

A TENDENCY OF MIND—REWRITING THE STORY:
AN EXPLORATION OF LATER-LIFE CAREER TRANSITION

by

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Date 22 May 2019

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in
Teachers College, Columbia University

2019

ABSTRACT

A TENDENCY OF MIND—REWRITING THE STORY: AN EXPLORATION OF LATER-LIFE CAREER TRANSITION

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As life expectancy rates continue to rise, so does the need for continued participation in the workforce. Economic sustainability and aging in place become values anticipated and realized through longer life spans. The ability to maintain lifestyle is severely halted when individuals are faced with loss of employment. This qualitative case study was created to delve into how individuals separated from the workforce after the age of 50, re-gain employment. The foundation of this study was couched on the following assumptions: (1) the older/later-life displaced worker will have developed/learned a set of competencies comprised of attitudes behaviors and skills underpinning ventures of re-engagement into the workforce; (2) workforce re-engagement can sustain livelihoods for later-life displaced workers; (3) older/later-life displaced workers have found self-sustaining opportunities through re-engagement pathways that have allowed them to continue to contribute to their communities.

Twelve individuals over the age of 50 representing eight states, and various careers participated in the study. The principal data sources were in-depth interviews and a focus group.

Although, the study was designed to explore workforce re-entry for displaced workers over the age of 50, the key finding that transitioning to employment pathways differing from previous careers, emerged as most challenging. In addition, post separation

perceptions yielded thematic elements concerning pluralistic ageism on the separation from, and the re-entry into the workforce.

Primary recommendations include the communication and viable training and re-tooling prior to workforce separation, comprehensive counseling, and awareness of legislative workforce rights, all of which should be disseminated with greater regularity.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to our daughter

Samantha Brooke Lawrence

our Kind Angel.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would not have been moved to completion if it was not for the drivers joining me on this journey, and to all of them I offer unending gratitude. I thank my husband Jerry Lawrence, my hero who has offered solace and complete partnership through this process and in this life and I suspect for all of my lives. I love you. I thank my grandchildren Sydney and Joy for their precious moments of patience as they danced around the days until I could again join them in play. I thank my advisor Dr. Marie Volpe my Outlaw Saint for her unwavering faith in me, for her guidance and wisdom in all facets of the process, and for the energy she shared as much, and as often, as needed. I thank Dr. Stephen Brookfield for the spark that encouraged this work and for sharing his mastery of the field of Adult Education. I thank my committee members, Dr. Catherine Embree and Dr. O. Roger Anderson, for their interest and appreciation of this work. I thank Dr. Ellie Drago-Severson for her intentional care, and concern that always promised belief and faith in the work and me. I thank Dr. Victoria Marsick for inviting conversations that often affirmed my thought on systems levels. I thank friends of all seasons for championing my work and me: Nida Williams, Jessica Chambliss, Laura Traynor, Jessica Blum DeStefano and, I thank Julia Ji for picking up the pieces that I may have missed. I thank Robert (Rocky) Schwarz for applying his formatting virtuosity to this work. I remain grateful for the trust all of the participants vested in me without which this work would not have been realized.

Thank you all.

D. B. L.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In a society that has yet to fully appreciate the potential of older adults, self-empowered aging improves one's odds to accomplish later life goals that others may discount, and to enjoy self-esteem and satisfaction that others may lack. (Irving, 2015, p. 72)

Introduction/Context

As life expectancy rates continue to rise, so does the need for continued participation in the workforce. Economic sustainability and aging in place become values anticipated and realized through longer life spans. The ability to maintain lifestyle is severely halted when individuals are faced with loss of employment. The effects of job loss are more salient for older workers. Meyers (2013) found that

those 55 and older who lose jobs have the most difficulty finding new ones. This segment of the labor force has consistently had the highest long-term unemployment rates [and experts say] is a looming public policy crisis as this group becomes dependent on various forms of public assistance because of their permanent joblessness or prolonged unemployment. Only about 15 percent were able to find a full-time job.”(Meyers, 2013, *Economic Populist*).

The condition of downsizing and job loss for the older worker can be so stressful that it has devastating effects on longevity. Allen (2012) found that mental and physical health can deteriorate when individuals experience extended periods of being out of the work force. Rampell (2013) notes that “new research suggests that older workers may die

sooner because their health, income security and mental well-being are battered by recession at a crucial time in their lives” (New York Times, February 2, 2013 Business Day). A Gallup Poll conducted January 1-June 25, 2013 supports the finding that stressors of unemployment affect health. The report indicated that rates of depression are low for those employed (5.6%), and lowest for those self-employed (5.1%).

Extended periods of job displacement even viewed as an ancillary contributor to the incidence of depression, depression itself is a major force to reckon with as positioned in universal health concerns. Lerner et al. (2004) define the prevalence and the magnitude as follows: “Depression is a leading cause of this burden costing the United States an estimated \$2.6 billion annually in medical care and \$44 to \$5.1 billion annually in terms of lost productivity” (p. 1). In addition to the potential effects of depression as a result of downsizing and extended separation from the workforce, it is often assumed that at the time of retirement there is a certain preparedness for the transition (Ulrich & Rott, 2005).

Readiness for retirement may not be at age 65 as historically assumed. Older workers defined here as individuals who are aged 50 years and above, might not be ready or prepared to withdraw from the workplace or retire, and yet the condition of job loss through downsizing/layoffs might be thrust upon them (Johnson & Park, 2011; Sadick, 2012). Once squarely situated in the condition of job loss, the older worker seeks re-entry into the job arena because of the need for economic survival and is met with barriers unique to those 50 and over.

Bowen (2008) defines downsizing as “the corporate attempt to trim costs and to gain efficiencies; and a tool often used to bring an organization back to its core business” (p. 1). While the mechanism of downsizing may be employed as a vehicle for corporations to develop competitive repositioning, the trend has been dispensed through public and private organizations in answers to ambiguity and shifting in the overall economic spectrum (Bowen, 2008; Butterfield, 2001; Cohen, 2016; Nelson Mail, 2014). Downsizing has often been operationalized through layoffs, and the triaging of layoffs is

often manifested through retrenching older workers. Nelson Mail (2014) found that in recent years over 42% of the workers laid off have been aged 55 and above. These findings are consistent with those of Backman (2016), who noted that not only can layoffs have sudden detrimental effects on livelihood and financial well-being, but the unpredictability coupled with age can have even greater impacts on financial stability:

According to research from Boston College, unemployed workers 55 and up are less likely to find new jobs than unemployed younger workers. Following the 2008-2009 recession, the average length of unemployment for those 55 and up was 4.6 weeks compared to just 31.6 weeks for younger job searchers. A 2012 study by the Urban Institute furthers the point: Despite their experience, workers in their 50s are 20% less likely to find new jobs than older workers aged 25 to 34. While getting laid off is clearly never a good thing, it can be especially detrimental to older workers and their long-term financial health. (p. 1)

The resulting impact of downsizing and layoffs for the over 50 segment of the population is spelled out by Kelly (2013): “It’s a baby boomer’s nightmare. The moment you’re 40ish and moving up, the next you’re 50-plus and suddenly shockingly, moving out—jobless in a tough economy” (p. 1). The shift of downsizing is in itself inequitable as older workers displaced from industries on the lower wage bearing spectrum may not have resources such as savings or retirement plans that would enable them to sustain themselves in retirement. In such cases the transition of downsizing and displacement may result in poverty (Mullany, 2014).

Mehta (2014) found that when corporate re-organization/restructuring result in downsizing/layoffs, the older worker in this process may face challenges to re-entering the workforce external to the worker’s control such as inequity in layoffs due to age discrimination.

In the shadow of downsizing, Roscigno (2010) found that “deterioration of jobs in the private sector from 1990 to 2006, with tenure declining substantially for workers over 40 years of age. What this means is that older workers are being ‘displaced’ or pushed

out of long-term employment at an even higher rate than younger workers” (p. 18). It is this type of inequity in hiring that is age selective.

Pryllis (2016) describes this practice:

Age discrimination is viewed by the courts and society more as an economic issue and we defer to the employer’s prerogative.... Even employers will say, “Well it’s their business and I understand why they want to save money.” But you wouldn’t say that if the employer said, “We have to save money so we’ll get rid of all of the women,” but we tolerate it when it’s age. (p. 2)

In effect, “ageism or discrimination based on someone’s age and not objective performance criteria, is one of the last ‘isms’ to be tolerated in the workforce and is far more socially condoned than sexism or racism” (p. 3).

Organizations operationalizing the often cloaked discrimination of ageism has recently become a realized implementation. Gronberg (2018) offers the following manifestation of such: “The long-time rumblings about age discrimination at IBM have finally produced a lawsuit. A 60-year-old Texas man alleges in a suit filed May 25 that he was improperly laid off amid the company’s push to hire millennials.” The company has shifted its workforce in heavy favor of younger workers. Specifically, as Gronberg (2018) notes: “IBM had ousted an estimated 20,000 U.S. employees ages 40 and over since 2014, about 60 percent of its American job cuts during those years.”

