teachers leave the profession or transfer to more desirable locations within first five years) (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Hafner & Owings, 1991; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003), and unwillingness of university graduates to fill positions in high need areas (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ng, 2003), an increased teacher workforce was needed. All 50 of the United States (McCarty &

Dietz, 2011) currently offer alternative certification programs with approximately 30% of newly hired teachers being prepared by alternative certification programs. Alternative certification programs offer security guidelines, networking opportunities with school districts, and required preparation courses; however, the license is issued by the state where one teaches (Feistritzer, 2005).

Guidelines require applicants for teacher alternative certification programs to hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree. Programs differ on admission and program requirements including: (a) length, (b) cost, (c) college GPA, and (d) previous experience in teaching and mentoring (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). Discussion has centered on differences in effectiveness for four-year college prepared teachers and those certified through an alternative route. Before comparing paths to certification, Walsh and Jacobs highlighted the differences between obtaining a teaching certificate after attending a four-year university or college in comparison to an alternative certification program. Discussions regarding quality centered on: (a) screening processes, (b) curriculum, (c) classroom experience, and (d) mentoring, all of which have been found to impact teacher effectiveness. Alternative teacher certification programs differ in their admission requirements, but generally accept individuals with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Program duration ranges from 12 to 36 months and usually does not include student teaching, in contrast to four-year undergraduate preparation programs where students are prepared with required education courses and classroom teaching experiences prior to obtaining their undergraduate degree. However, states are the sole licensing agency; testing and security clearance remains in the procedural realm of the state for either route.

Some of the participants pursuing alternative certification were recent college or university graduates who enter alternative certification solely to obtain a teaching certificate; but

the majority of participants of the alternative certification programs were career switchers or those pursuing encore careers, individuals later in their careers who chose to make a change to a different field of work. Feistritzer (2009) showed the benefits of alternatively certified teacher:

Successful alternative routes produce teachers who generally are older, more ethnically diverse, more willing to teach wherever the jobs are, and more willing to teach high-demand subjects in hard-to-staff schools than are traditionally trained teachers. These teachers are also more likely to stay in the profession than traditionally trained teachers. (p. 5)

The percentage of alternatively certified teachers teaching five years later is between 85-90% (Feistritzer, 2009). In a 2005 study, Feistritzer specified, “people entering through alternate routes who are in their 40s or 50s are the most committed to staying in teaching for 10 or more years” (p. 33). These results challenge studies indicating second-career, alternatively prepared teachers, left the field more often than college age, traditionally prepared teachers, citing low salaries, working conditions, and inadequate professional status (Johnson & Birkeland, 2002).

However, of the individuals acquiring certification through an alternative route, 50% of those in their 40s and 59% of those in their 50s, indicate they would not have become teachers if an alternate route was unavailable (Feistritzer, 2005, p. 20). These results are echoed in Smith and Pantana’s (2009) study, where almost half of respondents stated they would not have been able to switch careers had an online option not been available. The need for salary and additional benefits of employment were not negotiable. Career changers in mid-life require additional program planning considerations in an effort to support the balancing of responsibilities of those seeking a second career (Lee, 2011).

Arts-Based Research

The final and significant construct for the study is the use of arts-based research (ABR). Definitions, historical evolutions, and its purpose in this study are explored in an effort to

appreciate the potential understanding art provides for research participants, the issues, the researcher, and the reader.

In practical terms, arts-based research involves integrating the visual, performing, writing, or musical arts into the process of generating or interpreting data. Leavy (2009) defined arts-based research as “a set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation” (p. 2). Barone and Eisner (2012) acknowledged the evocative nature of art-based research by adding, “art-based research emphasizes the generation of forms of feeling that have something to do with understanding some person, place, or situation....It is the conscious pursuit of expressive form in the service of understanding” (p. 7).

Categorized as an extension of qualitative research, Leavy (2009) further distilled ABR providing the tenets of the three paradigms. Quantitative researchers use numbers for measurement and qualitative researchers use words to gain meaning, while arts-based researchers utilize stories and images for evocation (Leavy, 2009).

Barone and Eisner’s (2012) “fundamental ideas” (p. 164) explained the rationale for using art-based research and provide a broad scope of how art in research adds a unique component to the field of research. The authors began by revealing art’s capacity to broaden the representations of the world. With each tool comes “a distinctive way in which the world can be represented” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 165). Cited as examples of distinct contributions are bronze, computers, and neon paint. Obviously differing in capacity and limitations, they provide the individual with the capacity to interface in the world in ways not previously known. The second fundamental idea is posing important questions for the purpose of inviting dialogue. Without the concept of incompleteness, an acceptance exists knowing definitive answers are

unavailable. Barone and Eisner (2012) provided a beautiful analogy to explain the next idea of arts-based research that refers to the ability to “capture meanings that measurement cannot” (p. 167). Comparing the difference between temperature and heat, the authors noted temperature is a result of measurement, a quantitative concept; however, to feel heat is a qualitative description. Extending the example, paintings, film, and poetry are just a few of the ways in which one might evoke the experience of heat.

Additional access requires skills from the researchers and those who prepare researchers in order to glean optimal results. It does not restrict the use of arts-based research to researchers or artist. Some technique is recommended to produce results, but Barone and Eisner (2012) do not advocate excluding the activists, students, and others from utilizing the arts and research tool.

Arts-based research is not intended to replace quantitative and qualitative research, but to expand and enlarge “to both see what might not otherwise have been seen, and to be able to say what might otherwise might not have been able to be said” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 170). In doing so, the results would contribute to human understanding. Recognizing great art provides the opportunity for resonance, otherwise known as generalizability (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

Art-based research is an additional research tool to aid in understanding the essence of an experience. The criticisms of ABR include the challenges of validity and generalizability, true of qualitative research in general. A different goal, obtaining the meaning of the experience, is measured differently in qualitative research and even slightly differently in ABR.

For this study, the intention was to utilize art to aid in additional insight for the research participants and the researcher in understanding the transition to a calling. The art was not interpreted but rather used as a vehicle for personal insight by the artists themselves.

Summary

By reviewing the literature in the areas impacting adults and their career development, it is easier to appreciate how, although predictable, many developmental phases in life are highly individualized. Weaving together the field of work one has completed and the new career (teaching) is a complex process. It was essential to investigate development issues, adult and career, and the nature of change and transition. It was equally important to explore the process of beginning a new career, specifically through a teacher alternative certification program and to review the literature on how the arts contribute to the data collection and analysis processes. Chapter 3 explains how this study is designed to explore the experience of eight individuals as they transition through career change, an alternative route to certification, in pursuit of their calling.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience and meaning constructed by eight adults having transitioned from previously valued work to what they perceived to be their calling. Chapter 3 includes the research methodology in the study and is presented in the following sections: (a) research design, (b) participants, (c) role and background of the researcher, (d) ethical guidelines for the protection of human subjects, (e) data collection procedures, (f) data analysis procedures, and (g) strategies to ensure trustworthiness and credibility.

Research Design

Through semi-structured interviews, this qualitative research provides the reader a thorough description of the core element(s) of the central phenomenon and how the participants experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). An interview with a participant “yields data that provides depth and detail to create understanding of phenomena and lived experiences” (Bowen, 2005, p. 209).

The phenomenological method of qualitative research was chosen for its process in exploring the essence of experience of a limited number of participants. The concentrated approach results in a rich understanding of the complexity of the phenomena. Analyzing phenomenological data distills participants’ experiences to their essential nature. Phenomenology is not, however, the researcher’s subjective opinion of what an experience means to the participant. This analytical strategy remains focused on the participants’ perspective and essence of their experience (Schram, 2006). “The method of reflection that occurs throughout the phenomenological approach provides a logical, systematic, and coherent resource for carrying

out the analysis and synthesis needed to arrive at essential descriptions of experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47).

Participants

Potential participants for the study were identified by contacting school district administrators, teachers, counselors, personnel directors, regional service center coordinators, and research study participants. The purpose of the study, criteria for participation, and researcher contact information were provided to the contacts. Criteria for the study participants included:

- Experienced a significant change in roles, responsibilities, skills, and field of expertise in their career
- Taught in PK–12 for a minimum of 5 years, obtaining a teaching certificate through an alternative teacher certification program
- Previously employed in valued work before following their calling
- Perceived, recognized, and transitioned to their career calling
- Age 40 years or older
- Willing to discuss the journey through the interview process and with expressive arts (art experience not required)

The criteria evaluated by those referring individuals to the study were predominantly observable: (a) age 40 or older, (b) having taught a minimum of five years in prekindergarten through twelfth grade, (c) transferred from valued work to education, and (d) passionate about their work. Whether they had a calling was to be determined by me in the follow-up interview. Of the 32 individuals referred for the study, including those suggested by other participants, one was eliminated due to age (too young), five were eliminated because they did not participate in

an alternative teacher certification program, and one clarified that although satisfying, teaching was not his calling. Eight participants meeting the criteria were selected for the study and the remaining teachers who had contacted the researcher were notified.

After confirmation of the required criteria, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were scheduled at a time and place of the participants' choice. Prior to the start of the interview, consent forms were signed providing additional information on the study, assurance of confidentiality, consent to be interviewed and recorded. The interviews included 14 structured questions with follow-up questions as appropriate. After the interview questions, participants were asked to illustrate their journey to a calling using art as a research methodology with a follow-up discussion regarding the process and product of the expressive art.

Participants in the study were selected using snowball sampling (Creswell, 2005), a strategy where participants are identified by people who know people fitting the criteria and "information rich" for the topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 71). Using snowball sampling in qualitative research requires the researcher ask participants for suggestions of others who might add to the research. This conversation can occur during the interview or at a time apart from the interview process (Creswell, 2005). The researcher's intention was that as participants understood the specifics of the study, their insight into appropriate individuals would be enhanced. Participants met the criteria as outlined: (a) aged 40 years or older, (b) changed skills and responsibilities significantly when changing professions, (c) taught a minimum of five years in PK-12, and (d) transitioned from previously valued work to work they considered to be their calling. In an effort to weave together an understanding of transitions from previously valued work with the influence of mid-life maturation, the eight participants ranged in age from 42-54. Upon conclusion of the interview, the researcher asked several participants if they knew

additional individuals who met the criteria of the study and followed up as appropriate. A special effort was made in selection to include the voice of males in the research study. The snowball sampling procedure resulted in eight research participants. An overview of the participants' previous careers and current callings is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Descriptors

Participant	Gender	Previous Career	Calling
Alma	F	Retail	Mathematics teacher, Secondary level
Alejandro	M	Military	Technology teacher, Secondary level
Diana	F	Chemistry	Science teacher, Secondary level/ Administrator
Arthur	M	Military	Elementary teacher, Administrator
Louise	F	Forensics	Science teacher, Secondary level
Jessa	F	Researcher	Science teacher, Secondary level
Petra	F	Insurance	Middle School teacher
Eva	F	Finance	Elementary behavior specialist

The research study participants consisted of six females and two males. Four of the research participants were Caucasian, one was of Asian descent, and three individuals were Hispanic. Five teachers taught at the high school level, two at the elementary, and one at a junior high school. One high school and one elementary level teacher taught students with special emotional and behavioral needs. Seven of the eight participants taught in public school and one taught in a religious affiliated institution. Half of the research participants are employed in urban, inner city, or suburban schools and half of the participants are employed in rural school districts.

Of the eight participants, two are currently in administrative leadership positions. Qualitative research relies on meaning making between participants and the researcher, where we turn our focus now.

Role and Background of Researcher

Qualitative research relies heavily on the researcher as the instrument in the inquiry process. It is unavoidable; the researcher's assumptions, biases, and experiences will color the perceptions in the design, implementation, and analysis of the study. As a qualitative researcher, factors coloring my view and background (Creswell, 2009) affected the research and to the extent possible, were identified and bracketed.

My interest in the interfacing of emotions and learning crystallized during my university years and in response, established my academic foundation combining education and psychology. Deepening my understanding of both fields, my master's degree in Mental Health Counseling allowed a continuing exploration of individuals as they grew, incorporating both emotions and intellect. Problems appeared to surface when a singular approach was called upon at the expense of the other. My goal was to integrate emotions into the developmental phases of teachers and the classrooms they created.

I began my work with individuals, having decided to pursue a teaching certificate, who had enrolled in an alternative teacher certification program. For more than a decade, my professional life included teaching, observing, and mentoring these first-year teachers who were primarily career switchers. In particular, my interest has been in individuals who not only chose, but felt called, to become teachers, rousing my interest in why and how the path in a new direction is navigated.

I was struck early in my work with the relevance of Bridges' theory of transitions, involving endings, neutral zones, and beginnings, to the experience of individuals changing careers from previously held professional lives. From personal knowledge, transitions out of a role or perspective into a new sphere have occurred under different circumstances producing disparate experiences. At times, I have been unable to discern or recognize my purpose and call. Even with uncertainty and discomfort accompanying change, attempts to force outcomes, or minimize the impact have ended with frustrating and conflicted results. In hindsight, I am often relieved that my forced goals were not met since they were temporary adjustments rather than solutions. Forcing new beginnings without adequate time to reassess and learn from the ending almost always resulted in my generating a similar scenario from what I had just left. Understanding Bridge's model of transitions from various developmental periods in my own life lent itself to adopting openness to the direction from a calling. Upon reaching the midlife phase of life, the observations, conversations, and directions regarding a calling are recognized in a gentle and indirect way allowing me the transformational experience a calling makes.

Protection of Research Participants

The researcher contacted participants by phone or e-mail, described the study, and obtaining a verbal agreement to participate in the research. The research purpose, an interview guide, and a consent form (Appendix A) were e-mailed to participants in advance of the interview for participant review. Prospective participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the research and their ability to withdraw from the study at any point in the process. The researcher maintained confidentiality for participants by assigning each a pseudonym.