Adding to the challenges of ageism, extended periods of separation from the workforce, and less than welcoming hiring practices, are motivational elements fusing older displaced worker’s desire to continue working (Templer, Armstrong-Stassen, & Cattaneo, 2010). Even re-entry into the workforce has its inequities. Greenhouse (2005) found that many older displaced workers having undergone industry-specific training in the period between being laid off and re-entering the workforce were told that they were “too old to work” (p. 3). This was the response to displaced workers who averaged 50-60 hours per week on a job they maintained for more than 30 years (see Greenhouse, 2005).

The question of equal accessibility to the workforce, for the older worker and how can one learn to manage aging in place and afford to sustain livelihood is then presented.

Assumptions embedded in framing the topic of the displaced older worker and challenges to sustaining their livelihood, include the presence of ageism as a discriminatory factor targeting older workers in both downsizing, and layoffs as well as challenging their entry/re-entry into the workforce (Armstrong-Stassen & Cattaneo, 2010; Mehta, 2014). The assumption(s) revealed in the literature surveyed suggest that as a result of imposed career transition mechanized through downsizing and layoffs, the phenomena of older workers turning to entrepreneurship is a trend with increasing regularity with little or no attention paid to the potential correlation between age and later-life entrepreneurship (Gedeon, 2010; Hannon, 2014). In a sense, there appears to be a movement of re-engagement in the workforce due to the necessity to sustain lifestyle(s) as opposed to retirement that has yet to be captured.

Problem Statement

Given the above, not enough is known about how displaced older workers learn to re-engage in the workforce after having been gainfully employed. The potential significance for this study is multi-pronged. First, it will take a humanistic approach to an intersection of adult learning in an older aged segment of the population that has yet to be examined. In so doing it explored the possibility of life-long contributions to community, the economy (a potential for fewer reliance on economic supplements to sustain livelihood), and the value of individual engagement and aging in place. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the study holds the potential for creative pathways to economic sustainability for an older population displaced from the workplace. The implications of which are widespread from altering the view of adult learning and its place in aging in place, programming in nursing homes and assisted living centers, to the

viability of “ageless” learning and development, continued community contribution, to the utility of creative means of economic sustainability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore with 12 adults, 50 years of age and above, faced with extended job loss and the need to continue working to earn a living, their perceptions of how they learn to transition and re-engage in the workforce.

To carry out this purpose, the following research questions were addressed.

Research Questions

- (1) How did participants describe their learning experiences of re-entry into the workforce?
- (2) How did participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?
- (3) How did participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they faced in re-engaging in the workforce?
- (4) What activities did participants learn that helped them transition to re-engagement?

Approach

The approach to this study was largely vested in case studies of individuals from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, who transitioned from being displaced from an organizational career to re-entry into the workforce. The population consisted of 12 individuals who re-entered the workforce after the age of 50. The main source of data collection was derived from concentrated in depth interviews. This coupled with other

data sources, such as participant surveys and a focus group contributed to and informed the analysis.

Anticipated Outcomes

It was anticipated that this research would bear outcomes highlighting the unique strategies that older/late-life displaced workers employ to successfully re-engage in the workforce as a life-sustaining pathway.

It was also anticipated that the outcomes spawned from this research would yield information for economic and education policy affecting individuals over 50. As the population continues to age, there are implications for scalable mechanisms that promote intergenerational communities where older community members continue to engage in and support their neighborhoods in much the same ways as those under 50 years of age. Through this ongoing engagement the enduring and continual learning that is present in this type of career switch can inform strategic approaches to retirement, intergenerational community development and sustainability, assisted living facilities, and adult education programming.

Assumptions

The researcher also proclaimed that the approach to this research was through an axiological lens. One that admits to an inherent bias and an assumption that there is value to the exploration of people over 50 who after having been out of the workforce have switched career gears and re-engaged in sustaining their livelihood. Support for an axiological approach is offered in the description provided in *Research Philosophy and Assumptions*: “The researcher’s subjective values, intuition, and biases are important—they play a role in the dialog of social construction and inform his or her interpretation of

the data” (Research Philosophy and Assumptions-SOBT, p. 3). The researcher continued to approach this investigative journey in just that way. Therefore, the researcher held the following core assumptions upon which this work is based:

- (1) The older/late-life displaced worker will have developed/learned a set of competencies comprised of attitudes behaviors and skills underpinning ventures of re-engagement into the workforce.
- (2) Workforce re-engagement can sustain livelihoods for later-life displaced workers.
- (3) Older/late-life displaced workers have found self-sustaining opportunities through re-engagement pathways that have allowed them to continue to contribute to their communities and become less reliant on economic social system supports.

Rationale

The rationale for this study was based on research reviewed here that suggests older workers can be subject to depression, and shorter life spans as a result of being faced with the disparities of downsized displacement and longer periods of unemployment (Meyers, 2013; Rampell, 2013). Factors such as less than favorable hiring practices, challenging re-entry to the workforce, and the dire need to provide a livelihood over a longer lifespan, are untapped issues of policy as older displaced workers may lean on economic supports to survive and thrive. However, in some cases older displaced workers have looked to creative means of sustainability. One such manifestation would be later-life entrepreneurship, which may contribute to lower levels of depression, and foundational abilities to age in place. In the face of all of this, little focus has been placed on the older worker’s transition to later life entrepreneurship, as a means to sustainability especially as lifespans continue to rise. It is this difference from creative sustainability

through entrepreneurial means/ways that can factor into life maintenance and ongoing societal contribution that warrants further examination. Such examination holds the merit of informing scalable policy that would encompass a full lifespan. Given that the condition of downsizing is singular and specific to the individual, the question of what would direct the older downsized/displaced worker to regulate lifestyle and survival as a means to re-enter the workforce.

Significance

The significance of this study bears particular salience when examining learning and adaptation for the journey or the transition to career change (see Akola, 2008). The focus here is on self-directed learning, both in the individual-centric sense and in the social cognitive sense. Together, these are viewed as mechanisms to hone in on the potential for gaining additional knowledge on the trend of the displaced older worker's later life career transition and effecting, healthier, positively affective lifestyles. The impetus for future research opens the door to grasping the value of lifelong continuity of community contribution, lifelong learning, as well as the viability of older workers' economic stability. The learning potential can then be realized through self-efficacy and motivation for re-engagement and sustainability as opposed to retirement is then presented.

The Researcher

The researcher is a native New Yorker who believes that equitable access to viable resources will pave the road for sustainability; and that we, without question need to prepare all of our practitioners and communities to meet the possibility of opportunity through continued community engagement.

The researcher was a doctoral candidate in Adult Learning and Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University, and a fervent advocate for equity in education for all including the often overlooked disenfranchised adults. She has provided direct oversight of service delivery to AmeriCorps Reserve, in-school, out of school, and afterschool programs, professional development for Charter School teachers, as well as a liaison between Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and City Agencies. In addition to her current work as a Child Welfare Specialist for the NYC Administration for Children's Services, the researcher also served as a Teaching Fellow and part of the teaching team for the Summer Principal's Academy (SPA) at Columbia University.

The researcher has spent over 30 years working to develop connectivity with adults and promote successful re-entry into the workforce. This work has spanned a number of venues including public, governmental, not for profit, for profit and community-based initiatives. It is within these environments that the researcher moved issues of community balance and economic sustainability for living standards beyond economic supports. This work pushed discussions toward equity in training, hiring practices, and access to resources that would allow for entrepreneurship; a platform upon which creative endeavors are rooted in community development that embrace both intergenerational and lifelong learning.

The researcher is and has always been, squarely placed between the crossroads of logic and creativity coupled with an ever-growing need to work independent of judgment and restrictive age marking measures that dictate ability to perform. As a woman of color and a direct descendent of generations of educators, learning to her is based on an all-inclusive ubiquitous and equally pervasive platform of knowledge acquisition. The breadth of this journey is underscored in the researcher's belief that undertaking doctoral studies in her sixth decade of life is a natural segue on the learning continuum.

For over 20 years the researcher has worked with, and been interested in, broadening the conversation of individuals aged 50 and above (50+) who create wage-

earning opportunities later in life and effect re-engagement in the workforce. This is of particular interest to the researcher as someone who is representative of the sample examined here and as someone who did indeed try to add to financial sustainability through entrepreneurial ventures, having experienced an extended period of attempting to regain entry into the workforce after the age of 50.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of the current research the following terms are used as defined to provide contextual consistency and scope to the present study:

Ageism. Irving (2015) describes ageism as follows: “Ageism has been described as prejudice against one’s future self. It tells us that age is our defining characteristic and that, as midnight strikes on a milestone birthday, we will become nothing but old-emptied of our passions, abilities and experience-infused instead with frailty and decline” (Karpf, 2015, in Irving, 2015, p. 72). It is this perception of age and its influence in workforce practices that may inhibit re-entry into the workforce that is used as a baseline definition in the present study.

Displaced worker is an employee/worker involuntarily separated from the workforce for extended periods of time. This includes individuals who may have been coerced to leave their place of employment without readiness for retirement.

Downsizing has been defined by Freeman and Cameron (1993) “as an intentional reduction in personnel intended to improve the efficiency of effectiveness of the firm” (in Fisher & White, 2000, p. 244).

Economic support systems are often government regulated supports of income to provide equitable standards of living, an example of which would be the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Entrepreneurs are defined for the present research as individuals who are solely responsible for their wage earning, and that this is done independent of organized employment.

Laid off, for the purposes of this research, was defined as an involuntary removal from work related, wage earning functions and thereby presenting a gap in employment.

Later life entrepreneurship is an entrepreneurial venture undertaken in the latter part of life 50+ (see Rogoff, 2009). Later life entrepreneurship is a term that is often used interchangeably (with equal value) with the older entrepreneur. This is consistent with Akola (2008), who defines the older entrepreneur as someone who starts a business between the ages of 50 and 64 and continues to differentiate the age range and the timing of the start of the business as follows: “So when looking at the motivations to start up a business the focus is on those persons who have become entrepreneurs later in their career, not on the aging business owners who have established their business earlier during their career” (p. 5).

Older workers are defined as 55 and over by Konig and Paterink (2013); Beach (2009), however, for the purposes and scope of this paper, the term older worker will refer to adults 50 and over as consistent with the aforementioned Rogoff (2009) definition.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore with 12 adults, 50 years of age and above, faced with extended job loss and the need to continue working to earn a living, their perceptions of how they learn to transition and re-engage in the workforce.

Rationale for Topics

The literature was continuously culled for topics relating to re-entry into the workforce for the segment of the population that was either dislocated/laid off after/during the age of 50, or subsequently engaged in the workforce in ways to sustain their livelihood. Topic I begins with employment displacement, potential barriers for re-entry to the workforce, including socioeconomic factors of displacement, age disparity and workforce participation, and entrepreneurship and the older worker. Topic II reviews issues specific to adult learning and the correlations possible between aspects of informal learning, self-directed learning, self-efficacy and transition to re-engagement in the workforce. Topic III underscores an emphasis on motivation as a driving manifestation for each of the previous topics.

Topic I: The Older Displaced Worker and Re-entry into the Workforce

Employment Displacement

Since the end of the 20th century, there has been a continual increase in corporate downsizing/layoffs as a strategy for re-organization, minimizing debt, and increasing profit through greater levels of productivity. At its core a response to global competitiveness (Cameron, Freeman, & Misha, 1991; Cascio, 1992; Fisher & White, 2000; Freeman & Cameron, 1993; Sear, 2008). Resulting layoffs, however, have been disparate in the treatment of older workers as compared to layoffs of younger workers (Armstrong, Stassen, & Cattaneo, 2010). This disparity is manifested in longer spans of unemployment for workers over 55 (French, 2013; Johnson & Park, 2001; Johnson & Southgate, 2013; Rodriguez & Zavodny, 2003; Tatsiranos, 2010). Schirle (2012) suggests that this practice of disparate displacement of older workers driven through intentional downsizing has embedded within it, the assumption of readiness for retirement. And yet, longer life expectancies of 78.8 years on the average and growing, are more the norm (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013.; Read, 2013). This trend dictates the need for longer periods of economic readiness and sustainability, which in turn, suggests savings accessibility. All of which are made less probable through job loss particularly during high earning years (Mullany, 2014; Read, 2013; Toder, Johnson, Mermain, & Lei, 2008).

Socioeconomic Factors of Disparity

Koeber and Wright (2001), however, contend that the displacement of older workers can be attributed to social economic variances that manage organizational structure, where factors of increased medical coverage and workforce market readiness potentially unique to older workers, may play a crucial role in this phenomenon. In either case, the resulting effect is that many Americans after having spent a career spanning a few decades in the workplace are finding themselves the victims of company dissolution, downsizing/layoffs. They are suddenly thrust out of the workplace when they may not

have been prepared financially, psychologically, or emotionally (Sadick, 2012). This involuntary movement away from the workforce is viewed by Hennekamis (2015) as a “push” out where older workers are forced out of employment.

The push argumentation is based on the proposition that older workers are being “pushed” from the traditional labor market by factors such as age discrimination practices, recruitment, promotion and training, [and] a lack of attractive employment options. (p. 878)

Hennekamis continues to observe that starting a business may be the most viable option to maintain livelihood.

Concerns for economic security and sustainability are predictors of increased interest in participation in the workforce, and yet re-entry/entry into the workforce bares a unique set of barriers for older workers (Toder et al., 2008).

Age Equity and Workforce Participation

Mehta (2014) found that when older workers were seeking employment, a disparate practice of hiring and layoffs was reported due to age. The author continues to describe this form of discrimination not only contributed to lengthy periods of unemployment for older workers, but more importantly, the practice was being done in the face of anti-discrimination legislation. Laws and legislation promoting equity in employment for older workers were found by Adams (2004) to

increase the probability of employment significantly for covered workers. The probability of being a new hire is not significantly affected; however, suggesting that the positive employment outcomes are not simply reflecting an increased hiring of older workers to comply with the law. (p. 20)

This is consistent with the findings of Daniel and Heywood (2007), who found that while legislation mandating age equity in employment may serve the already employed, it does not, however, cover new or re-hires.

Although ageism would not, in and of itself, be a particular singular barrier to entering/re-entering the work force, especially as it stands in the shadow of the Age

Discrimination Employment Act (ADEA, 29, USCA, 621). Grossman (2005) found that the Act might have halted blatant age-based discriminatory manifestations such as listing age as a requirement in a job/hiring notice as a point of eligibility. The author raises the issue that the Act has yet to ensure through mandate, that older workers would be safeguarded or protected against falling prey to inequitable discriminatory practices. Ageism, in this context then, is unique in how it is perceived as it may hold an intergenerational stigma that may well move on a subjective age continuum when it comes to older workers' participation in the workforce (McCann & Giles, 2004; Winerip, 2013). An example of which can be explored with Johnson and Park's (2011) finding that even when older workers are successful in securing employment, it is likely that they may take a significant decrease in salary, which may result in the need to seek additional wage-earning resources to sustain their independence.

Allen (2012) qualifies the effects of long periods of separation from the workforce for the older worker as having the following widespread implications: "with people living longer and the pension age rising, leaving older workers on the job scrap heap, is more than a social issue, experts warn by 2020 a third of the working-age population will be over 50. If employers are reluctant to hire them, there could be huge costs in benefit payments and lost social security power. There is also loss to employers as they struggle to fill vacancies" (p. 2).

The question, how does the older worker find avenues for re-entry into the workforce and sustaining economic independence, is then presented.

Less than welcoming hiring practices for older workers, including stereotypes and stigmas underscoring some hiring practices are more common than not (Heywood, Ho, & Wei, 1999; Karren & Sherman, 2012; Martin, 2008; Weinrip, 2013). Couple this with lengthy periods of unemployment, and older workers become creative in efforts to sustain their livelihood. This creativity, a lens seeking life sustaining resources other than the

traditional employment avenues, may result in a career change (Freener, 2013; Lambrects & Martin, 2008; Marino, 1996).

Training and Retooling

Johnson and Park (2011) found that training and retooling skills sets for displaced older workers holds the potential for increased marketability rendering re-entry into the workforce a more level playing field. However, even with the aspirations of equity in hiring as a result of training and a retooled skilled set, the question of acquiring true fitting training comes into play. To this, Hannon (2015) offers, “As the demand for more adult learning opportunities accelerates, colleges and universities are trying to figure out how to tap into the market for second careers to bolster their revenue” (p. 1). In essence, with the population growing older and the segment of individuals 65 years and older nearly doubling from 40.2 million in 2010 to 72 million by 2030 (see US Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2010), post-secondary institutions have yet to take notice (Hannon, 2015). There is a lack of curriculum advantage or inclusion that would respond to the plight of the older worker interested or in need of training and retooling to enhance marketability (Grossman, 2005; Hannon, 2015; McCann & Giles, 2004).

The question of true fitting training for the older displaced worker includes the overarching global reliance on technology. To this DeGraff (2014) suggests that “the truth is that this generational gap between the so-called digital natives (the generation of people born during or after the rise of digital technologies) and the digital immigrants (people born before the advent of digital technology) doesn’t actually have to do with technology. The real issue is that the two worldviews that they represent are so different” (p. 1).