The interview was arranged at a time and place convenient for all parties. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed electronically by the researcher. The audio tapes of

interviews will be destroyed after the appropriate storage time period of no longer than five years.

Data Collection Procedures

After documents were reviewed by the researcher and research participants, consent was obtained, and the following protocol executed. Responses to the semi-structured interview questions (Appendix B) were tape-recorded and transcribed electronically by the researcher. Upon completion of the semi-structured interview, research participants were provided with 24” x 30” white drawing paper. Participants were asked to visually represent the journey to their calling utilizing art materials supplied (colored pencils, crayons, and markers). Utilizing the expressive arts incorporates an additional medium for data acquisition and engages interviewees as active participants (Cheng, 2010). Participants’ artistic knowing facilitates the understanding of personal knowledge and consequently may add to the experiences being communicated (Anderson & Braud, 2011). The researcher provided open and flexible instructions regarding the expressive arts allowing participants to express their stories when representing their transitional journey (Cheng, 2010). In contrast to responding to the interviewer’s questions, the participant will follow the internal knowledge of personal truth. Additional interview questions (Appendix C) followed the completion of the expressive arts. The art work generated during the study will be returned to the participants after completion of the research project.

Data Analysis Procedures

“Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for this transformation” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). On completion of each interview, the researcher transcribed and read the results adding reactions, metaphors, and insights. Beginning the formal analysis, the researcher identified the smallest unit of data capable of providing a potential

answer to the research question (Merriam, 2009). These small bits of data can then be assembled in a meaningful way and referred to as themes of the research. Merriam (2009) clarified themes are referred to as patterns, findings, or answers to a research question.

The analysis process of the participant interviews included a constant comparison approach to identify underlying themes. Looking for keywords in context provided insight in to where the most significant words will reveal themselves. Keywords in context provide a framework for how particular terminology was used and may provide clarity around words and word counts (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The comments made during the creation of art and in describing the work were also coded for themes.

Credibility

The credibility, or believability, of qualitative research is dependent on the complexity and thickness of data presented. With as much detail and complexity as possible, the process or phenomenon is believable. To increase credibility, the data from participants demonstrated the concept of “thick” data, gathering relevant information to the saturation point. In addition, using several types of data analysis referred to as triangulation, increased the reliability of the findings and was employed in this study (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

As the instrument for qualitative research, the researcher’s ability to remain conscious of bias, assumptions, and worldview directly impacted the credibility of the study outcomes. In an effort to increase internal validity with evidence of research competencies, the researcher employed an audit trail or log chronicling the thought and decision-making process called upon during the study (Merriam, 2009). Generating a timeline with depth, provided readers with the history of the project. The use of the audit trail is not for replication of the research, but rather provided the how and why of the research project’s trajectory. To adequately construct the

central phenomenon, the qualitative research process focused the interpretation of meaning on the participants rather than the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The truest source of credibility is the integrity of the researcher. To ensure the highest credibility and trustworthiness, the researcher employed rigorous academic commitment and accurate implementation of methodology, including interviewing, data analysis, and reporting of findings. In addition, all research was conducted within the ethical guidelines for the researcher as professional (Merriam, 2009). Self-reflection and peer review assisted the researcher throughout the design, data gathering, and data analysis phases of the research study.

Data analysis began following the interview and art session continuing through the data collection phase. To increase internal validity, the researcher utilized triangulation, drawing upon several sources of data to increase credibility of the findings (Merriam, 2009). The data sources included interviews, expressive art work, and peer review, the process of discussing preliminary interpretations, emerging themes, and research design with colleagues (Merriam, 2009).

Summary

A phenomenological, qualitative study was chosen as the best approach to answering the research question in this study. Since the intention was to acquire understanding of the participants' experience, and to distill that experience to its essence, a phenomenological study is structured ideally to gather the information. Eight individuals having left previously valued work to pursue their callings as teachers were the research participants in the study. Participant interviews and art were coded by the researcher, themes were identified, and findings were synthesized with professional literature. In depth examination of the findings are discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the essence of the experience of eight adults as they perceived, recognized, and transitioned to their career callings. A focus on each of the research participants provided depth and context for their lives followed by an exploration of the patterns that emerged through the interviews and illustrations. Each of the research participants held valued careers prior to the transition. These careers fit well into the life path at the time they were chosen; however, this study explored the transition individuals made from valued careers into what was eventually found to be their calling. It is partially this undercurrent toward something more that served as a catalyst for this research. The undercurrent, varying in intensity in participants, appeared to have originated from life events and/or internal dissonance. This research study explored the essence of that yearning experienced almost as non-negotiable as the tides in the ocean. When indicators of change surfaced, each of the research participants were employed in valued work.

Individuals were employed in the following areas: (a) retail management, (b) financial services, (c) commercial chemistry, (d) insurance, (e) forensic toxicology, and (f) the United States Armed Forces. The eight participants provided a wealth of experience from many disciplines. Some transitioned to teaching after as many as 20 years in their previous fields, others after as few as 8 years.

The findings lead us to who the participants identify as the source of the calling. Callings, originally received from “God,” also include secular interpretations as a legitimate voice in responding to one’s intended call. In this study, God as the source of the calling was identified in six of the eight participants and was explored. Additional patterns emerged in the exploration of

participants' experiences. In the composition of callings, participants reported at least two of the three significant characteristics: (a) a sense of integrity when finding and living the calling, (b) an innate ability for the work, and (c) a focus on others. Participants also identified the personal cost of following a call and the hypothetical cost of ignoring it.

A theme addressed by most of the individuals in the research study is the influence of childhood experiences. Participants spoke of both supportive and difficult circumstances that impacted their perception of self, the safety of their world, and their place within that world. The early undercurrents would flow through to adulthood forming patterns of meaning. For half of the participants, struggles in school were part of their childhood experience. This is relevant to the research, as each of the participants ultimately returned as teachers to educational settings.

Less vivid, but present, was the pattern of adjusting to transitions required in moving from what is known to what is uncertain. Bridges (1980, 2001, 2004) described these phases as Endings and Neutral Zone, respectively. It is important to recall the internal experience of Bridges' Endings, Neutral Zone, and Beginnings are separate from the external changes. The latter includes the circumstances of job change, role change, moving, and birth of child, while the internal experiences are processes an individual works through on a timetable impossible to dictate by external forces.

Creating a unique mosaic for each participant, these patterns provided images within a larger motif. First, we take a focused look at individual participants, followed by a broader look at the patterns of their lives, and then an understanding of how the relationships of these patterns create unique life stories.

Participants in the Study

The research participants in the study live and work in the South Texas region with half in rural and half in urban school districts. This research study focused on adults in the years associated with mid-life who had experienced a transition and switched careers to teaching. Each of the participants have remained in the classroom for a minimum of five years, an important milestone as almost one-third of new teachers leave the classroom within the first five years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In areas of high poverty, the teacher turnover rate in the first years of employment is 50% higher than in low poverty locations (Ingersoll, 2001). This phenomenological study focused on eight individuals and their perception, recognition, and transition to their calling. The phenomenological method of qualitative research was chosen for its process in exploring the essence of experience of a limited number of participants. The concentrated approach results in a rich understanding of the complexity of the phenomena.

The study turns now to the individuals and their stories. Each participant transitioned to the field of education from other careers, as shown in Table 1, page 55. The path to and from previous careers and into teaching begins to tell the story of early influences in perceiving and recognizing one's calling.

Alma. Alma arranged to meet in a quiet room near the sanctuary of a neighborhood church. Alma had volunteered to participate in the research study after listening to a description and repeatedly stating, "That's me." Meeting the criteria for the study, she initially appeared eager to discuss the influential events leading her to her career as a teacher.

Although baptized in the church as a baby, Alma does not remember religion being a significant part of her childhood. She and her five siblings lived with their parents in an inner city housing project until her junior high years. Alma does remember her personal academic and

emotional struggles with school readiness. Although education was highly valued by both of her parents, school was not a satisfying experience for Alma and only in hindsight was she able to identify learning disabilities exacerbating some of the struggles she faced educationally.

Although religion was not a significant part of Alma's childhood, after college it became an important part of her life. At that time, she began attending church and reading biblical teachings, both of which contributed to seeing her work as service-oriented.

As the internal transitions were in progress, Alma graduated with a degree in business and began her career at a retail chain store. As a child, Alma worked in her father's retail business. As an adult, she continued to enjoy the hard work and interaction with people required when managing a pharmacy and retail store.

The responsibilities of managing the store required Alma to work long hours. Working night shifts in a high-crime area of an urban city meant Alma's physical safety was a concern. Coupled with corporate changes and buy-outs, she found herself looking for other work. Alma also realized her original career decisions may have been influenced by familiarity, "When I was young, I was in retail management so I think that is why I kind of gravitated to that. I knew it. It was familiar to me" (Alma, October 2, 2012).

Unsure of the exact moment teaching as a career option entered her awareness, Alma described the process of becoming a teacher through an alternative certification program. She recalled school personnel being unable to recognize or offer intervention services for her learning difficulties, dyslexia and dysgraphia, both of which were diagnosed later. When deciding to enter the alternative certification program, she chose to specialize in special education. Re-entering the school environment as a teacher, Alma was equipped with skills and insight to guide students through similar threats to success in school. Teaching students who

struggle in the school environment “fit so well” for Alma (October 2, 2012). She accepted her first teaching position on a campus for students with emotional disturbances where she has remained for 11 years.

Although neither of her parents graduated from high school, education was highly valued and supported in her home. Each of Alma’s siblings went on to graduate with at least a high school diploma. After completing her certification, Alma received a grant to earn her master’s degree in mathematics, a subject she loves to teach. She has taught mathematics on this same campus for the previous five years.

As the interview continued, Alma spoke of her cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment during the previous year. Life purpose and trusting God’s will were key focus points during her illness. In the past, Alma relied on God to assist in placing her in a teaching position if that was part of the plan for her. She believes life challenges are provided so we will pay attention. Ultimately, Alma stated the task we are given is “to help others. I think that is the biggest thing” (Alma, October 2, 2012).

Alejandro. In a bookstore, even with the hustle and bustle of activity, a story of change and adaptation unfolded. As a child, Alejandro, and his family emigrated from South America to the Midwest. Being a Spanish-speaker re-locating to an English-only speaking area, he experienced a gap educationally and a significant struggle connecting socially. Eventually, he established friendships and completed high school in the United States. Upon graduation, Alejandro followed his father’s career choice and joined the military, serving in active duty just over 20 years. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in Pennsylvania, New York City, and at the Pentagon, coincided with his planned discharge from the military; consequently, his departure was deferred. Following his exit from the military, Alejandro was employed in several

corporate and civil service positions. He then enrolled in the financial certification support program for retired or soon-to-be retired military or reservists, Troops to Teachers. He concluded the program certified to teach bilingual education at the elementary level and technology at the secondary level. Alejandro explained the various assignments during his 20 plus years in the military and the sense of reward he felt from assisting young recruits in maturing and resolving issues interfering with their own success. After exiting the military and relinquishing the authoritarian persona, Alejandro reported a better fit when assisting young people as teacher and mentor:

I'm outgoing, very approachable, if that is the word. Most students will say that, and people. Sometimes they say that is not good, especially in the military and I can see their point. One should look and act authoritarian. I just have a hard time doing it. You earn respect; it is not just given to you. And I think I believe in that philosophy from students. (Alejandro, October 20, 2012)

Alejandro has completed his fifth year as the technology teacher at a large public high school in a metropolitan area. Alejandro draws upon his array of military assignments and his work with young military recruits. His assignments included: training pilots, survival instruction, and a well-suited assignment working with new recruits who were unsuccessful in basic training. Ironically, commanding officers were often forced to assign a usually unwilling soldier with this duty, but Alejandro found a strong fit. While other soldiers would have rather avoided this career obligation, Alejandro found it matched his interests and talents and he thrived in this assignment. As he described, "Everything just fell into place. I loved it" (Alejandro, October 20, 2012).

Diana. The privacy of Diana's office provided an ideal setting for a moving discussion. She began her story with her family history. Her father, teacher, principal, and director of special education, was connected to many people in the community, making an impression on Diana she did not fully recognize. Consciously forging her own path, Diana chose to be a chemist.

However, in college and as a scientist, she found herself teaching and experienced firsthand the impact of the role of teacher. Diana's job description required she facilitate the knowledge transfer between the customers and the chemists. She found herself teaching what was needed and expected from both parties. Diana described the work as just what she had imagined for herself, glamorous and fun.

Then the economics of the oil industry took a negative turn and layoffs were inevitable. Many people, friends of Diana's, were slated to lose their jobs. The difficulty arose when she realized she no longer regarded this work as what she was meant to do. Her conscience weighed heavily when considering keeping a job that someone else really needed if she really did not see herself in the work much longer. Sleepless nights followed. A severance package was available, but it would not last very long. She had two pre-school age children and her salary was important although so was her time and happiness. Diana observed her husband, a teacher, experience the joy of working with young people and contributing to their lives. The final clarity arrived as she was driving down the road, crossing a bridge, and felt a significant knowing within her to be a teacher. She continued home to tell her husband and never looked back. This convergence of external and internal forces resulted in a change into the classroom teaching children.

Diana spoke of observing the electricity she felt witnessing her college-age sons describe the further evidence of being drawn toward teaching:

This past summer this friend of mine opened up a gym and she needed college kids to teach these classes; it was basketball skills. Well, my kids are good enough, they are athletes....When they came back that first night, the look on faces, it still gives me chills, they are like, "Mom, this is what we want to do. This was so much fun." Those kids. I am tearing up thinking about it....I want them to have that feeling. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

Several years ago Diana accepted a professional development position working with adults. She recalled the reluctance and indecision in leaving the classroom. She recalls the

decision to move away from directly teaching children every day to be more difficult and time-consuming than moving from the field of chemistry to education.