Entrepreneurship and the Older Worker

Johnson, Kawachi, and Lewis (2009) found that a determinant to career change for older workers, which they define as 51+ years, are the circumstances leading to later life

career change or transitions. Older workers faced with downsizing were found by Walser (2000) to develop a focused sense of control that moved them toward transitioning away from the event of downsizing toward a career transition.

Baird (2009) argues that this type of transition is legitimized as a necessity for the older displaced worker, and that this is manifested in the process leading to career re-invention often realized in self-employment. This is evidenced in older workers trending toward later life entrepreneurship. Hannon (2014) found entrepreneurs aged 50 to 59 years were responsible for 20% of new businesses in 2013, with adults aged 60 and over responsible for another 15%. French (2013) found that, in the case of the older worker, “for some, being laid off, or seeing peers losing their job as a catalyst to entrepreneurship” (p. 1).

The impetus for this research was based on examining the relationship between the laid off/downsized/displaced older worker and later life re-engagement, and the key role they can play specifically in light of the increased longevity of the population. Toder et al. (2008) found a correlation between workers who are self-employed and age with over 40% of men between the ages of 55 and 74 years, and 22% of women in the same age bracket. Weber and Schaper (2004) suggest that “demographic trends in the developed world indicate that older entrepreneurs will play an increasingly important part of economic activity as populations age, yet this cohort has been largely ignored in entrepreneurial research” (p. 147). According to McKay (2001) and Baderman (2009), the population of the older entrepreneur has not benefitted from qualitative exploration. The question of entrepreneurship and its lack of universal definition is so pervasive that it has, according to Gedeon (2010), generated its own taxonomy of understanding. Gedeon contends that within the general taxonomy, one can pick and choose a definition according to his/her current needs. Congruence for this trend can be found with Clark and Holt (2010), who found that “entrepreneurs articulate goals that evoke public, social and moral concerns alongside the more commonly accepted entrepreneurial goals of

independence and challenging existing orthodoxies” (p. 69). And yet, with research focused on defining entrepreneurship, Cope (2005) argues that not enough investigative attention is placed on the process of entrepreneurial learning, a process that has at its core goal—centered, self-directed learning.

Topic II: Adult Learning Theory

The theoretical underpinnings that bind the inquiry of the research questions are organized through the overarching umbrella of Adult Learning Theory and research with specific attention paid to the conceptual framework comprised of the following elements: skills adaptation through training and retooling, adult learning and self-management, self-efficacy, motivation, and self-directed learning.

Adult Learning

Differentiating adult learning from childhood learning has eluded explicit classification until Malcolm Knowles (1984) used the term *Andragogy* to describe the learning experience specific to adults. Andragogy is based on a term used by educators in Europe to extricate adult learning from that of childhood learning. Applying the use of Andragogy to adult education Knowles (1984) explains is “the term as a parallel to pedagogy to provide a label for the growing body of knowledge and technology in regard to adult learning, and that it was being defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (p. 6).

Brookfield (1987) points to Lindeman’s expansion of the utility to adult education as:

a co-operative venture in non-authoritarian informal learning, the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of experience, a quest of the mind which digs down to the roots of the perceptions which formulate our conduct, our technique of learning from adults which makes education

coterminous with life and hence elevates living itself to the level of an experiment. (p. 4)

Informal Learning

While learning is often attributed to the implementation of Pedagogy the structure of learning where there is a set curriculum that informs instruction, Andragogy is more individual and experience centered (see Knowles, 1984). In essence this defines two distinct branches of learning, Informal and Formal. Formal structured learning bares familiarity that is embedded in many educational structures, however, it is informal learning that is suggestive of the adult learning experience. Marsick, Volpe, and Watkins (1999) provide sustenance to this concept:

Informal learning is playing an increasingly central role in the lives of individuals and agendas of organizations. Informal learning is not a substitute for structured training or education. Often, learning is much more productive if it is designed, planned and facilitated in some way. However, the evidence suggests that the need for more effective informal learning from experience is also rising. (p. 94)

The question arises, what is this phenomenon of learning that appears to be more applicable to adult learning, and a learning style that is gaining ground and fortified by the number of life experiences?

Marsick and Volpe (1999) define informal learning as follows:

Informal Learning can be described as learning that is predominantly unstructured, experiential, and noninstitutional. Informal Learning takes place as people go about their daily activities at work or in other spheres of life. It is driven by people's choices, preferences, and intentions. (p. 4)

Marsick et al. (1999) suggest that Informal Learning takes on a different character in the face of downsizing where active engagement once shared during organized work environments is alerted and Informal Learning may become more internalized.

Laswell (1994) speaks to this and notes that “ little, however, has been done in terms of looking at job loss from the perspective of personal change and adult learning, and existing research falls short in looking at how adults change as a result of job loss

and the learning process” (p. 229). Drucker (2005) suggests that through continued engagement, there is continued learning and that process may well move through an active working life of 50 years. This self-management is the force of continuance and in “knowing and when to change the work we do” (p. 5). Inherent in this is an internal drive of self-management to determine in what career one belongs, and inherent in that, is the concept of self-management of learning (Marsick, 2014). The concept of self-management in learning has at its the core motivation and volition as defined in the Self-Directed Learning Theory of adult learning (Abdullah, 2007; Bandura, 2001; Candy, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1997). It also bears application to the displaced older worker in need of career transition. Because self-directed learning is inherently individual driven, utility is difficult to standardize and measure, however, this component of adult learning theory offers a great deal of promise across learning, developmental, and organizational domains as it vests learning squarely in the lap of the learner. It is an enhancement of autonomy that cultivates motivation, personal agency, and a focused directed engagement (Bandura, 2001; Candy, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1997).

Self-Directed Learning

Self-Directed Learning is individual-centric and empowering in supporting and developing new or foundational skills, as well as knowledge acquisition that is content specific, and has a unique driving force (Brookfield, 2013; Cope, 2005; Merriam & Bierema 2014).

Self-Directed Learning was found to contain components of incentive and personalized interests in older adults by Robertson and Merriam (2005), and a change in self-concept by Tuohy (1980) and Brockett (1985).

This learning is often measured as an augmentation to structured learning environments (see Cranton, 1994; Koeber, 1998; Shin, Haynes, & Johnson, 1993). Self-Directed Learning implies by the term alone, that it is regulated or directed by ‘self’ and

yet, it is rarely viewed as a stand-alone learning scheme. More often it is viewed as learning through informal means (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Informal learning while not on the traditional or formal education platform, is intentional and appeals to variations in learning style(s) and development. (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Similarly, lifelong learning was found by Beckett (2001) to augment structured learning for older adults and to contain empowering factors that are congruent with the informal multi-disciplinary extended experiences found by Johnson-Hunter (2004).

While Self-Directed Learning is readily referred to as individual-centric with a driving core of intentionality, the motivational factor may well be directed through the perspective lens of others in terms of how or what is the ‘something’ that should be learned (Bandura, 2001; Brown, 1997; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001; Edwards & Muir, 2005).

The plight of entering a new career implies entering a new social system where participation can either be active through personal agency which promotes self-awareness and reflection (active), to simply participating by proxy (passive), to a socially collective and coordinated effort (Bandura, 2001). All of which according to Bandura represent multi-pronged pathways to self-directed learning that are based in social cognition. Added to this, is the consideration that self-directed learning in practice bears similarity to empowered learning, where learning holds a certain amount of social interaction. The ultimate decision on what is learned rests solely with the learner (Brookfield, 2013).

Given what is presented in the research on Self-Directed Learning, the research is wide sweeping in scope, but does not or perhaps cannot provide the same type of breadth in its focus and methodology. Accepting the presence of the ubiquitous intricacies of social systems and the difficulty of being solely isolated from them, invites the question of how much self-direction is possible, and whether or not self-directed learning requires affirmation to be effective and benefit from knowledge layering and acquisition.

Topic III: Motivation

Cook and Artino (2016) define the drive to action as an impetus the core of which is motivation. The authors offer the following explanation: “Motivation has been defined as the process whereby goal-orientated activities are initiated and sustained” (p. 997). Ryan and Deci (2000) find that “to be motivated means *to be moved* to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated” (p. 54). Wlodkowski (1999) offers the following definition: “Motivation is the natural human capacity to direct energy in the pursuit of a goal, and learning is a naturally active and normally volitional process, but that process cannot be separated from the cultural context of the classroom or from the background of the learner” (p. 7). The most salient factor in this definition is that the individual’s intrinsic motivation creates potential possibilities that foster motivation. This is then an individual-centric drive owing in large part to the process being founded in maintaining respect and equity (see Wlodowski, 1999).

Inherent in these characterizations are the internal and external elements that influence and drive one to be motivated. Ryan and Deci (2000) define these as being intrinsic and extrinsic: “Intrinsic motivation remains an important construct, reflecting the natural propensity to learn and assimilate. However, extrinsic motivation is argued to vary considerably in its relative autonomy and thus can either reflect external control or true self-regulation” (p. 54).

Kordbacheh, Shultz, and Olson (2014) found a correlation between employment resources as a driving intrinsic motivating force and increased levels of engagement.

Bandura (1994) defines motivation as being linked to self-efficacy and key to behavior manifestations as follows:

Self-beliefs of efficacy play a key role in the self-regulation of motivation. Most human motivation is cognitively generated. People

motivate themselves and guide their actions anticipatorily by the exercise of forethought. They form beliefs about what they can do. They anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions. They set goals for themselves and plan courses of action designed to realize valued futures. (p. 1)

Life changes and adaptation to increased ambiguity over the adult lifespan can generate variances in behaviors that submit to continuity of perceived lifespan. Bandura (1994) explains this:

When the elderly are taught to use their intellectual capabilities, their improvement in cognitive functioning more than offsets the average decrement in performance over two decades. Because people rarely exploit their full potential, elderly persons who invest the necessary effort can function at the higher levels of younger adults. By affecting level of involvement in activities, perceived self-efficacy can contribute to the maintenance of social, physical and intellectual functioning over the adult life span. (p. 1)

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1994) describes self-efficacy as follows:

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's belief about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection process. (p. 71)

McGee, Peterson, Mueller, and Sequeira (2009) describe self-efficacy in terms specific to self-employment: "Self-efficacy is a useful concept for explaining human behavior as research reveals that it plays an influential role in determining an individual's choice, level of effort, and perseverance" (p. 2).

Bandura (1977) distinguishes between efficacy outcomes and outcome expectations as if done in tangent can produce a continuity between perceived thoughts/ideas and beliefs to operationalized behaviors. Bandura continues to project that this movement from perceived to realized is representative of a straightforward personal agency and offers the following explanation: "within this analysis efficacy expectations are distinguished from response-outcome expectations. The difference is presented

schematically in Figure 1. An expectancy is defined as a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (p. 193).

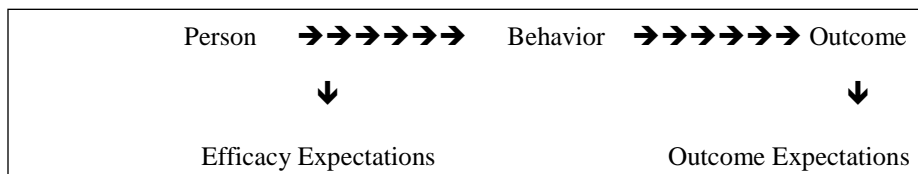


Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of the difference between efficacy expectations and outcome expectations. (Adapted from Bandura, 1977, p. 193)

Expectations defined by efficacy and outcomes vary in behavioral manifestations if the individual promotes self-doubt that can be mechanized as a barrier to outcome and coping behaviors. The presence of which is indicative of variations in persistency in coping mechanisms.

Zhao, Seibert, and Hills (2005) provide for a linkage between self-efficacy and the motivation to engage in entrepreneurial ventures: "Self-efficacy is a motivational construct that has been shown to influence an individual's choice of activities, goal levels, persistence, and performance in a range of contexts." (p. 3). The authors also found that there is a positive correlation between engaging in entrepreneurial ventures and self-efficacy.

Summary

As much of the literature reviewed thus far, is centered on the efficacy of displacement of the older worker in career change, this research is looking to begin to gain additional understanding of the presence of self-directed learning later in life as a potential developmental factor in the ability to re-engage in the workforce and not retire. Something that stage theorists such as Erikson (1963) even tipped his hat to, having lived

longer himself. It is this understanding, that it is hoped, and assumed, will be useful to other older workers who are let go from their jobs as well as those who are thinking of leaving voluntarily and striking out on their own. In addition to re-entering the workforce through various venues, the possibility of later life entrepreneurship can be realized as a mechanism for aging in place as well as sustaining livelihood and community contribution as the population continues to age and thrive.

Conceptual Framework

Narrative

The Graphic Illustration of the Conceptual Framework as illustrated and detailed below form the grounds of the present work and upon which the research questions were framed. The present study examined potential casual relationships between displacement from the workforce at age 50 and above and re-entering the workforce.

The illustration of the conceptual framework details the causal relationships between self-efficacy, self-directed learning, motivation and engagement as framed in the theoretical concepts of Adult Learning.

This is captured below in Figure 2, as the Graphic Illustration characterizing the overall study. It represents the relational alignment of the research questions and the Conceptual Framework, inherent in the topic of displaced older workers re-entering the workforce after the age of 50.



Figure 2. Graphic illustration of conceptual framework

In addition to the literature reviewed, there were several studies that the researcher found embodied the over-arching themes of the present study. Table 1 below, Relevant Studies, highlights evidenced based support that contributed to the formation of the research questions with the following emphasis: Roberson and Merriam (2005) for older worker's interest in sustaining their livelihood, in Beckett (1985) for the utility of self-directed learning and increasing career options, Armstrong-Strassen (2008) finding value

of the older worker, Edwards and Muir (2005) finding the need for continuing policy discussions surrounding the older displaced worker, and Schuring et al. (2013) indicating potential factors acting as barriers that interfere with older workers' efforts to re-enter the workforce.

Table 1. Relevant Studies

Author	Study and Sample	Method	Key Findings	Implications for topic
Brockett, 1985	64 adults at least 60 years of age	Qualitative survey	Correlation between self-directed learning and life satisfaction	Self-directed learning can increase life and career contentment
Schuring, Merel, Robroek, Otten, Arts, Coos, 2013	N=15 of 152	Longitudinal	Ill health plays a key role in job retention and job re-entry	Health is a potential contributing factor to re-entering the job market
Roberson and Merriam, (2005)	10 purposely selected adults ranging in age from 75-87	Qualitative-in-depth, semi-structured interviews	Self-directed learning was found to be initiated by an interest to learn, there is attention to learning	The focus to promote ways of sustaining the livelihood of the displaced older worker can drive interest to learn
Edwards and Muir, 2005		Case Study	With resources barriers to entrepreneurial learning can be eliminated	Policy for the later life entrepreneur can be put in place making necessary resources accessible
Armstrong-Stassen, 2008	N=90-retired and returned to work N=198 retired and remained in their careers N=321 retired and remained in the workforce	Comparison	HR practices need to reflect the needs of the older worker especially when looking for either retention or rehire	The value of the institutional knowledge base of the older worker

Table 2 below, Relevant Self-Directed Learning Theories in Adult Education, exemplifies the foundational studies of motivation and self-directed learning that directly relate to, and serve as, foundational underpinnings to the topic of the displaced older worker re-entering the workforce.

Table 2. Relevant Self-Directed Learning Theories in Adult Education

Author	Theory	Key Concepts	Implications for Topic
Bandura, 2001	Social Cognitive Theory	Three approaches to participatory self-directed learning: Personal agency-active participation, self-awareness, and ability to reflect, Proxy agency – individual participates through others employee to boss, husband or wife to spouse, etc. and, Collective Agency-participation through collaboration including overarching meta systems	The displaced older worker can transition to entrepreneurship through the motivation inherent in self-agency, as well as seek advice from a trusted advisor, and collaborate on the larger goals implied and to be realized through this transition
Candy 1991	Four dimensions to self-directed learning	Assistance Autodidactic Instructional- Domain Control – couched in autonomy that assume the presence of pre-existing value structure that directs	The presence of self-rule and guidance allow for the displaced older worker to think, learn and act with self-determination in transition as well as in entrepreneurship
Deci & Ryan, 1997, 2001	A social determination theory	Motivation and volition defined by a real sense of freedom either self – determined or imposed	Transitioning from job displacement may determine the variance between external motivations and internal self-determined behaviors

Summary

Of the relevant studies illustrated in Table 1, the researcher found the studies of Roberson and Merriam (2005) indicating the older worker's learning throughout lifespans, and Beckett's (1985) inquiry into the motivation for ongoing engagement in the workforce most guiding in terms of application to the present study. The work of Deci and Ryan (1997, 2001) exemplifying the trajectory from displacement and the nuances of the interplay between internal self-determined behaviors and external motivations, coupled with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory formatted the foundation upon which the research questions were based.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore with 12 adults, 50 years of age and above, faced with extended job loss and the need to continue working to earn a living, their perceptions of how they manage to transition and re-engage in the workforce.

This research was based in qualitative exploratory inquiry where information is strategically positioned to infuse data through rich description. An approach supported by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) as they suggest, “such strategies include descriptive research (involves collecting data to test hypotheses or answer questions about the current status of the subject of the inquiry)” (p. 30). Creswell (2013) reasons that “we conduct qualitative research when we want to *empower individuals* to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (p. 48).

The following research questions were examined:

- (1) How did participants describe their learning experiences of re-entry into the workforce?
- (2) How did participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?
- (3) How did participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they faced in re-engaging in the workforce?