Arthur. Currently in an administrative position, Arthur chose his office space for our interview. His story began 40 years ago. The divorce and subsequent relocation of both his parents left Arthur raising himself from the age of 15. He lived in cars, slept on the side of the road, stayed with friends a night or two before moving on. Eventually taken in by a close friend's family, he worked full-time as a janitor (and part-time in a grocery store) to support himself through high school. He joined the armed forces at age 19 and remained active duty for just over 20 years during which time he earned a bachelor's degree in religion and a master's degree in philosophical theology.

Approaching his military retirement at age 40, he elected to pursue a career he loved, teaching children. After acquiring his teaching certification, Arthur was hired to teach elementary school where he remained for eight years. Administrative positions in both the elementary and secondary levels followed. After teaching for five years, he moved into the role of administrator where he has remained for the previous nine. He has plans to return to the classroom, working directly with children, before he resigns from education as it is the reason he identifies for entering the field. Arthur stated being homeless in high school was the best thing that could have happened to him because he was not fearful of what might happen to him.

Louise. In her usually very busy classroom in a small high school, Louise and I sat down for the interview prior to leaving for a long school break. Even with the pending holiday, she was generous and unrushed with her time as she recounted her journey to her calling.

Louise began her work in an aerospace laboratory as an undergraduate and continued as a researcher post-graduation. Finding research unsatisfactory as a profession she applied, and was

hired, by the medical examiner's office, an area of high interest in college. As a member of the medical examiner's team, Louise was committed to work she deemed important, a high priority for her. With close to a decade conducting toxicology work, she stepped out of the paid workforce to concentrate on her role as a mother and homemaker.

Louise is proud of her family and the life she was able to build for them during the years she was a stay-at-home mother. However, the years were not without difficulties. Her youngest child was diagnosed with cancer requiring all the emotional, physical, and economic resources available to the family. Louise was also diagnosed with cancer and a crisis in the family business made this an excessively stressful time. Her diligence and attention to the family unit was a priority, and each of the crises eventually subsided, with both Louise and her son, healthy again.

After observing her son struggle unnecessarily with a less than competent high school science teacher, she felt she could improve the instruction in that small pocket of education. After completing alternative certification, she accepted the position as a high school science teacher and has remained seven years.

Her children's developing independence and a substantial motivation to improve the quality of instruction in schools factored into her push toward work while the calling offered the pull. Both Louise and her son made full recoveries, and Louise considers the anxious and frenzied time of illness as a point of comparison with the rewarding life and career she experiences currently, which she describes as peaceful.

Jessa. The interview with Jessa occurred in her classroom/laboratory in a rural school district. The learning environment was filled with spectacular scientific models and diagrams, the researcher took a few minutes to learn about some of the displays before beginning the interview.

Born in to a military family of Asian heritage, Jessa acknowledged cultural influences of both. The dynamics included high expectations, with rare acknowledgement of success, and immediate redirection when falling short. The pressure to perform academically, combined with several school relocations, appeared to result in an inconsistent assessment of her abilities academically.

Moving from adolescence through young adulthood created tension between her parents and Jessa. Eventually, she moved out of her parents' home accepting a position in a research laboratory where she unexpectedly found herself in the role of teacher. The range of graduate and post-doctoral students from around the globe resulted in non-standardized protocol in the laboratory. In an effort to increase lab safety, efficiency, and success, Jessa found it necessary to increase consistency by providing instruction. She received feedback that she was effective at explaining information reinforced by a substantial science foundation. Although she had never considered herself a teacher, a pattern of positive feedback about her teaching emerged. With a dearth of feedback in her past, the positive feedback regarding teaching skills invited her to consider a career Jessa now described as who she is. Jessa pursued teaching at the secondary level where she has remained for 19 years.

Petra. Petra agreed to meet for the interview in her classroom in a private, religious school, with a student body ranging in age from early childhood through eighth grade. She began by describing her career history. After two decades working in insurance, Petra no longer found her heart in the work. Through prayer, she asked God to help her find the work she was meant to do or to help her find her peace where she was. Soon after, she was one of many who were downsized from her current company. Petra lightheartedly recalled she could not really blame God as she had asked for a new direction.

Due to her husband's benefits, Petra was able to leave the workforce for a few years. Having worked since the age of 15, the lack of structure, job-related identity, and self-sufficiency were difficult adjustments for her. She once again relied on dialogue through prayer for direction and support through disorienting times.

In an effort to fortify students academically, emotionally, and spiritually, while remaining cognizant of the struggles of the young adolescent, Petra elected to teach middle school where she has remained for eight years. As a middle school teacher, Petra reports never having worked harder or loved a job more.

Eva. Welcoming me into her warm and inviting home, Eva led me to the dining room where I arranged the materials for our interview and began our much awaited conversation. Although she began working at age 15, Eva began her professional career after college in financial services. The majority of the time spent in finance she trained adults, enjoying the work and experiencing success. Exiting the workforce after the birth of her child, she found the unstructured, isolated experience of child rearing a difficult adjustment from her active and engaging corporate life. It took effort to establish a balance between the care necessary for her child and her need for engagement, intellectual stimulation, and personal growth.

Achieving success in meeting various needs changed again four years later when Eva returned to work, accepting a position in finance. An unusual event, an administrative error she attributes to God's presence, blocked her hiring, providing her the opportunity to reconsider her preferred career start, and instead, pursue teaching. Within the week, she enrolled in an alternative certification program for elementary education. Upon completion, she accepted a position as a behavior specialist on an elementary level campus. Eva described the challenges unique to teaching as a behaviorist:

It takes an emotional toll and a mental toll because these poor kids are sick and a lot of them are sick because of their home environment, which is so sad. You can't take them out of that, but you get the end result of that, which is the rage and the anger and the physical violence...so that is taxing that is put on you every day. (Eva, March 21, 2012)

After concluding her fifth year as a behaviorist, Eva would like to move into a regular classroom where she can teach one curriculum. Her hope is to enhance her skills in a focused area rather than needing to be proficient in curricula from several grade levels, as well as behavioral and emotional issues.

Themes

Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas' (2011) secular definition of callings, "a consuming, meaningful, passion people experience toward a domain" (p. 1005) communicates the key elements of intensity and focus without a definitive source. Religious, spiritual, and political in origin, callings have served many purposes. For six of the eight participants in this study, God was identified as the source of their calling into the field of education.

Eva told her story of returning to work after staying home with her child for four years:

I applied for this job, got a really good job at another corporation, which was another financial planning trainer. It was wonderful pay. But something happened in the paperwork and it was such a fluke. Still today, I think it was God saying "You don't belong here; you belong somewhere else." Because even though it was a great job, I was still thinking, "Why am I doing this?" I need to be doing that, you know, teaching, working with the kids. (Eva, March 21, 2012)

Petra described the tight timeline for applying to the alternative certification program.

She also attributed the chain of events as being influenced by God:

I went to the alternative certification program to look into it and they said their next program is starting. You have to have your paperwork in by Thursday. All your records, all of your transcripts, all of that. And I said, nope, no way, no how. God thing. All in. All done. Thursday I start the program. It has always sort of fallen that way. It is funny. And I laugh because it is so much His plan. (Eva, February 14, 2013)

Arthur explained how checking in on the spiritual information helps to direct the path:

The transition itself is a time of turmoil. Less structure, uncertainty inside because you are trying to satisfy your soul, if you will, or your inner calling, is a gamble. You're hoping the emotions you are reading are correct. But your eyes are always toward seeing clearly but inner clearness and focus. And I think, I am a strong believer and I think there is a connection with not only personal here but spiritual. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

Diana also acknowledged the introduction of the divine because her previous work met many of her identified goals:

So I think there was a little divine intervention about what I was supposed to be doing. Because I think I was happy enough in it. In that I had good money, I had great relationships, with people; I liked what I was doing enough. It was not my passion. It was a job. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

Louise simply stated teaching was her "ministry" (Louise, December 17, 2012) and used her work as demonstrated service to God. Alma described a similar commitment to His will and God's direction for her:

I try to pay attention to what's going on because I think God puts things in front of you and we need to pay attention. Everything I do is to help others. I try to anyway. Sometimes I catch myself not being so nice sometimes. That's the human in me. (Alma, October 2, 2012)

The remaining two participants did not identify a source for their callings. It is possible altruism or excellence is involved but this is unverified. Culture and geography may also impact the way the call was conceptualized provoking curiosity in the researcher regarding international inquiries regarding callings. Regardless of the source of the calling and the benefits associated with living a calling, the experience was not without a price. These patterns will be explored next.

Callings

Although the literature offered many definitions of callings, this study refers to Wall's (2010) phrase, "inner directives towards meaningful life pursuits" (p. 7). The participants explained choosing careers where they would provide compassion, model respect, and prepare

young people for the academic challenges in their futures. It was fulfilling these goals where they realized the merging of critical thoughts and feelings of effectiveness and meaning resulted in a calling. They did not teach because they were called, but rather, were drawn to the field of teaching and through the process realized they had found their calling. The experience of reconstructing the process provided insight into how this self-knowledge unfolded.

After inquiring into the career history of the research participants, the researcher asked for their understanding of a “calling.” Although unanimous definitions are not the goal, it is noteworthy that each response held a minimum of two of three elements one could use to construct the meaning of a calling.

Integrity and wholeness resulting from the calling. Honoring their callings, individuals reported a sense of relief or wholeness, even describing the experience as coming home. Occasionally, accepting the calling followed years of steadfast rejection, while in other situations there was a lack of awareness that teaching could be a reasonable option, until it was. The belief appeared to be embedded in the research participants that the constellation of life experiences and gifts resulted in an opportunity and responsibility to grow into the position of teacher. Eva described the moment when she allowed herself to listen to her inner yearnings, change direction, and accept a job as a teacher. Her visceral explanation pointed to the needs being met for her in a school:

I was so excited about going in to the calling that was finally in my heart. You know I told you the first time I walked into a school, I was like “Aaaahhhh. I am home.” The smells, the sights, it is like smelling an old book. Makes you feel comfortable. (Eva, March 21, 2013)

Alejandro recalls the first awareness of wanting to be a teacher combined with the responsibility rooted in his position as training instructor. Individuals unable to fulfill basic training for one of many reasons were sent to Alejandro’s unit where potential obstacles,

medical, psychological, and/or legal concerns interfered with trainees' advancement in the military. Alejandro seized the opportunity of his position to guide trainees toward self-management and discipline in an effort to effectively address the obstacles interfering with their goals. "I would rather take these guys and teach a class. And then it was neat, a neat fulfillment to see them go back (to their unit). I liked that" (Alejandro, October 20, 2012). Interjecting teaching and rapport building with struggling trainees was enriched by building an educational atmosphere for growth and development. In turn, his military experience and confidence helped him obtain his current position as a high school teacher: "I think what helped me was the military training part where they can see I had some kind of management, discipline management, some kind of control" (Alejandro, October 20, 2012). The roles and experiences appeared to require additional growth and enhance a manner of interacting most in sync with Alejandro's nature.

Arthur's picture of a sense of wholeness came into focus before his scheduled military exit supported stepping into the role of teacher:

I decided, being retired military, gave me some flexibility in being able to choose something that my heart wanted to do instead of looking at dollar signs. So my last three or four years before I retired I mentored at a [local elementary school with high risk population]. I mentored 4th and 5th grade, usually boys, there were a couple of times I mentored a girl. But I would go there three or four times a week during my lunch hour and help them with homework or help them get ready for the TAAS test and do stuff like that with them and I loved it. So I knew that was where my heart was. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

The responsibility and opportunity of teaching is expressed well when Diana discerned making a difference as a scientist and making a difference as a teacher:

You asked me what I would have missed, I would not have really known that. I would have thought I was making this big difference, and I was making a difference for that company, and that's good for that company, and it was good for the people we were working for, but it is different when you are making an impact on a child's life. For me it was not about the science, it was about getting to the kid and what is going on with them and helping them get through junior high. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

The framework of how Louise perceived her role as teacher is clearly stated and consistent with how she perceives herself, “I hate to keep bringing it up, but I really consider this my ministry. This is my mission field. It sounds corny, but that is the perspective, that is where I am coming from” (Louise, December 17, 2012). Jessa remembers the series of opportunities to see the calling and acknowledges her lack of awareness of her abilities for many years. When finally recognizing her work for the richness it offers she explained: “I could not say I chose it. It chose me” (Jessa, December 19, 2012). This recognition was able to complete a sense of personal understanding contributing to a sense of integrity.

In an inner city neighborhood, Alma works with high school students with emotional problems. One of her responsibilities as an effective teacher is to create a connection between the world outside of the neighborhood and her students. Recognizing the extreme situations her students face, she balances academic content with realistic examples and emotional support. Students describe coming to school without food and running water, many people temporarily moving in and out of the home, and crime. Alma draws on her personal experiences and belief in what she knows to be an honest communication pattern to develop focus and comprehension skills. Below is an example of her challenge and approach:

And the textbooks are like “Penny went to Disneyworld” or “They went to Hawaii.” “What is that? What are they talking about Miss?” Some of them haven’t even left this city. This is the town they lived in and they have never been anywhere else. A lot of them, probably 90%, have never left their neighborhood. So I try to pull some real world things that they’re involved in, whatever I think they can relate to. (Alma, October 2, 2012)

Although Petra feels her teaching position is a calling and she belongs exactly where she is, it was not always her feeling. She recalls a warm and humorous story of being considered for a teaching position where she felt it most improbable to be called back. Due to her lack of teaching experience, Petra did not regard herself as competitive enough to be seriously

considered for the teaching position. However, she recalled her reaction to being contacted and offered the position:

It was a God thing. So I have to laugh. He [God] has such a sense of humor. Petra, never say never, especially with kids. So, of course, I said, “Yes.” That was eight years ago. So, led, yes, very much so and led to a career of wanting to serve, very much so, that was in my heart. (Petra, February 14, 2013)

The participants connected with some important aspect of themselves when they accepted the role of teacher. This characteristic, a sense of integrity or wholeness, was expressed uniquely by each of the eight participants; however, they all described being more of themselves when living their calling.

Innate ability for the work. Participants’ awareness of teaching as a personal aptitude influenced their eventual transition to teaching. Sources of the input for the awareness differed. Some examples included: (a) a retrospective scan of volunteer pursuits, (b) job descriptions where teaching led to particular success, (c) feedback from others regarding the ability to communicate ideas effectively in a teaching task, as well as (d) teaching to the whole person, both academic and personal management.

Working with military youth experiencing a variety of obstacles to their advancement, one participant continually provided redirection, structure, and support. Recognizing his ability and the experience of fulfillment when teaching, the following thoughts were offered:

Making contact with them. Letting them know they used to fear us and it’s funny when they know we are actually human beings it’s different to them. I think that is a fulfillment for them to go from one side of the sword to the other, or one side of the spectrum to the other. Again, it is a neat feeling to see that and say, “Wow! I created that.”
(Alejandro, October 20, 2012)

For Jessa, the recognition was initially sparked by external sources. Over a period of years, to her surprise, she heard similar feedback. “Have you ever thought of teaching?” “You

are good at explaining this.” “You give good directions.” “That helped a lot because I had never thought of teaching, never.” As a teacher, her expectations are high and communicated clearly:

It is not play day. This is my job and my job is to help them, help teach them....But in the end, I am not going to let you down when you go to college. You may not like it right now, but you are not going to come back later and not be prepared. (Jessa, December 19, 2012)

As Diana studied chemistry in college and continued with her plan to not become a teacher, she accepted a part-time job to pay for college. “This is what is really funny. I am teaching labs part-time for money and loving that” (Diana, December 12, 2012). After graduation, she accepted a position at a chemical plant where she explained the work she found herself doing: “I wasn’t really at the lab table doing science all the time. I was basically teaching the other guys that I worked with, my fellow lab partners. I would teach them what the customer wanted” (Diana, December 12, 2012). In retrospect, Diana saw a pattern:

I didn’t realize it then, but I see it now because I taught religion classes. But when I talk, people look at me and they would listen and I thought they were paying attention to me when I talked. Of course, I am loud and I use my hands a lot. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

During the final six of Arthur’s 20 years in the Air Force, he held the position of Dean of Curriculum and instructor of the Non-Commissioned Officers Academy at one of the larger Air Force Bases. After retirement, Arthur’s ability to connect with students who walk a similar path as his own affirmed his innate ability to superimpose the roles of caring adult and teacher:

I connected most with those kids that struggled the most...the kids that were homeless, the kids that lived in government housing, the kids that didn’t have anything given to them....I connected with those kids a lot better that struggled. Probably because of my own life. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

Louise has taught at the high school level for seven years where building rapport is essential. She also indicated teaching is not new to her:

During college I was teaching Sunday school, and I was always teaching adult classes on Wednesday nights. After I had kids, I started a Bible study and I did that for 10 years. I love facilitating discussion. I love open thought risk-taking. I love creating an environment where people feel safe. Plus, I was teaching at the medical examiner's office. I presented papers at professional conferences so I came to realize I had always been teaching.

I think all teachers bring something different to the table...I think safety, kidding around with them, I play with them, I don't flip out when they act like teenagers. (Louise, December 17, 2012)

Alma also acknowledged teaching while in a previous professional role. In her managerial position, she found essential components of effective teaching evidenced in her interactions. "In retail I worked with young people because they worked for me. I had to teach people how to do things when in management."

But the best part was when I got to teach mathematics, which has been recently. This has been my fifth year....When I received my master's and I got my certification to teach math also, I have really enjoyed these past five years because of that. I really love mathematics. I think it is awesome. (Alma, October 2, 2012)

With a prior career in insurance, Petra struggled to convince herself she had the abilities needed to be an effective teacher. She realized the commonality in her previous and current assignments:

I felt very inadequate coming to school, coming to teaching. I had to think about what I brought to the table. I felt like I brought two very important things belonging to people. Not necessarily in this order, but in the order of my experience: one their money and two their children. So two very important things. You have to be able to work with people and negotiate and come to terms with and here's a plan to help your child be successful. We have to work together. (Petra, February 14, 2012)

Eva talks about her connection to schools. "I mean I have always worked or been connected to school in some way, shape, or form. It has always been in a volunteer fashion." She follows the story of her personality as a teacher:

I think it is my nature. I think I am a people person. And I love to teach. Just being up in the room and sharing information with the children and even the adults. I loved being an adult trainer, too. It suits me. (Eva, March 21, 2013)

Even when moving to the field of financial services, the numbers work. Eva transferred to the training department after a year and a half. Six and half years of her professional life in financial planning she was a corporate trainer.

The six participants who identified an innate ability toward teaching described individual manifestations. Being the single greatest impact on student achievement, capable, effective teachers are the most valuable resource in schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). Unfortunately, identifying and quantifying what constitutes an effective teacher is the focus of considerable research and debated results. Observable classroom behaviors and routines of teachers in the top quartile of student achievement with those in the lowest quartile produce significant differences between scores for classroom management, instructional organization, positive relationships with students, and encouragement of student responsibility (Stronge et al., 2011). In addition, behaviors attributed to teacher effectiveness include conveying high student expectations (Wentzel, 2002), instructional clarity (Stronge, 2007), and differentiation of instruction practice (Wenglinsky, 2000). Determining the effectiveness of the teachers in this study was not included in the research design. However, the characteristics described during the interviews included love of learning, compassion, communication skills, individuation of learning process, understanding of age-appropriate development, high expectations, empathy, “relatability,” and enthusiasm. The critical aspect to the discussions with these participants was the personal investment in reaching students. The challenge, commitment, and responsibility appeared to be accepted as a personal quest. The students were not absolved of responsibility, and teachers were still accountable to those in authority; however, the ultimate responsibility seemed to be to an internal voice.

One participant, Jessa, referred to the feedback she received regarding her ability to explain concepts well, certainly an important skill for a teacher. I must assume in addition to the affective abilities offered by the participants, the skills of task analysis, mastery of content, integration of technology, and ability to adapt for a variety of learning styles are included in the skills they possess. My assumption is they regard these as acquired, and their innate abilities to be effective teachers are the above-mentioned characteristics.

Motivation to benefit others. The last of the three elements of a calling was the necessity for the work to benefit others outside themselves. The urge to respond to the calling (teaching PK-12) expanded beyond what benefits the individual received. Participants in the study expressed the compelling force to assist students in getting what they needed, engage in work that changes society for the better, and/or as an answer to their understanding of the will of a higher power (God).

Arthur, left to raise himself from age 15, recounts how his personal experiences resulted in a desire to extend help to vulnerable others:

I think just my life experiences have led me to be a person who is compassionate and caring. And in my opinion the people that need the most care and compassion are children and so probably that's kind of led me to where I am. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

Another participant (Alma) identified the importance of her work with students diagnosed as emotionally disturbed in an effort to generate positive experiences in bleak circumstances. In addition to their learning challenges and histories of academic failure, the majority of her students live in very low social economic conditions:

If you hear some of those stories, you would be like, "Oh my God. How did you survive?" We have a couple of kids from Katrina who were molested, who saw family members die, bodies floating by them, you know. And some of them have been kidnapped and attacked by several men for several days. Just trying to make their lives a little better, for a little while, anyway. (Alma, October 2, 2012)

Eva provided her motivation to teach distilled to the most basic words, “I get very excited about sharing the knowledge with the kids” (Eva, March 21, 2013).

When Diana identified her priorities, she was able to transition accordingly. Working as a chemist required science to be in the forefront; however, she realized the order needed to be adjusted:

I was making this big difference for that company, and it was good for the people we were working for but it is different when you are making an impact on a child’s life. For me, it was not about the science. It was about getting to the kid and what was going on with them and helping them get through junior high (Diana, December 12, 2012).

Louise is proud her motivation for being a teacher revolves around a value system of making a difference to others. As she says, “I like it that my job matters. I like trying to make a difference in my little corner of the world” (Louise, December 17, 2013).

For Petra, living a calling for the benefit of others was the result of her service to God. She explained the conversational prayers requesting the avenue to serve: “I prayed, and it was Lord, lead me to something where I could serve you more” (Petra, February 14, 2013).

Eventually, Petra became a junior high teacher with sensitivity for the needs of the middle school age group: “Would you want to go back to junior high? Not me, I wouldn’t. I think my heart tugs for them because it is such a tough time for them” (Petra, February 14, 2013).

Each of the eight research participants utilized a combination of these three elements in describing their experience of a calling. The elements varied for each individual occupying a different constellation of motivation or yearning.

Willingness to Pay the Price

Participants were asked whether they paid a price for responding to their calling, and inversely, if they would have paid a price for not following the calling. Six participants (Diana, Jessa, Eva, Petra, Louise, and Arthur) identified the cost of following their calling.

The primary burden was financial, both from the loss of salary during the career-switching year exacerbated by the reduced salary in comparison to most other professions. Petra's salary is currently a third of what she was previously earning; Diana's is approximately half.

Arthur described the financial sacrifice for his entire family:

At the time I made the transition, my oldest son was 13 and my youngest son would have been 9. And it was huge....When you student teach, you don't get paid. I went from November clear to August without a paycheck and so it's tough. I was willing to make that sacrifice and my wife was supportive because she knew and I knew that that was what I really wanted to do. And so we got through. We struggled though. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

In addition to struggling with the financial challenges, Arthur addressed another complication of pursuing the work. Transferring from active military to elementary education, the external burden of the military stereotype was expressed in statements such as, "How is he going to treat little kids?" (Arthur, December 13, 2012). Eva, a behavioral specialist, addressed the emotional and mental toll working with troubled children. She reported the primarily internal stress as difficulty that stayed with her beyond the school day.

Jessa's cost of following her calling centered on the perception of prestige, or lack of, in the teaching field. Although she could not imagine not teaching, stating "It is who I am," she also expressed frustration over the opinion of lower aptitude in teachers (Jessa, December 19, 2012).

Louise addressed the time and re-organization of priorities required to take on the responsibilities of important and meaningful work. Alejandro and Alma acknowledged the cost

but did not consider it to be significant compared to the benefits. An accurate assessment required looking at not exactly the cost and benefits of the teaching job, but the cost of following one's calling or choosing not to follow the calling.

The hypothetical responses centered on a belief of missing a piece of one's self. Eva explained, "I think I would have always regretted that I didn't follow what my heart was telling me to do. Because I wasn't fulfilled in that job any longer and I needed to be fulfilled and teaching absolutely does that" (Eva, March 21, 2013). Diana explained how the fulfillment compensates for the reduction in financial compensation:

I think I would not have been as happy. I would have had money. But I would not have been around as much for my children. What I gained [was] being there with my husband and my children and not only my children but all of the students I taught and all of the things that I learned from them and got back from them. I know that I gave them knowledge but what they gave back was just so much more wonderful. When someone comes to you and says you were my favorite teacher and I remember in class when you did this, blah, blah, blah, and I remember when you listened to me. And I don't know if I would have ever have known, but I think there always would have been emptiness. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

Arthur summed up how he imagines life if he had not followed his calling:

The biggest price I probably would have paid would have been dissatisfaction with my life. You have to understand when you are called into a profession, you always have that burning desire. It is on my mind 24/7 just about. If we go to the beach, I am sitting there looking at new ways to do things and manage schools. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

The cost to follow one's calling was paid with internal and external difficulties, sometimes both from the same individuals. Even with the price being high, the willingness to pay it was evident.

Childhood Influences

Callings allowed participants to go back and address childhood issues. Arthur's grandmother said to him, "You had a million reasons to turn out wrong, but something about you just didn't do it" (Arthur, December 13, 2012). The research on resilience indicates life stressors

are often not predictors of a troubled life. It is possible, in spite of adversity, for children to utilize strengths and succeed in life (Alvord & Grados, 2005; Seligman, 2011; Werner & Smith, 1982). Although this research does not specifically identify resiliency factors as a component of the challenges, subsequent strengths appear as patterns. Let us explore more.

Everyone experiences challenges and often growth is the result. In this study, several of the study participants experienced school challenges. Alma spoke of her learning disabilities, undiagnosed at the time she was in school.

Alejandro's family left their home country under stress and conflict, relocating to a new very different geographical area. Language was a significant barrier and assimilation was challenging for him and his brothers. School was not a place to connect; at least until he was able to learn the language, as no one knew his language. Alejandro now works in a school and models soft-spoken respect.

Arthur was homeless for eight months during his freshman year of high school, living in abandoned cars, on the street, and relying on friends. School officials informed him he could not attend school because he did not have an address. Finally taken in by a family, Arthur worked a full-time job and a part-time job through the remaining high school years. Now fulfilling his calling, Arthur explained:

I just think my life experiences have led me to be a person who is compassionate and caring. And in my opinion the people that need the most care and compassion are children so probably that's kind of led me to where I am. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

Research participants demonstrate the undercurrent of previous experiences still influencing their decisions and yearnings. The challenges of the experiences have not made them bitter but have resulted in some passion to return to the vulnerable and fortify.

Studying the profession of teaching brings into focus the adversity experienced by participants while in the school systems. Just as Alejandro's move placed him in a foreign country, his struggles played out in the school setting where language was critical to social and academic success. Arthur's struggles were also heightened in the school setting when an administrator informed him he could no longer attend school without an address. Alma's struggles with school were at least in part due to undiagnosed and untreated learning disabilities. Without the academic interventions now available to students and teachers, Alma experienced much less success than possible. Jessa's school struggles were slightly different. Family expectations were set so high that she was unable to feel a sense of mastery resulting in an inaccurate assessment of true ability. Jessa explained the expectations from her family: "I always felt like I had this high standard, and I would be notified if I did not meet it, OK. Nothing was said though when I did meet it" (Jessa, December 19, 2012).