- (4) What activities did participants learn that helped them transition to re-engagement?

Research Sample

The participant sample was purposefully drawn from the general population of individual's aged 50 and above. Participants were individuals who have re-entered the workforce after having been separated from employment after the age of 50. The sample was comprised of 12 individuals ranging in age from 50 to 75 with the mean age at 61.58 years. There was an equal split in gender with 6 males and 6 females. The participants hailed from eight states (New York, New Jersey, Washington State, South Carolina, Nevada, Rhode Island, and Illinois), represented 12 different professions and spent an average of 25 years in their previous (pre-separation from the workforce) careers.

The evolution of the research strategy was in part, similar to one of snowballing. This occurred when three of the participants each recommended another potential participant.

Creswell (2103) explains "snowballing as chain sampling as an occurrence that identifies cases of interest from people who know what cases are information rich" (p. 158). As snowballing is similar in strategic execution to convenience sampling, Creswell continues to suggest that "convenience sampling" saves time and effort not at the expense of information and credibility" (p. 158).

Overview of Information Needed

Consistent with the conceptual framework the data listed below are needed to inform the research questions:

Demographic Data

Demographic detail specifically surrounding individual compositions of age, gender, ethnicity, place of residence, length of time in an organized workplace, length of time displaced from the workforce, difference in compensation from current employment with current employment, when re-entered the workforce, and type of workforce engagement, are elements of the demographic data collected through the participant survey.

As indicated in Table 3 Demographic Data below, of the 12 participants, six are female, six males are. In terms of ethnicity, seven identified as White, (four males, three females), two females were Black/African American, one female identified as representative of multiple ethnic groups, one male identified as being Hispanic, and one male did not disclose his racial or ethnical make-up. The participants resided in eight states and ranged in age from 50 to 75 years. A complete delineation of demographic data can be found in Appendix L-Demographic Breakdown.

Table 3. Demographic Data

Participant	Age	Gender	Racial/Ethnic Identification	State of Residence
Marco	61	Male	White	New York
Templeton	68	Male	White	New Jersey
Veronica	56	Female	Multiple	WA
Chloe	65	Female	Black/AA	Georgia
Sebastian	50	Male	Hispanic	New York
Fred	62	Male	White	New York
Clark	75	Female	White	New York
Plato	63	Male	Not disclosed	South Carolina
Giants	59	Male	White	Westchester, NY
Mavis	58	Female	White	Nevada
Brooklyn	58	Female	White	Rhode Island
Annalise	64	Female	Black/AA	Illinois

Perceptual Data

Perceptual data in the present study is bifurcated in that there are two areas in which perceptions are being examined. The first looks at how participants perceive their

ability to approach task efficiency through increased skills and knowledge base potentially leading to changes in behaviors (see Bandura, 1994).

The second facet of perceptual data will examine how participants view challenges/impediments to re-entry into the workforce and how those challenges may have shaped their attitudes and behaviors such that they transitioned back to the workforce. Inherent in this is the potential for additional skill development/honing existing skills.

Theoretical Data

The theoretical data employed here weaved the structure of the study by layering the factors of the Problem Statement, Statement of Purpose, Research Questions and Rationale against the Conceptual Framework. The Review of Literature was ongoing as it guided the Analysis and Interpretation.

Table 4 below illustrates the research methods used to capture the various aspects of data that connected to the research questions.

Table 4. Research Methods and Questions

Research Questions	Information Source/ Respondents
1. How did participants describe their learning experiences of re-entry into the workforce?	1. In-depth interviews with participants 2. Focus group
2. How did participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?	1. In-depth interviews with participants 2. Survey
3. How did participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they face in re-engaging in the workforce?	1. In-depth interviews with participants 2. Focus group
4. What activities did participants learn to help them transition to re-engagement?	1. In depth interviews with participants 2. Focus Group

Figure 3 offers a graphic example of the dissertation journey from the point of topic identification through participant selection, interviews, capturing and transcribing the data, to presentation and oral defense.

The primary source of data collection was done through in-depth interviews. The applicability of the semi-structured interview is appropriate for qualitative research (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2004). The format of open-ended questions core to the semi-structured interview illicit depth of description that can be coupled with simultaneous behaviors that add to the richness of the data (Decicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2004). To obtain fidelity in participant responses the researcher did, as Creswell (2013) describes: “conduct different types of interviews: email, face to face, focus group, online [synchronous] focus group, and telephone” (p. 150). The interviews spanned from an hour to over two hours, and were conducted in person, over the phone, and virtually. To protect their anonymity all participants were assigned a pseudonym.

The interview also served as a vehicle examining their perceptions of self-efficacy and their beliefs that may have motivated them to transition from employment displacement to re-entering the workforce. The interview then swerved to infuse the research questions with specific related perceptions and experiences.

A secondary form of data collection was a virtual focus group employing participants with characteristics and experience congruent to those of the interview sample. However, the focus group participants were not part of the interview group. The focus group consisted of four adults aged 50+ who have experienced employment displacement later in life. The focus group participants were not part of the research population.

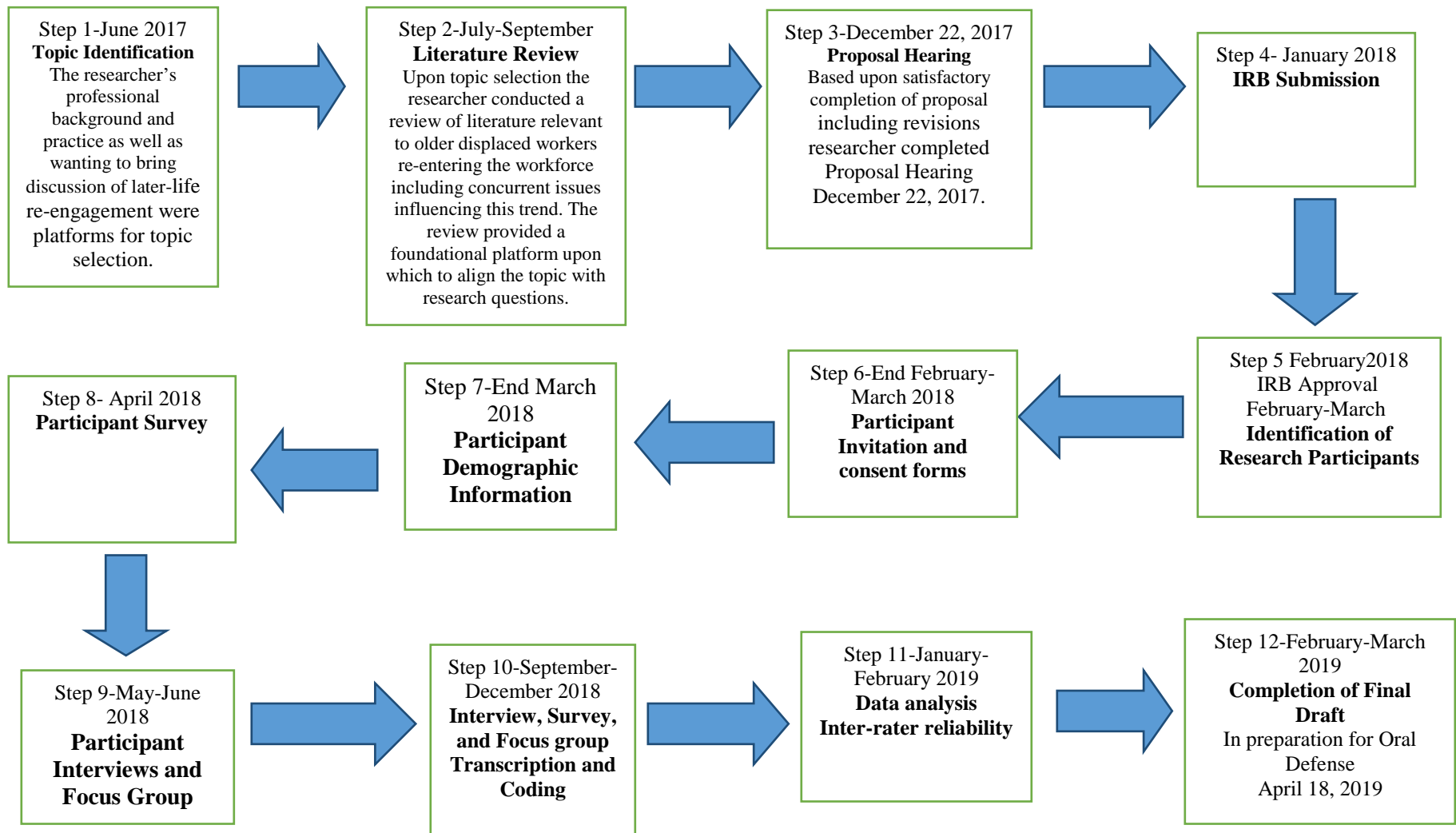


Figure 3. Research design overview

Methods of Data Collection

Prior to being interviewed all participants were administered a survey that served to look at their demographic information as well as surveying time spent in previous employment, length of time spent between previous profession and present employment, how current position was acquired, and differences in compensation from previous employment and current employment.