Eva described the energy she felt being with her mother when she worked on educational projects:

You know my Mom was always a big influence in my life and I think consciously and subconsciously. She would take me with her to work a lot to help her do stuff and I would always work on things with her in the evening. Her passion for that. She was a teacher of teachers. She guided that. Sometimes I think my passion comes through my mom and also just my personality. (Eva, March 21, 2013)

Also addressing the influence of a parent and their career, Diana speaks of the unique culture her father's career created in her life:

My father was the principal and I grew up in the school business. He was at school all the time, and my mother worked, but we were always with Dad at school. And there was absolutely no way that I was going to be a teacher. (Diana, December 12, 2012).

Toward the close of her interview, Diana spoke of her father's recent death and added:

To see, after he died, the people who sent my mother stuff about things he had done. He was such a big part of their lives. From when he had taught them math to when he taught them swimming lessons, to all of the things he had done. She was just inundated with that. I want that to be my legacy. I am so excited that I got that, you know, from him. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

Although some influences were positive and some were challenging, the effects experienced directly within the school systems were of particular interest. These participants struggled within the school environment, yet returned to education. We turn now to look into the stories with more depth.

Because school is a significant source of socialization, a stand-in for the family, and a place of readying for independent living, children's school struggles are worth noting. Stress from school, where other than home children spend the most hours, requires a separate lens in which to examine childhood influences. School is a significant part of their lives and when that environment is taxing, it can be difficult. Four of the participants in this study had struggles in school and returned to fulfill their calling in the same system.

Arthur represented the struggles of childhood faced with inadequate parental support. He recounted the conversation with his coach the day the school became aware he did not have an address:

I was homeless, truly homeless, as a 15 year old. And so I will never forget it was the freshman year of high school and I was playing on the freshmen basketball team and we were in the locker room and one day the coach came in and he said, "I got a letter from the principal and we're going to have to withdraw you from school." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Because you don't have an address." And I said, "Well, yeah, I'm hanging around. I'm here and there." And he said "You have to have an address to go to school here." And I said, "Well OK." And it was a tough summer and fall for me that year. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

Alejandro's struggles resulted from an inter-continental relocation amidst political conflict. He and his family immigrated to the United States where they were safe but experienced the stressors of speaking a different language:

It is easier for kids to learn English. It is like a crash course. Still it is hard. Scary....Some of the teachers how they would just pass us through and I think that affected us more because we didn't really, I had a hard time learning. (Alejandro, October 20, 2012)

As mentioned earlier, part of Alma's decision to specialize in special education came from her own unrecognized learning disabilities as a student. Attempting to read, spell, and write with dyslexia and dysgraphia resulted in struggles in school and being unprepared for college.

Alma explained:

I struggled when I was going through school. When I graduated from high school, I wasn't ready for college. So, when I went to college, I wasn't ready. I had to leave and get myself back together. No one ever tested me for anything, but I was horrible at English and I was a horrible speller...I just couldn't hear the sounds. (Alma, October 2, 2012)

Jessa's school struggle resulted from perception. She appeared to experience a void in balanced and consistent feedback on her academic abilities. In retrospect, Jessa still appeared to struggle with the accuracy of her academic strength. Expectations from her family, internalized well, left her feeling like she never quite measured up to where she should be. Jessa stated:

I always felt like I was expected to be a lot smarter than I was, OK. I was the quiet one, so she must be a brain. That kind of thing. I am not that smart. There are people a lot smarter than me in that class. (Jessa, December 19, 2012)

Childhood and adolescence can be a trying time for young people when forming an identity, which is a critical developmental task. When basic physiological needs are met and academic challenges assessed accurately, students are better equipped to respond to the vast array of emotional and intellectual tasks of the school environment. Each of these struggles appear to make the work of childhood and adolescence just a little more difficult.

It is also worth noting that each of the participants facing the struggles in school demonstrated resilience in the face of the challenges. Using strengths to find support elsewhere, return to acquire missing skills, and create support systems all demonstrate hardiness of spirit.

Transitions

The theoretical framework for this study was Bridges' (2009) process model of change and transition. Significant to the examination of transitions is the differentiation Bridges (2009) provided:

With a change, you naturally focus on the outcome that the change produces.... Transition is different. The starting point for dealing with transition is not the outcome but the ending that you'll make to leave the old situation behind. Situational change hinges on the new thing, but psychological transition depends on letting go of the old reality and the old identity you had before the change took place. (p. 23)

It is the internal psychological reorientation of a transition that differentiates it from changes. The events can occur simultaneously or independent of each other. The participants in this research study described both changes and transitions during the processes of perceiving and recognizing their career callings and the consequential effects.

Alma's transition process began in college when her priorities shifted to helping others. At that time, the Bible and God were internalized and utilized in decision-making. Working in retail, work influenced by family history, she worked many hours in difficult locations. Alma noted the similarities in managing a retail store and her work as a teacher:

You still have to develop those relationships with your employees and administration, other teachers, so it was kind of the same thing to me except I was teaching. But even that, I had to teach people how to do things when in management. (Alma, October 2, 2012)

Alma discussed her reaction to the diagnosis and subsequent treatment for cancer. She explained the results of the transition on her thought process, "Like the cancer. You're like, what is the point of that? Now I would say, what does God want me to do with this?" (Alma, October 2, 2012). Alma's life events illustrated the internal transitions and the external changes. There are some similarities in Alejandro's experience.

As active duty military personnel, Alejandro provided an excellent example of the numerous changes a person can experience externally. A significant foreshadowing of his later calling emerges in an early life event that catapulted Alejandro and his family into change and transition. In his pre-teen years, his family was able to leave the dangerously conflicted area of his home country and relocate to the Midwest United States. The change resulted in new geography, language, and school routine. The transition included the disconnection resulting from a language barrier and the struggle to assimilate felt by him and his family members.

Alejandro spoke of the loss of what he left behind at the age of 11:

It is easier for kids to learn English. It is like a crash course. Still it is hard. Scary. You manage. Somehow you manage. Like my brother—he didn't succeed as much. He had trouble in high school and I had the capability to move on. Three of us moved on. I am not saying he's messing up or anything, but it did hurt him a lot. He was about three or four years older than me. I couldn't even understand my friends. So, it took me a while to understand them. (Alejandro, October 20, 2012)

Diana's journey differed from Alejandro's in that she chose her changes. Her goal was to become a scientist. She met her goal and was successfully employed at a chemical plant with a glamorous, lucrative career in science. But change is inevitable, and for Diana, the change was triggered by an economic downturn in the oil industry necessitating significant layoffs around the state, including her place of employment. The pending layoffs sparked internal questions for Diana regarding the suitability of the work for her at this time in her life and in her future. Few positions would be available after the layoffs and Diana asked herself the hard questions:

I am not sure this is what I want to be doing the rest of my life. Yet, these people, this is their life. I was toying with that and I was up all night worrying. I was really invested in these people and of course this company. But my heart was not in the whole chemistry part of it anymore. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

The transition process had begun followed by Diana's recognition of teaching as her joy.

Eventually, Diana changed jobs. The transition had preceded the move, resulting in reduced stress in the resignation and beginning in a new direction:

I was just driving down the road and it just came over me, you need to just do it. Just do it. And I can tell you, when I told my husband, it was like this big relief, just like a flood of, "this is it, this is so right." And I don't look back. And I miss the people, but I don't miss the job. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

Like Diana, Arthur began his transition ahead of his anticipated change. Prior to his planned retirement from a 20-year military career, Arthur knew in the next phase of his life, he "would be able to choose something my heart wanted to do rather than looking at dollar signs" (Arthur, December 13, 2012). For several years before the retirement, he began mentoring and "loved it. So I knew that was where my heart was" (Arthur, December 13, 2012). Arthur's changes included a retirement parade, alternative certification, and beginning his work in schools. Being outnumbered by women (occasionally the only male teacher) on elementary campuses, Arthur received feedback that his military background might work against him in seeking employment at the elementary level. In the short time period between military life and entering the school environment, he moved to match the internal and the external self:

I grew a full beard so when I started my student teaching, if you saw me in the hallway, you didn't automatically assume retired military. I tried to break the stigma in one of the few ways I could break that stigma, which was appearance. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

Bridges (1980) spoke to this issue when describing the individual manifestations of transitions adding this caveat, "But beneath the surface, the various transitions began with the discovery that roles and relationships were starting to pinch and bind like somebody else's clothes" (p. 38).

Louise described changes in life circumstances, both negative and tumultuous, resulting in a realization of the necessity to transition through change:

Our younger son had leukemia when he was young and he is cured now and he's in college now and he is fine and I had cancer at the same time and my husband's office manager, she took the opportunity of our son having cancer as the time to embezzle from his business. You either knock yourself out trying to get back on this path you are not meant to be on anymore or you take the path and go with it. So as a teacher, I realize I am on a different path. So trying to go back to my old life I understand is probably not reasonable. (Louise, December 17, 2012)

Recognition that some experiences change us inwardly and outwardly necessitates ongoing re-evaluation and establishment of equilibrium. Teaching continues to challenge Louise in many ways, while simultaneously pushing her toward growth from transitions:

Because of the reflecting your interview caused, I've become even more committed to teaching. This past year has been my most difficult year since my first year of teaching and your interview/reflecting helped me to "want to make it work." I believe that my desire to remain in teaching, but knowing that I have to change/mature in some of my coping mechanisms, will ultimately help me with life skills in general. It's a win-win. This past year has been a difficult win-win, but it's a win nonetheless. (Louise, June 19, 2013)

Throughout the interview, Louise described her calling, transitions, and change as experiences of consistent questioning and work, as opposed to a flash of insight allowing clarity henceforth. Louise eloquently stated, "When I started teaching, I have never had the Paul on Damascus Road thing. I never had that" (Louise, December 17, 2012). Louise referenced a Biblical story of Saul of Tarsus traveling the Road to Damascus when struck off of his horse by a literally blinding light and "voice/sound" of God questioning him on his persecution of Christians. The overwhelming confrontation is believed to have resulted in Saul taking a "different road," changing his name to Paul and converting to Christianity. Louise's interview echoed this point by acknowledging the lack of fanfare surrounding her calling. Instead, she described a series of indicators directing her. The common usage of "Road to Damascus" refers to a sudden, abrupt, life-changing event that changes the course of the individual's life. Louise's

qualifier is worth noting because the perception of a dramatic message associated with a calling may have been a reservation of several participants although only articulated by Louise.

Transitions may result in unrest for individuals experiencing them, and indirectly, for those affected by the shift. Friends, family, and co-workers are often unsettled by the differences in people they have known to be a certain way for a while. Jessa is an example of personally transitioning to living arrangements independent of her parents' home. Jessa's choices to define herself, independent of her parents, resulted in tension between them, not atypical of adolescents and young adulthood. Even though she elected to move out on her own and it was a beginning for Jessa, the move was also an ending of a certain safety net and a prescribed way of operating in the world. Electing to move out of her parent's home left Jessa without a college degree and low-paying job prospects.

Jessa eventually accepted a position in a research laboratory working for a professor she described as being in his "sunset years." With international research projects, the laboratory hosted a multi-cultural array of scientists. In an effort to provide cohesion and clarity for the laboratory personnel, Jessa was placed in the teaching role; she not only enjoyed the work but received positive feedback for her strength and clarity in communicating ideas. These combined variables began the transition in seeing herself as a teacher. Jessa was able to discern this critical element while observing knowledgeable individuals. "You can have a lot of knowledge and not be a teacher. That is just different" (Jessa, December 19, 2012). Years later, through alternative certification, she implemented the changes required to become a certified high school science teacher and has taught for 19 years. The changes, as before, followed the transition in her perception of self.

Petra described the perspective of wanting change to complement the internal transition she was experiencing. The dissonance for her was a result of recognizing the lack of alignment between her internal need and her daily work. So she prayed, “Lord, lead me to something where I could serve you more. And if that is not your plan, then change my heart because I know I can serve you here as well” (Petra, February 14, 2012). Being downsized from her company may not have been the perfect answer to her prayer, but as Petra reported, “I couldn’t sit back and say, “Lord, why did you do this to me? I felt very much this was His plan as well” (Petra, February 14, 2013).

Eva’s life changes involved exiting the workforce to become a stay-at-home mother, returning to work in her original field to have the hiring thwarted by a clerical error, and taking the opportunity to pursue teaching. The changes included physical and financial stressors, roles demanding very different aspects of her temperament, and returning to the familiar. Throughout the process of changes, Eva knew shifts had occurred and when the roadblock temporarily stopped her from being able to proceed with the job within her original field of work, she celebrated the obstacle as an intervention from God for her to pursue what she was meant to do, teaching:

Hindsight being 20-20, had I gone into that other career, you know I just pray, thank God, thank God, that you blocked that path and something else happened because I know I would have been probably looking back miserable. I wasn’t fulfilled in that job any longer and I needed to be fulfilled and teaching absolutely does that. (Eva, March 21, 2013)

Eva alluded to the expanding awareness of her calling being fulfilled serendipitously. Although aware of following her long-held dream, she voiced the significance of God’s intervention in her recent employment history.

Ages of participants in this study ranged from 42-53, chronologically falling within the range of mid-life outlined by both Erikson (1989) and Levinson et al. (1978). Examining the design and findings of this study through the lenses of Erikson (1987), Levinson et al. (1978), and Rohr (2011), provided psychosocial developmental and spiritual perspectives, including those of individuals in mid-life. Erikson's theory of adult development is based on the resolution of issues during progressive stages of development. In middle adulthood, the tension of the opposites results from the opposing elements of self-absorption and generativity. Capps (2004) associated Erikson's stages of development with chronological ages. Norman, McClusky-Fawcett, and Ashcraft (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007) applied Erikson's psychosocial developmental model to women, noting the prior resolution of issues were revisited as life events changes, such as death of parent, health crisis.

Levinson et al.'s (1978) "seasons" of development result from consecutive studies conducted with individuals in mid-life. Within these seasons, Levinson et al. (1978) noticed a broad range of variability just as in the seasons of men's and women's lives, noting an essential aspect includes periods of stability sandwiched between transitional periods.

Rohr (2011), an author and Franciscan priest, offered a spiritual perspective on the second half of the lifespan. Seventy-five percent of the participants in the study identified God as the source of their calling to teach, making it a conscious element in their identity and choice making. Rohr (2011) maintained the first half of life as the period of building the laws and the limits, "giving foundational meaning and safety" (p. 29). Rohr (2011) claimed "Law and predictability seem to be necessary in any spiritual system both to reveal and to limit our basic egocentricity and to make at least some community, family, and marriage possible" (p. 29).

Sometimes chronologically, but occasionally event-driven, life creates a “stumbling stone” (Rohr, 2011, p. 65) or “disorienting dilemma,” (Mezirow & Associates, 1990, p. 14). The passing of time or life events create the need for new perspectives, as the old framework ceases to effectively explain the internal and/or external changes. “The most adult learning occurs in connection with life transitions” (Mezirow & Associates, 1990, p. 17). Although not guaranteed, the stumbling stone and disorienting dilemma present opportunities for a deepening and a complexity of personhood and in so doing according to Rohr, usher in the second half of life.

During the second half of life, Rohr (2011) suggested the mindset moves away from the rules, laws, and comparisons:

At this stage, I no longer have to prove that I or my group is the best, that my ethnicity is superior, that my religion is the only one that God loves, or that my role and place in society deserves superior treatment. (p. 121)

In summary, whether transitions preceded change or vice versa, it is essential to delineate the events of change from the process of transition. Whether initiated by life events or merely the aging process, changes occur and often result in the accompanying transitions and growth in one or more dimensions of a person’s life. Psychosocial development, spiritual growth, physical health, and cognitive agility all contribute to who the person is when hearing and responding to a calling.

Expressive Arts in Research

“I paint how others write their autobiography. The paintings, finished or not, are the pages of my journal” (Picasso, as cited in Gilot & Lake, 1964, p. 123).

In an attempt to facilitate the communication process and invite knowledge beyond what is readily available with verbal communication, expressive arts were integrated into the research design. Given a piece of white drawing paper, crayons, markers, and pencils, participants were

asked to represent their transition to their calling. With symbols, words, or images, participants represented the journey toward their transition and calling, as explained by Anderson and Braud (2011): “Artistic knowing complements and enhances what we know by reason alone” (p. 263).

Six of the eight research participants articulated insecurity and hesitation when asked to draw: “I am really horrible at drawing.” “This is not going to be good.” “I am so bad at this.” One participant’s statement noted a sudden ambient discomfort as the art materials were laid out on the table, “It’s getting hot in here,” to a complete summary of state of mind, “I am very intimidated and scared right now.” In response to the comments, the researcher offered reassurance to the participants reminding them no art skill was required. Despite self-consciousness, each participant generated an illustration representing the transition to their calling providing additional insight into the essence of the experience of perceiving, recognizing, and transitioning to their respective callings.

The culmination of participants’ journeys was conveyed in words describing the arrival at the calling: “It is that which makes you, you.” “This is the real joy.” “I am peaceful inside.” “Everything felt right and I was sure of my direction.” Artistically, the journey of the calling was represented in two general styles, the first of which included a concrete symbol of arriving at “school.” For three participants arriving at the place of their calling was represented by a schoolhouse, while one participant represented the place of calling in a school floor plan with an X marking her usual teaching locations on the layout. For another participant, coming into the place of congruence was represented by a school bus. In addition to the concrete symbols in their illustrations, emotions regarding the journey and its resolution were offered:

Then I am here (schoolhouse) and when I start pursuing this path, everything felt right and I was sure of my direction. (Eva, March 21, 2013)

Then just coming home. Coming home. The rest is just coming home to find the school building. (Petra, February 14, 2013)

So having the kiddos and the people that I have taught and been a part of and they have taught me, this is the, the happy, the happy place (school house). (Diana, December 12, 2012)

The second style included an abstract internal experience used to convey the journey through transition and arrival at their calling. As opposed to literal representations of the school house or school bus, the calling was communicated as the affective result of the journey. Participants illustrated an emotional shift occurring after aligning with the calling. For those individuals whose arrival at the calling was communicated as primarily a feeling, the following thoughts accompanied symbols such as stick figures, a piece of furniture, or geometric shapes:

I am peaceful inside. (Louise, December 17, 2012)

This is a very large part of who I am. (Jessa, December 19, 2012)

I believe in God and He is in everything I do. And if I feel like I am not doing the right thing I ask God to help me. (Alma, October 2, 2012)

I needed to be fulfilled and teaching absolutely does that. (Eva, March 21, 2013)

Each of the eight research participants provided a thoughtful representation of the transition process to their calling followed by reflective dialogue illuminating the process. “Because artists are involved in giving shape to their lived experience, the products of art are, in a sense, lived experiences transformed into transcended configurations” (van Manen, 1990, p. 74). The products contained an array of symbols, color, and details.

As researcher and as observer, the process of drawing deepened the content of the discussions and allowed significant images to come into view and be noted. The interviews became exchanges, dialogue in two directions, providing an understanding of previously inaccessible information. The tears and emotions changed the nature of the interactions and

provided insight into how close to the heart the constructed experiences of transitions and callings reside.

Although distinctive and personal in many ways, the illustrations of the journey toward calling overlapped in several themes, symbols, and style. For six of the eight participants, the explanation of their drawings illuminated the unrest within and its function in stimulating the move toward a calling.

Arthur used sunshine and “blocks in a row” to show external contentment and orderliness (Arthur, December 13, 2012). These were in contrast to the opposite side of the picture where his internal unhappiness was reflected in stormy skies and a troubled self-expression. With a similar trajectory, Eva’s words and symbols communicate fear and trepidation prior to recognizing and transitioning to her “heart of hearts” (Eva, March 21, 2013), teaching. Eva entered a classic school house dividing the fear and trepidation on one side, the words confident, sure, and bright bathed in light from a large sun on the other. Petra, in monotone, grey color, under rainy clouds, drew herself praying for help and support in the uncertainty phase. Petra’s sequence continues with a full body portrait, blue-gray skies, and a prayer for ongoing support from God. In the final of three phases, Petra stands in full color, by her homeroom, under a sunny sky and blue clouds, stating, “home at last” (Petra, February 14, 2013). The vivid representation of the often hidden inner discord of change and discontent catalyzing a transition reflect the importance of art as an additional source of data. Furth (1988) explained:

The idea is not to decipher with accuracy what is within the picture – in order to predict the person’s future – as much as it is to ask concise questions as to what the pictures may be communicating. This communication lays bare the unconscious and its energy. If we want to follow the unconscious, we need to consider its suggestions and enlightenments, and so bring the individual into a greater state of consciousness. (p. 13)

In each of the three participants' drawings, the illustrations traveled from the inner state of searching to having found the place of calling.

Bridges' (1980) three phases of the transition were represented well in Arthur's, Petra's, and Eva's illustrations. Representations exist of the ending of a way of life or a belief system or an impression of oneself. Each is followed by a time of waiting and unknowing, followed after an indeterminate time period, by a new outlook or phase in life. For Arthur, releasing himself from an occupation and lifestyle that no longer fit, freed his time and emotional energy for teaching. In Petra's world, the knowledge God had something more planned for her was finally catalyzed by being let go from her job. Although stressful, the forced letting go created freedom. It was this freedom that opened her to see possibilities she had not allowed in the past and begin a new path to serve God.

Eva's drawing was yet another representation of the ending of a work life, which although valued, no longer satisfied Eva's desire for meaning. The unknown kept her fearful and trapped behind obstacles represented in her drawing by a large tree she is unable to see around. It was a minor clerical error that forced Eva to see the mix-up as an opportunity for a new beginning. The intended goal was not actualized; however, her calling was.

Diana's sketch demonstrated a critical aspect of art in research. Both the process of creating and reflecting upon creative product invites additional insight as well as revisiting details long forgotten (Furth, 1988). Diana's sketch differed from the previous three participants' drawings by including her father as her point of orientation. A career educator, he was interchangeable with the construct of school requiring a definitive of herself as a scientist. Diana explained, for her, it would not have been beneficial to go directly into teaching:

I had to go through this (being a scientist). Because I think if circumstances had been, for whatever reason, that if I had been forced into teaching, I think I would have liked it but I

would have always thought, well, what if I had done this? What if I had gone and done things and traveled and done things and gotten to be a scientist? You know, there was this thing I thought a scientist was going to be. And it was wonderful. Don't get me wrong, it was really cool. I can relate a lot of stuff to the kiddos. But it doesn't bring me joy and it's not what I think about. This is what I think about. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

Diana's experience reflects the most concrete example of receiving a dramatic calling to teach.

Although these details were not relayed during her narrative of her experience, after drawing, she shared these thoughts:

When I had this feeling I was literally driving over a bridge. Yeah, it was really strange. And when I drive by there, I still get a good feeling. So, it is like a bridge to it was like a calming feeling that came over me and made me just lighter. (December 12, Diana, 2012)

Both Jessa and Alejandro shared a literal geographical artistic representation of their callings. Jessa's provided a detailed floor plan of her previous workplace, a laboratory, complete with lab tables and work stations. Jessa indicated her two work spaces within the lab with the letter "X." Her classroom, which she describes as "a different kind of laboratory" (Jessa, December 19, 2012), is also drawn as a floor plan with desks, lab tables, and her primary locations in the room are, once again, indicated by the letter "X."

Although Jessa and Alejandro differ in their experiences, the drawings shared these similarities: both used only one color to draw their career journeys, both shared a significance of place in the storyline, and both volunteered substantially more information on a deeper level upon completion of the illustrations.

Alejandro shared a detailed chronology of his career and thoughts on transitions and callings for approximately 30-40 minutes before the interview turned to the utilization of art. Turning to begin his drawing, Alejandro asked, "Do you need to know where I am from by any chance?" (Alejandro, October 20, 2012). Willing to follow the participant's lead, the researcher responded affirmatively. Alejandro unwound the fascinating story of his family's emigration

from their home country in South America to the United States with the challenges and opportunities for the family. Alejandro's drawing illustrated a chronological sequence: the continents of South and North America, an Air Force plane, corporate buildings, and finally a school bus. The art supplies merely being placed in front of him appeared to allow a different level of disclosure from Alejandro. But more importantly, one was struck by the depth of the story told when art was introduced.

Alma's drawing was uncomplicated, depicting herself in two stick figures with word bubbles. The first figure showed Alma prior to asking questions about life and its purpose. The next, identical stick figure showed Alma stating "God in my life all the time, in everything I do!" (Alma, October 2, 2012). Once again, the illustration, initially met with resistance, was followed by personal disclosure of loss and the meaning of struggle. Alma reported the difficulties are managed through regular integration of God's intention for her and her life. It was this very openness to receive information she believes is at the core of a calling.

Louise had one focal point of her drawing, her bed, with statements regarding exhaustion and peace. Louise explained the significance of being able to lie down at night and, although worn out, to find peace. For many years, the health crisis of her son and herself, as well as business complications, kept a state of peace at bay. It was in explaining her drawing that Louise also recounted the importance of doing work she considers her mission. The drawing had no reference to the trials faced and the paths traveled, but rather, the current peacefulness of body and spirit.

Asking participants to convey something of their transition to a calling through drawing was initially anxiety-producing for all but one of the participants. In spite of the discomfort, producing artwork allowed a different language in which to explain the journey, moving away

from logistics, to the emotional demands and changes of following one's path. "The inductive nature of these methods is connected with the strength of arts-based practices to get to multiple meanings" (Leavy, 2009, p. 15).

As discussed earlier, the following patterns regarding transitions and callings emerged: (a) components of callings including a sense of integrity, (b) innate ability for the work, (c) a focus on others as well as God, and (d) secular sources as origins of callings. In addition, patterns were explored regarding the influential experiences in childhood, struggles in school, and the process of adjusting to changing career roles. Each of these themes was articulated as a combination of the interviews, the artistic representation of the journey to their calling, and some insights, from the art itself.

Petra provided a detailed career history, her desire and prayers for more meaningful ways to serve God, and her eventual move to the field of teaching. She provided her thoughts and feelings about the transition from her previous position. "I don't want to do this anymore; my heart was not in it. The work I am producing is not 100%" (Petra, February 14, 2013). Later in the illustration part of the interview, Petra drew a sketch of her at the time of wanting to move from her position to something more meaningful, followed by a sketch of herself once she was gone from the organization, and the third sketch in the series was when she had begun teaching and found her calling. Petra observed the three self-portraits in which her hair lacked color when her life lacked color and regained it when her life was colorful again: "The connection. I have always had short hair. This surprised me that I didn't think about color. I was still this gray person, and I realized I should color my hair again, it matched my gray period" (Petra, February 14, 2013).

With Petra, Arthur, Eva, Alejandro, and Diana, the art illustrated the three phases in Bridges model of change and transition starting with Endings, moving to Neutral Zones, and finally, new Beginnings. Petra's example of ending a way of living in a life no longer fulfilling and meeting her needs gave way to a better situation, no longer ending or colorless, but not with a direction, yet. It was only after the new beginning was found that full color entered into her illustration and her life. The interesting note is the unconscious nature of these representations by Petra. It was not until after the drawing was complete and the discussion commenced that she observed the patterns.

Alejandro's interview followed a similar pattern in offering a detailed career history, including accomplishments and frustrations and factors influential in becoming a teacher. However, it was not until Alejandro turned his attention to illustrating the journey that he posed the question to the researcher, "Would you like to know where I came from, by any chance?" Responding affirmatively, Alejandro proceeded to recount the family's departure from their home and country to America.