The researcher attempted to establish triangulation by asking interviewees to complete a post-interview Critical Incident Questionnaire (based on Brookfield's work; see Brookfield 1995, 2010), which would have provided the supportive interplay of triangulation. However, the time of the interview (all exceeding an hour), and the sensitive nature of the topic, precluded the formation of triangulation in this way. Similarly, document review did not apply.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Data were analyzed and synthesized through alignment with the research questions under study and coded using a Coding Scheme (see Appendix A), based on thematic trends found to be congruent with both the researcher and two inter-raters known to the field of adult education. This included consensus between the researcher and the inter-raters on elements of coding and thematic representation. Consensus was reached to a 90% level of agreement which was achieved first by independent coding completed from pages of transcribed interviews, and then discussed collectively with the researcher. This process informed the final iteration of the coding scheme, the foundation of which was the conceptual frame work. It established issues of trustworthiness with particular attention paid to the credibility, dependability, and the potential for transferability.

Data analysis was merged through an understanding of the data from discernable trends and patterns that assembled to inform the interpretation and synthesis. All are issues relating to the relevance, potential influence and significance of the findings.

The demographic data were developed and collected through an email survey tool (see Appendix B). Brondani, MacEntee, and O'Connor (2011) found that the use of email is a viable technique when interviewing older adults and "appeared to be an effective approach to collecting qualitative information about beliefs and behaviours from older adults who feel comfortable with this type of communication" (p. 211). That coupled with transcribed interviews were aggregated, coded and synthesized through the thematic trends that emerged.

Literature on Methods

This research was based in qualitative methods, which have at its core the case study. The qualitative method is often criticized for having limitations such as length of time to arrange interviews or observations. Chetty (2016) finds additional limitation in the use of qualitative methods in the researcher's inability to verify the data collected as the participant holds the controlling hand through response. The author also suggests that inherent in qualitative research methods might be difficulty in establishing causality as information collected under this method may not lead to consistent conclusions. Johnson and Waterfield (2004) counter this set of limitations on qualitative research methods by noting that "instead of trying to control extraneous variables, qualitative research takes the view that reality is socially constructed by each individual and should be interpreted rather than measured; that understanding cannot be separated from context" (p. 123).

In terms of the case study,

the special features of case study research that provide rationale for its selection also present certain limitations in its usage. Although rich, thick description and analysis of a phenomenon maybe desired a researcher may

not have the time or money to devote to such an undertaking. And assuming time is available to produce a worthy case study, the product may be too lengthy, too detailed, or too involved for busy policy makers and practitioners to read and use. The amount of description, analysis, or summary material is up to the investigator. (Strengths and Limitations of Case Studies/Tomorrow's Professor, n.d. Retrieved from <https://tomprof.Stanford.edu/posting/1013>).

Yin (2013) offers the following position on the advantages and viability of the case study:

The classic case study consists of an in-depth inquiry into specific and complex phenomenon ('the case'), set within its real-world context. To arrive at a sound understanding of the case, a case study should not be limited to the case isolation but should examine the likely interaction between the case and its context. (p. 321)

This research is exploratory in nature examining the potential causal relationship between extended periods of time away from the workforce and re-engagement in the workforce. Yin (2003) suggests that "an exploratory case study presents data bearing on cause and effect relationships-exploring how events happened" (p. 5). Exploratory research is the mechanism for which the interview is often best served through open-ended questions allowing the participant to truly individualize the experience as it is being revisited during the interview. Sofaer (1999) supports this reasoning in the following manner:

In this developmental framework, initial questions are very open-ended. Often the researcher just asks what appears to be relevant and individuals describe, in their own way, their experiences and responses concerning a given situation or issue. Over time, questions remain open-ended but become more specific either in their initial wording or in accompanying "probes." (p. 1103)

This is consistent with the strategy of utilizing qualitative research to answer questions presented and positioned by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012). And thereby, allowing for a depth of exploration through participant description of process, transition and occurrence. However, it must be noted that Yin (2013), while promoting the case study as a mechanism by which robust probing can yield rich data unique to qualitative

study, the author also points out that its downfall may not be truly representative of the larger population upon which the research is based. On the other hand, Small (2009) suggests that while small samples may present disadvantages when attempting to scale findings through generalization, if the area or topic of discussion has been afforded recognition through previous evaluations/study, the small sample becomes the beacon to bring attention to and spur additional discussion in an under resourced area.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were addressed during the delineation and explanation of the purpose of the study safeguarding participants' confidentiality prior to, and again during the administration of surveys, interviews, and focus group. In so doing, ethical concerns and issues are presented front and center to provide the platform for equitable and consistent treatment. This upfront approach to ethical frameworks and concerns is consistent with the recommendations of Brockett and Hiemstra (2005). These authors suggest that "by talking openly about potential problems before they take hold ... we can do much to ensure accountability, credibility and honesty" (p. 5). In addition to this, every aspect of the research was carried out in direct alignment with the guidelines of the Internal Review Board (IRB).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) frame issues of trustworthiness in qualitative study as clearly delineating elements of credibility, dependability and transferability. Each contributing to the clarity, utility and fidelity as threading the research. Similarly, Connelly (2016) finds that "trustworthiness or rigor of study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of the study"

(p. 435). The current study executed and followed guidelines established by the IRB of Teachers College, Columbia University as well as established and maintained protocols that define authenticity in soliciting, collecting of data and its analysis, synthesis, and interpretation.

Credibility

To determine authenticity in the researcher's characterization of the participants' perceptions the researcher's biases, empathetic grounding of the context and conditions being explored as well as the interpretations of what is presented and use of repeated check ins with participants to maintain transparency, collectively comprise the credibility of the work (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Connelly 2016).

Dependability

In order to provide robust findings that are authoritative and consistent across a number of domains Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) suggest the following:

Dependability refers to whether one can track the processes and procedures used to collect and interpret data:

- a. Provide detailed and thorough explanations of how the data were collected and analyzed, providing what is known as an "audit trail". Although it is not possible to include all of your data in the findings chapter, many qualitative researchers make it known that their data are available for review by other researchers.
- b. Ask colleagues to code several interviews, thereby establishing inter-rater reliability. The process of checking on the consistency between raters reduces the potential bias of a single researcher collecting and analyzing the data. (p. 113)

This accounting of dependability and its structural processes are consistent with the findings of Connelly (2016) as being indicative of the potential of qualitative research to maintain its stability beyond the period of study.

Transferability

While the expectation that qualitative researchers hold is that “findings are useful to persons in other settings” (Connelly, 2016, p. 2), “transferability is not whether the study includes a representative sample” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). Transferability is more of the perception of the reader who in turn decides the appropriateness of the overall findings and context to his or her condition(s). By depicting participants, settings, perceptions, descriptions in elaborate detail coupled with fidelity in data analysis contribute to the practical application of transferability.

Limitations of the Study

The present study was limited in ways that are consistent with qualitative research such as the reliance on anecdotal data as opposed to the strict usage of empirical data of quantitative research.

The study was limited to sample size and the variance of the sample population’s banks of experience. Additional limitations include interviews that are dependent upon participant recall, and participant recall with fidelity. To mitigate these limitations, the researcher took the following precautions:

Bearing in mind and practice the assumptions of the researcher (as presented in Chapter I), the researcher kept at the forefront and as a constant thought and thread, the link between the researcher and the theoretical framework positioned here. And made this understanding of researcher bias clear from the start. In so doing, the present research qualitative in nature will as Sofaer (1999) suggests: “embrace this level of discipline [the researchers] they take important and concrete steps to protect against bias whether intentional or unintentional” (p. 1104). To reinforce this discipline, the researcher conferred with both advisors and peers to determine consistency in coding and thematic classifications.

The study was also limited to working with adults aged 50 and above who have suffered barriers and challenges to re-enter the workforce and thereby leading them to pursue other means of employment to maintain their livelihoods. These factors may have limited the transferability/generalization of the findings to unique parallel segments of the population. By highlighting the richness of descriptions of all aspects pertaining to the participants will go a long way in the application of transferability of the findings (Connelly, 2016).

In response to providing the platform for fidelity in participant response, the researcher created an environment that was equitable and inclusive honoring individual voice. The removal of all identifying information enhanced trustworthiness and encouraged interview and focus group participation. Being an experienced trainer and interviewer was helpful in that the researcher was able to facilitate these elements in the research process.

Chapter IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore with 12 adults, 50 years of age and above, faced with extended job loss and the need to continue working to earn a living, their perceptions of how they learn to transition and re-engage in the workforce.