With pending layoffs at the chemical plant, Diana was debating her options. The idea of teaching drifted in, as she explained in the interview section: "I was driving down the road, and it just came over me, you need to just do it" (Diana, December 12, 2012). Then in Diana's illustration, an additional detail was added; as she drove and felt the strong message to teach, she was crossing over a bridge. Diana explained, "Literally when I had this feeling, I was actually driving over a bridge. It was really strange. And when I drive by there, I still get a good feeling" (Diana, December 12, 2012).

The interview questions did not pose questions sufficiently to provide access to these significant pieces of information. To understand the phenomena of transitioning from valued

work to one's calling, additional layers, known to the individuals themselves, needed to be questioned. From every one of the eight participants, a significant layer of understanding was afforded from the art created and discussed by the participants. With the companionship of the research participants, even the difficult stretches of the journeys could be explored. McNiff (2004) provided insight into how art helps traverse tough times:

Artists throughout history have shown that creativity comes from conflict. Psychotherapists have an equally great concern for conflict, but they have not so universally appreciated its positive, transformative powers. It is the artist, the creator, who can teach us how to engage the energy of conflict. (p. 54)

In Table 2 a representation of themes specific to each participant is displayed. The purpose of this research was to explore the phenomenon of eight individuals as they recognize, perceive, and transition to their calling. Consistent with the complexity of various dimensions of humanity, the transition participants experienced included physical, intellectual, psychological, spiritual, and emotional, in addition to the occupational components. Without exception, the participants in this research study experienced a transition in at least one additional area prior to making the occupational transition, many of which were reflected in the art they generated.

During the interview, participants were asked approximately 14 questions in the first phase of the interview. With an initial focus on the participants, career history was ascertained, their concept of calling, and how that understanding has changed over the years and the surprises encountered throughout the process. In addition, inquiries were posed regarding the price paid for following the calling and what the cost would have been if they had decided not to pursue the call.

Table 2

Themes From the Study

Participant	God/ Source	Wholeness	Innate Ability	Other Focused	Price paid	Childhood Influence	School Difficulty
Alma	X	X	X	X	-	X	X
Alejandro	-	X	X	-	-	X	X
Diana	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
Arthur	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Louise	X	X	X	X	X	-	-
Jessa	-	X	X	-	X	X	X
Petra	X	X	X	X	X	-	-
Eva	X	X	X	X	X	X	-

Credibility

Rather than determining truth, qualitative research seeks to obtain “people’s construction of reality – how they understand the world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 214). It is to this end that the following strategies to increase internal validity were employed: (a) triangulation, (b) peer review, (c) audit trail, (d) rich descriptions, and (e) reflexivity.

Triangulation, the use of more than one strategy to obtain data, was accomplished by observation in the setting selected by the participant, conducting interviews, and requesting

illustrations of the journey to a career calling. Both sets of data provided overlapping information regarding the experiences, with the art providing additional depth.

Peer review, accomplished in meetings with the dissertation research group, provided regular opportunities to discuss methodology, as well as explore and analyze themes. During the peer review process, researcher bias and assumptions were challenged resulting in greater professional integrity, as well as accuracy in findings.

Additionally, an audit trail in the form of a detailed journal was kept on the process of the research study. The audit trail, a method Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed to increase internal validity, functions in a similar manner to the trail of an accountant within a business, providing a map of how, when, and what was done. The audit trail for this research provided organization, as well as contact dates and information, logistics, personal notes, challenges and points of review during researcher reflexivity.

Researcher Experience and Reflexivity

To increase trustworthiness, qualitative research requires diligence in identifying and containing bias and personal experience from the analysis process. The use of peer reviews, and the utilization of an audit trail, resulted in a greater separation of personal life events and opinions in order to prevent contamination of the interviews or the process of analyzing data.

The initial two-part strategy was implemented to establish neutrality in analysis. Following each of the eight participant interviews, the researcher wrote a journal entry that included reactions, impressions, and relevant details of the process. One purpose in journaling was to acknowledge and contain the impressions and feelings of the interview with each individual as accurately as possible. The journal entry was followed by sand tray, a Jungian

technique used in part to reconcile internal and external tensions (Kalff, 1991). An additional journal entry followed to continue the reflective practice of the researcher.

During the time the interviews were being conducted, family members of the researcher became critically ill. It was important to continue to write, paint, and create sand tray through this time of emotional and physical exhaustion in an attempt to keep the data as clear from emotional contagion as possible. Personal life transitions risk biasing what is heard and understood from the research participants.

It was ethically and professionally necessary to respect the transitions of the research participants by maintaining the integrity of their meaning, without undue researcher projection. Experiencing intense family transitions while studying about them added depth and nuance to the process. Bridges (1980, 2004) reminded us we are constantly in some phase of Endings, Neutral Zone, and Beginnings, in one or more areas of our lives. Recognizing a pattern in shifts between stability and change holds the potential to make even difficult transitions meaningful.

Summary

For good and for bad, work defines us, providing us with economic livelihood and identity and roles. When callings are involved, the complexity increases as the needs appear to come from a deeper source. Addressed in Chapter 4, the many layers of data provided elements constructing callings, the source, and the price to be paid for following it.

As the eight participants in this study shared their stories of transitioning from jobs and careers, to callings, childhood influences were important. For half of the participants, the childhood influences included struggles in school, understandable as school is an important environment where children interact, learn, and face many opportunities for change. It is also possibly where the seeds of callings are sown.

Exploring the spoken and illustrated findings provided insight into complex human experiences. In Chapter 5 our attention turns to the significance and implication of the findings for the broader community.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

The intention of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of eight adults as they perceived, recognized, and transitioned to their career calling. In this final chapter, a synthesis of the findings with current professional literature will assist in the generation of implications for the outcomes of the study, recommendations, and suggestions for additional research.

Weaving emerging patterns and arts-based research from the findings, contained by the contextual constructs of transitions and midlife, provides a unique perspective into the complexity of adult development for these eight research participants. Although no expectation of generalizability exists for the results of qualitative research, as leaders and learners, we each have the opportunity to examine patterns and reflect on applicability in our work environments.

Emerging Themes

Theme: God was identified as the source of the calling. Although no question regarding the basis of their callings was posed, God was identified as the source for six of the eight participants. In addition, they attributed divine intervention for identification and redirection of their careers.

Theme: Three characteristics of callings emerged. Each participant spoke of at least two of the three characteristics when describing their personal view and/or experience with callings.

A feeling of integrity or wholeness. The acceptance of personal talents and values synthesized into the work they believe they were called to do, resulted in a feeling of congruence. Seven of the eight participants described thoughts and feelings around the

satisfaction of wholeness. Palmer (1998) reminded us: “Wholeness does not mean perfection. It means being more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am” (p. 13).

Innate ability for the work. Participants described possessing innate talents when operating in the role of teacher. The self-identified traits included a sense of humor, competence, compassion, high expectations, and communication skills. Regardless of the identified talents, the teacher understood the constellation of traits, which was at least in part a natural ability, increased their effectiveness in the role of teacher. Feedback is important: sometimes indicating one is in the right place, and at other times, that one is in the wrong place.

Inability or a complete lack of satisfaction with a job choice is considered to be information one is not in the right place (Hartnett & Kline, 2005, p. 16). Collins (2004) described “orchestrated circumstances” to explain both talents making one successful in a job and opportunities becoming available (p. 113). Two sides of the same coin explain how one’s talents, or lack of, create a feedback loop for alignment in a career. Palmer (2000) shared his personal experience receiving feedback after his first year at Union Theological Seminary: “God spoke to me – in the form of mediocre grades and massive misery – and informed me that under no conditions was I to become an ordained leader in His or Her church” (pp. 19-20).

Focus on others. Six of the participants stated electing to teach, in part, was a way to make children’s lives better. Some of this was in spite of personal childhood experiences lacking in supportive, kind, consistent, and competent teachers and other adults. Wolin and Wolin (1993) identified the ability to do for another, regardless of whether one was a recipient of the actions, as a resilient trait: “Morality aims to repair an injured self and improve the world as well” (p. 184).

Due to the growing interest and publications on the subject of callings, the lack of precision in terminology and a consensus on meaning of vocabulary makes discussion and determination of antecedents difficult and probably inaccurate. In an effort to differentiate terminology, Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) elaborated on two previous qualitative studies conducting a 275-person quantitative study using alternative confirmatory factor analysis of meaningful work. The purpose of their study was to establish clear validation in an effort to successfully measure constructs such as meaningful work and define the terminology and concept used in investigating satisfaction at work and the meaning it potentially offers individuals. Callings, employee engagement, and attachment to work are some of the terms used interchangeably. The team of researcher's purpose is to measure the meaningfulness of work itself rather than the antecedents of meaningful work.

Even with a lack of differentiation, four dimensions surfaced: (a) developing the inner self, (b) expressing full potential, (c) service to others, and (d) unity with others (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). The four dimensions "are both specific enough to further understand the relationship to antecedents and outcomes and existential enough to distinguish meaningful work from other concepts such as job engagement or self-determination" (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012, p. 672). Although terminology is not precisely aligned, three of the four findings from their 2012 studies are echoed in the themes from the current study. Participants from the Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) study also revealed themes of a sense of integrity, innate talent for the work, and a focus on benefiting others. Unity with others, the fourth factor identified by Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012), was identified by two research participants, Jessa and Petra, who both identified unity with others as being critical to the sense of commitment to the work.

Jessa described sharing her father's philosophy "Your work is your family. I am really into that. Most of my friends are here at school" (Jessa, December 19, 2012). Petra described the experience of having both her college age children away at school during a law enforcement emergency at their university. A colleague from the school promptly showed up in Petra's classroom, informed her of what they knew, and encouraged her to ensure her children were safe before returning to teaching (Petra, February 14, 2013). The result of this cohesiveness was significant to both participants.

Theme: Willingness to pay the price. Participants addressed the personal price of responding to or the hypothetical cost of ignoring a calling. The price of responding to the specific call of teaching was felt economically by half of the participants.

In addition, the lack of prestige associated with the teaching profession was also acknowledged and adds to the complex picture of the phenomena of transitioning to a calling. Although they stated the loss is, on balance, worth what was gained, participants reported significant reduction of financial compensation, physical and emotional exhaustion, and a loss of professional status. If opting to not follow the call, several imagined living with the perception of not having stepped into their potential, or disregarding a message from God. Several participants reiterated they would have been teaching somewhere as the role was deep-rooted into their personhood.

Assisting students in obtaining information, struggling with learning disabilities, strengthening life and problem-solving skills, and planning for a previously unimagined future, the focus remained on service. Educators' salaries are infamously low and the decision to help students experience success often goes unnoticed. It appears to be the norm in the work ethic of the educators who feel called to the work.

In a related question, research participants were also asked what the cost would have been had they not followed the call to teach. Responding hypothetically, participants proposed they would have felt emptiness, a lack of fulfillment, and a sense of disregarding direction provided by their heart. Others felt they would have found another way to serve society. Jessa could not imagine not being a teacher, stating simply, “It is who I am” (Jessa, December 19, 2012).

Lastly, related to the price paid, the participants in this study also shared perspectives regarding job satisfaction, even with the cost of following the calling. When asked about moving to another position, Eva responded, “I want to be in the classroom with the kids. I am not confused about that” (Eva, March 21, 2013). Petra’s sentiment is the uniqueness of teaching compared to other jobs: “This is the career I have loved the most. I don’t know that I have loved any of my others” (Petra, February 14, 2013). When describing school in her drawing, Diana noted, “The birds are singing and the sun is shining, not really, but literally it feels that way, even on the darkest days” (Diana, December 12, 2012). Careers impact our overall well-being and for these participants, the outlook appears positive.

Theme: Childhood influences. Circumstances and variables from many sources converge in order for one to select a career path, yet it remains unclear exactly how individuals make the choice. From the eight personal accounts in this research study, it is evident many influential factors, some as early as childhood, affected the choices. “Unpredictability of life circumstances may have positive or negative effects on an individual’s career choices from childhood to retirement” (Dik et al., 2009, p. 34). It appears from several of the participants, life circumstances had positive and negative effects on career choices. They also did not voice regret about the circumstances, as much as recognized the influential nature of life events. Arthur

explained: “Being homeless in high school was a blessing because it set me up for a life of not being afraid to take a risk” (Arthur, December 13, 2012).

Some childhood influences were uplifting, some were challenging, and some were both. In the childhoods of four of the research participants, school difficulties were influential to their experience as children. Regardless of the struggles (low socioeconomic status, lack of parental support, poor housing, experiences of failure) experienced in school, the four participants returned to the school setting and became one of the many factors influencing student success. Support from significant non-parental adults, a value of education, and cohesive family structure were some of the protective factors working to offset the difficulties faced. Each of the four who experienced difficulty in school returned to be the light they needed most when in school: teachers who are accepting, competent, compassionate, and committed to their work.

Context of the Study: Midlife and Transitions

In the process of exploring the recognition and transition to their callings, individuals were examined through the prism of transitions and midlife. Participant interviews were reviewed to determine how the participants viewed themselves within life transitions. As the findings layered information regarding the manner in which callings were constructed, historical influences, and the costs of following callings, the interrelatedness of the concepts became visible. Similar to sections of tissue paper placed upon each other, the colors and degree of opaqueness blend, creating unique shades and forms. An example of the interrelatedness of issues is illustrated in Arthur’s experience. References to mid-life events from research participants were made only in the definitive career changes instigated with military retirements. It was the two ex-military personnel who anticipating their departure from a 20-year way of life who had begun a process of planning a new and different life, one better aligned with their

preferences for work. Both individuals were age 40 at the time of their exit from the armed forces. The significance of the transition was presented in the change in military to civilian status rather than age or life phase. The military service marked a clear line for endings for these individuals.

Arthur discussed exiting the military after 20 years, including the financial strain on his family, as he pursued his calling. His portrayal created an image with shape and contrast. As his story progressed, he spoke of working both full- and part-time jobs, simultaneously, for three and a half of his high school years to voluntarily pay the family who took him in when he was homeless. Now the images are cast with a richer shade and light reflects off his narrative in a new way. Even difficult sections of Arthur's story provide insight, and the result is a glow as if a light behind a multi-colored stained glass window. Arthur cannot be seen as one-dimensional. He proceeded to talk about the wonderful opportunity in the radiology school with the possibility of a program scholarship. One semester shy of graduation, a school bus tragedy brought children into the hospital on gurneys and body bags and Arthur's stamina for the work evaporated. Arthur's story continued through the timeline of mid-life where his retirement from the military coincided with his fortieth year, a natural transition for career and adult development.

Although the transitions were anticipated and navigated in advance for the participants exiting the military, the difficulty they presented for Petra, Eva, and Louise were not anticipated. Each spoke of the unexpected anxiety associated with moving out of professional positions into the roles of stay-at-home mother and non-earning woman. Relinquishing the identity of self as worker, earner, and self-sufficient professional, was difficult. For Eva and Petra, working since the age of 15, the lack of structure and external validation illustrated Bridges' (1980) concept of "disidentification" in endings. He explained, "In breaking the old connections to the world the

person loses ways of self-definition” (Bridges, 1980, p. 96). Regardless of whether the new arrangements were chosen freely, the transition process can require adjustment.

Each of the participants told his or her own stories of numerous life transitions confirming Bridges’ (1980) view that midlife is not a time of crisis. Bridges (1980) claimed a more accurate description: “a series of expansion and contraction, change and stability” (p. 42). If the continual transitions of our lives are acknowledged and embraced, if we recognize the endings, including the losses, the neutral zone, with little identity in which to attach ourselves, and finally beginnings, the opportunity for growth exists.

After utilizing art to represent the transition to a calling, participants were invited to tell the story in the drawing. Follow-up questions were asked to determine what surprised them, along with the use of images and impressions of the process.

Although the benefits of having a calling have been presented (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dik et al., 2009; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010), the findings in this study also reflect the challenges. Identified as a personal toll, participants acknowledged the financial sacrifice in moving from previous work to that of the calling, in this instance, teaching, a field known for low salaries. Leaving valued work to follow their calling, most of the participants in this study had a substantial reduction in compensation, yet were willing to make the sacrifice. Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2012) cited an example of financial woes with musicians, also called to their career, but often faced with bleak employment possibilities and financial realities.

Approximately 3,000 orchestra instrument musicians graduate each year in the United States and compete for 150 positions (Druckenbrod, 2005). An occupation referred to earlier in this study, zookeepers, reported a frequent sense of calling for their work. They are, however, very poorly

paid, with salaries in the lowest quartile of United States occupations in terms of hourly wage (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

One element of exploration for this research study was the process of transitions in mid-life. Consequently, criteria for participation in this research study included having taught a minimum of five years and to be a minimum of 40 years of age. The participants in the study ranged in age from 31 to 54.

Bridges (2004) explained age-related transitions differently: “The most important fact is not that there are one or three or four or six identifiable periods of crisis in the lifetime; rather, adulthood unfolds its promise in an alternating rhythm of expansion and contraction, change and stability” (p. 40). The interviews might have explored each phase of the transition process with participants’ previous experiences with life transitions. Aspects of Endings and Neutral Zones were discussed in regard to their callings, but as Bridges pointed out, we have lifetimes filled with transitions.

Contributions of Arts-Based Research

“Embedded in care, beauty comes to us, sometimes wordlessly” (Chilton, 2013, p. 470).

Utilizing art in research integrates an additional communication tool. The creation of some art prompts unconscious information to surface and art clarifies events for the artist making it accessible. Precisely because of the transparency of the arts, researcher ethics include confidentiality, a safe environment for disclosure, and a clear boundary regarding level of expertise. The researcher is not an art therapist and does not interpret participants’ drawings. The strength of the illustrations resulted from the process of creating the art, the participants’ understanding of what they represented, and the significance they communicated.

“Transcognition” a term coined by Sullivan (2009), refers to the multi-layered process of cognition through the creation of art (p. 133). Chilton (2013) addressed the elusiveness of words that art allows us to bypass: “In my art making and art therapy practice, I have learned at times there appear phenomenological soul-knowings that just will not be put into words, butterflies of meaning dancing away from being pinned down (p. 470).

When creating their art, the participants’ explanation of their career paths appeared softer and more intricate. This served as an important reminder for vigilance in respecting the vulnerability of interviewees when accessing individual’s personal history.

All of the research participants met the criteria of the study including valuing their previous work. However, life experiences, increased self-knowledge, a change in responsibility level, and flexibility in finances smoothed the transition to work as their heart desired. Four of the eight individuals in the study used the word “heart” in describing the source of their motivation or attachment to their careers.

Self-knowledge was important as both strategy and product when constructing an occupational path. Several of the participants demonstrated self-knowledge as part of what illuminated their journey:

You start reflecting on things and I guess it was just a perfect storm basically. (Diana, December 12, 2012)

During the day your head talks to you, but I think when it’s dark and you are out there by yourself your heart talks to you. (Arthur, December 13, 2012)

Because of the reflecting your interview caused I’ve become even more committed to teaching. (Louise, June 19, 2013)

So I struggled a lot and I prayed a lot. (Petra, February 14, 2013)

As self-awareness increases consciousness and art assists with both, utilizing art as a research strategy provides a healthy avenue for the difficult work deep growth demands. In the

next section, the insights and interpretations of the participants' experiences merged with professional literature provide a rich canvas in which to evaluate how best to apply the information.

Barone and Eisner's (2012) "fundamental ideas" (p. 164) provide rationale for using art-based research including: (a) to "capture meanings that measurement cannot," (b) provide additional vehicles to describe and understand the world, (c) access the voices of individuals whose primary comfort in communication is something other than verbal, and (d) recognize resonance produced from great art, otherwise referred to as generalizability (pp. 164-170). In this study, the intention was to utilize art to aid in additional insight for the research participants and the researcher in understanding the transition to a calling.

Implications for Action

Transitions are the processes we experience when an aspect of ourselves no longer fits and a new way is inevitable. Bridges (1980, 2004) emphasized a difference between changes in circumstances and a life transition. The later takes time and requires a reconstruction process. When the participants of this study transitioned to a calling, they each traveled a different path, yet no one had a flash of enlightenment. It appears transitions rarely occur in this manner. They begin with an awareness of unrest or a lack of alignment. Humans possess the innate need for equilibrium and seek to reestablish this balance. I believe it is something more. For the eight individuals in this study, there was unrest and a state of searching for a different experience. No one set out to find their life's calling; but as they observed what they had learned about themselves and remained open to information, they each ended there.

These events illuminate the nature of callings observed in these eight participants. The goal was to understand the phenomenon of the experience from those who had lived it. Callings

are hard work. Finding a calling and living it does not lead to a life of leisure, but rather a life of passion for one's work. Callings cannot be rushed. They are recognized and accepted when the timing is correct and then, at least for the participants in this study, the details begin to form a previously undetectable order. Even within the same profession, the experience of a calling is unique for each individual. For one research participant, it is the ability to empower students to take responsibility for their lives. For another, it is the sheer joy of knowledge being transmitted, and for another participant, it involves replacing the perception of a learner as a failure with one as a success.

Research on the satisfaction and engagement levels of employees is available and abundant. Linked with productivity, customer service, worker retention, etc., the interest in employee well-being is high in many industries. Further understanding of callings, meaningful work, and worker satisfaction is also important in the field of education. Research findings continue to indicate callings are not related to income but were present in employees who found more meaning in their work and reported a higher level of job satisfaction (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010; Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). Teachers interact with many students for sustained hours for weeks and months out of the year. The potential for high impact relationships, student-perception, and love of learning is certainly present. Teachers finding more meaning and experiencing greater job satisfaction would be an asset in a classroom.

At the basis of this exploration was Bridges' (1980, 2001, 2004) theoretical foundation regarding the nature of transitions. Evident in the participants in the study, transitions to their calling had the elements of Bridges' model: Endings, Neutral Zone, and Beginnings. Several of the participants readily identified a clearly defined ending in a previous chapter in their professional and emotional selves. They knew the identity no longer fit but nothing was available

to replace the old. The length of time in the often-dreaded Neutral Zone varied. The new beginning was immediate for one participant and occurred years later for others in the research study. After following the loss, time of uncertainty, and new start through, the internal and external transition process was complete, at least in the area of occupation. Bridges noted the model of leaving a familiar way to a place of uncertainty and, finally a different direction applies to all aspects of development. Family life, physical change, spirituality, and relationships hold the potential for moving through the process.

Recognizing the process is important for educators teaching students, who are themselves, experiencing transitions. Acknowledging the predictable trajectory of transitions, with the need for special care for individuals during times of numerous transitions (new school), is supportive information for anyone who works in a human relationship field, like teaching.

The potential gifts of the Neutral zone, clearing the way for new beginnings are all units of understanding that have the potential to serve teachers new to the profession, particularly during the first five years when teacher attrition is high. Insight into the process we all experience as we grow, losing what is familiar, leaving sight of the shore, and finally, beginning anew, can help new teachers to be fortified for the significant demands placed upon them in the new role.

Further Research

Observing the participants' stories, one could not help wonder if previous life experiences influence the calling. Although life experiences differed, there was a commonality in wanting to make better what had been a struggle for them individually. The goals of this research did not include connecting motivation with calling, although the link is worth further investigation. Whether it is the teacher who builds a stronger, further bridge between school and a non-English

speaking child, or the teacher who creates a process of stepping out of overwhelmingly deep holes of poverty, violence, and abuse to create first generation graduates, the insight will be helpful and hopeful in understanding the impetus for callings. The extension question for the research would explore, “Do callings heal the called?”

Conclusions

My personal motivation in exploring this topic follows the long-time inclination to assist individuals in realizing their potential. Whether the source of callings is religious or secular, callings appear to be a link between an individual’s personality, temperament, life experiences, and their greatest potential. Listening for individual callings, as they change throughout our lifetimes, and aligning skills sets and intentionality, seems to offer the possibility of facing challenges in our ever-changing societies.

The research project has been a process of exploring how eight individuals make sense of thoughts and actions in their lives. On a personal level, conducting the study has enhanced my knowledge as a researcher and as an educator. The research process is well reflected in Kegan’s (1982) observation of his young daughter learning to read:

However much self-congratulation might be involved, however much I might appreciate her being “successful” or “smart,” this just doesn’t seem to be finally what my experience of being moved is all about. There is something simpler and deeper, something else. I have felt it before, with people who aren’t in any way “mine.” Being in another person’s presence while she so honestly labors in an astonishingly intimate activity – the activity of making sense – is somehow very touching. (p. 16)

Making the inquiry, ‘Why am I here?’ is an existential question not easily answered. Pursuing work one perceives to be called to do can partially address the question for some individuals. It is not a simple task and the layers are complex. We may have several callings, at different times in our lives and yet, callings do not guarantee bliss and bliss is not elusive to

those without a calling. However, purpose appears to be a North Star for many. Observing others attempt to “make sense” is a fascinating endeavor.

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Appendix A: Research Participant Consent Form

Transition to a Career Calling: A Phenomenological Study

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You are free to decide not to participate or free to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with this organization, the researcher, or your employment. If you have any questions regarding the research, you may contact the Investigative Supervisor, Dr. M. Sharon Herbers at the University of the Incarnate Word, at (210) 805-3073.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of eight individuals' transition from previously valued work to work considered to be a calling. Data will be collected using semi-structured interviews and expressive art techniques.

Please ask any questions before, during, and after the research study. I will make every effort to respond to your inquiries regarding the research. You may request a copy of the findings if you choose. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym in lieu of your name in order to ensure your privacy. The recorders and transcriptions of the interviews will be destroyed within the maximum timeframe of five years, and art created will be returned to you.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study; however, discussing your personal life and engaging in expression through art may result in the surfacing of uncomfortable feelings. The benefits expected include the advancement of knowledge in the fields of career counseling and personal development.

Please sign the consent form. You are signing it with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this form will be given to you for your records.

Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Please send me a written summary of the findings: yes _____ no _____

Investigative Supervisor: Dr. M. Sharon Herbers
 University of the Incarnate Word
 4301 Broadway St.
 San Antonio, Texas 78209
 (210) 805-3073
 IRB # 12-07-005

Appendix B: Interview Questions

I am interested in your career history. Will you recount it for me?

What is your understanding of the concept of a calling?

Tell me about your experience of transitioning from valued work to your calling.

Why did you choose teaching?

Describe life at the time you began the transition experience.

Will you explain the internal and external changes involved in the experience for you?

Was there a personal price you paid for responding to your calling?

a. Did you consider turning back?

b. At what point(s)?

Are you aware of a price to be paid if you had not responded to your calling?

What would you estimate as the length of time it took to complete the transition to your calling?

As you reflect on the experience of living your calling, were there factors from your history influencing how and why you are where you are?

Did you encounter surprises when moving from valued work to your calling?

Was your process of transition affected by others or affect others and if so, in what way(s)?

How has your understanding of your work as a calling changed?

How have you changed in relationship to your calling?

What do people not understand about transitions, callings, and transitioning to a calling?

Appendix C: Interview Questions/Post Art Journey

Please tell me about the journey represented in your art.

What was unexpected about the process of perceiving and transitioning to your calling?

Did anything surprise you as you worked on the art?

Was your calling “expressed” in any way during your transition?

What do you observe about yourself as a result of your experience of transitioning to a calling?

Is there anything I did not ask that would be important for you to add?