To realize this purpose the following research questions were presented:

- (1) How did participants describe their learning experiences of re-entry into the workforce?
- (2) How did participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?
- (3) How did participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they faced in re-engaging in the workforce?
- (4) What activities did participants learn that helped them transition to re-engagement?

From participants' responses to the research questions, the following four main findings emerged:

- (1) An overwhelming majority (92%) of participants described feeling passé, as an older worker when separated from the workforce after the age of 50.
- (2) All participants (100%) reported transitioning from full employment to learn new ways to earn a living, as the most critical challenge they faced.

- (3) All participants (100%) described having to learn to be willing to find new ways to re-engage in the workforce.
- (4) All participants (100%) reported the need to be self-directed in order to re-enter the workforce.

This chapter presents a dialogue of the four main findings emanating from the participants' responses to the research questions. The findings will be presented through the lens of the conceptual framework.

Participant Profiles

To enhance understandings, and potential connectivity between the research questions and the findings as couched in a qualitative lens, it is important to reveal the data within the backdrop of context to enhance the story. In this sense, the story chronicles salient thematic trends brought forth during the interviews that addressed challenges, issues, and concerns as participants experienced later life workforce separation. To this end, the following participant profiles are presented.

Marco

Marco, a 61-year-old White male, is a highly skilled Senior Infrastructure Manager with over 15 years of Project Management experience complementing his 30 years of Infrastructure experience. Prior to his separation from the workforce, he wore multiple hats as a Senior Vice President of Technology for a financial company specializing in electronic trading. While he amassed years in this role, neither the years of experience nor his skill base could have foretold the company's trajectory. He believes that when the algorithms and black boxes came in as general practice, that some of the board of directors altered the way electronic trading was being executed, making it virtually impossible to keep up with the output of the trading machines over different platforms.

This led to the loss of traders and a downward spiral within which he was trapped and eventually let go. At the time he was maybe 55 or even 57 years of age and kept applying for positions in his field. He was met with vast changes in the finance industry that did not mirror his experience, expertise, or salary. He continued to apply for positions often mastering the technical portion of the interview due to his practice of staying current on the trends in his field. He believes that when companies/agencies want to conduct a face to face interview it is to determine your age. After a year and a half of searching, he accepted a position as an Administrator earning significantly less than in his previous career.

Templeton

Templeton is a 68-year-old White male who spent over 28 years as skilled mail room support staff for a major corporate oil concern. Around 1995 his company started shifting organizational concerns in ways that significantly changed the way operations were being managed and implemented. It was during this time that the company decided that one key strategy would be the widespread use of downsizing. Templeton explained that this was communicated to his department as one which would be significantly affected by downsizing and as it was explained, he was faced with the deep interior feeling of terror. In the midst of all of this, he wore a façade that he hoped was being perceived as, he would be ok. He pounded the pavement and met with a number of leads only to be turned away he felt, because of his age. However, with the help of his sister and mentor, he decided if he could not re-enter the workforce in the ways he had historically, why not pursue an independent source of sustaining his livelihood? Why not try operating an independent car service. Now, mind you, this decision did not serendipitously fall from the sky, it was on the heels of many attempts to just keep going and maintain himself, which included doing jobs of cleaning, doing floors, and other jobs of basic service. All in all, Templeton explains that the one factor that remained

consistent between all of his lines of work was his dedication to customer service. He was always committed to meeting the customer's needs whether expediting corporate communication through various departments or making sure that floors were mopped/refinished to satisfaction or getting customers to their destinations in a safe and timely manner.

Veronica

Veronica, a 56-year-old female stemming from a multiple ethnic background, worked for a major electronics firm, that as she noted, “the company targeted a specific demographic to maintain – older white men.” Upon this realization and ahead of becoming a victim of the then ubiquitous ‘pink slip,’ she left with the intention of pursuing a career in higher education. Unfortunately, this decision to re-enter the higher education job market meant a significant retooling from a business background to one of an academic. In the process of going back to school for her doctorate, and the need to sustain herself and her family (single parent), she applied for many different jobs across the country with the belief that she would have no difficulty in re-entering the workforce. This proved not to be the case and taxed all of her economic reserves and resources. After a seven-year period she completed her doctorate, relocated to the Pacific Northwest and landed a position in higher education.

Chloe

Chloe is a 65-year-old Black woman who worked as a CAD Engineering Design Drafter for a US military concern. She spent the bulk of her service in this area of expertise in Texas at a military installation until she was approached by her supervisor and told that the job she was doing for the bulk of her adult life (38 years), would be folded into other areas. All of the Engineering Department was laid off. Without warning or any real time to prepare she was immediately separated from the workforce. To mediate the blow and as she noted, “to keep me from going insane and into depression, I

did a lot of research.” The research proved to be arduous because her skills are keenly specific to mechanical engineering and jobs in that arena she admits, are hard to come by. However, she did manage to find a way of re-entering the workforce that would play well into her existing skills base. The only problem was that the position required her to move out of state. She found herself scrambling to figure out how to move years of living to another state. This was a transition that proved to be quite traumatic not only due to the rudiments of moving, but also when she arrived she had to put her massive 38-year experience behind her and start at the bottom again.

Sebastian

Sebastian, a 50-year-old, male Hispanic technology expert, hosted data installations for major concerns up and down the Eastern Seaboard. He is the one who makes sure that the technology installed is not only a viable fit, but one where it can be sustained through growth and adaptation. In essence, he is the one who makes sure that once the train is on the track it stays on the track. With this came a kind of professional community of reliance where industry individuals knew who maintained specific skills that could be potentially tapped into if need be. And yet, when he was confronted with layoff and separation from employment, he asked, “do I really want to pick up and move at this age? But [if you do] you lose your contacts. People are separating to relocate to get a job.” He did re-enter the workforce through freelance work, where he is maintaining technology that is based in Chicago and hosted in New Jersey. He used this as a vehicle to supplement his income while he continues to seek full time employment. Sebastian notes that the technology field is still in recovery, and he has been actively seeking full time gainful employment ever since being laid off. He has applied for full time employment through recruiters, corporate websites, job search engines and any viable opportunity that comes his way. He also feels that there are a lot of people like him who remain under employed and shut out of the full-time job market. Although grateful for his freelance

work, he reported that this is the longest he has been without full time employment. Sebastian still has feelings of anger as he continues to re-enter the job market with the same kind of professional respect for his abilities that he experienced and welcomed in the past.

Fred

Fred, a 62-year-old White male, spent over 20 years as an analyst for a major national rating corporation. And during this entire time, he felt he was doing a great job with a good salary and compensation package to show for all his efforts, until one day he was laid off. A gesture that smacked him in the face with feelings of, “why me?” and was convinced that there were other people who could have been laid off, perhaps those individuals whose performance was not up to company standards. He felt that the company loyalty he had come to enjoy for decades meant nothing anymore. He joined job clubs, knocked on doors, even applied for jobs in stock and retail that required heavy lifting which he knew he could not accommodate, but simply wanted to have a foray back into the job market. He even considered going back to school, but there were financial considerations that he did not believe he could overcome in a timely manner. He tried his hand at one of the certification courses in Medical Billing. The course was designed to help people displaced from the workforce, retool and manage gainful employment through a different venue. Although he felt this was a good idea and perhaps even a true means to potentially supplementing his income, he found the course far from his stream of interest. After almost 2 years, he did manage to land a temporary job as a Compliance Analyst. Fred expressed being discouraged and depressed and having feelings of guilt for not contributing to his household as he has in the past. Simply feeling that he is not carrying his weight.

Clark

Clark is a 75-year-old White woman who upon her separation from the workforce had amassed over 44 years as a Director of Therapeutic Recreation. Not prepared for retirement on either the financial, or occupational plains, she looked at this as an opportunity to relocate with the hope(s) of finding viable opportunities to sustain her livelihood. The move and the need to supplement her income incentivized her to seek opportunities for gainful employment that would suit her needs and skill base. She had, for a number of years taught courses in Therapeutic Recreation at a local Community College. Prior to her move, this was a convenient way to supplement her income. Having done it for so long (over 30 years) with ease both in transportation and regularity of course facilitation, she was able to rely on the supplemental income. Once relocated, what was an under an hour trip was now almost three hours, and the guarantee of class registration became dependent on varying factors beyond her control. Making what was a student-centric guaranteed course offering, more of an offering regulated by College need for critical mass. This forced re-entry into the workforce through different pathways and she did so by honing a once simple hobby into an award-winning practice. She became a master knitter and an entrepreneur, by generating creations for individual and trade distribution.

Plato

Plato, a 63-year-old male, separated from the workforce when overseas and relocated to the United States where he pursued careers as an educator and a small business owner. Both of which had various challenges, so much so that he became a Hospice Chaplain in a rural area of the American South. Ostensibly believing that this type of transition would not only bring forward his vocation but would not be that difficult to achieve. He based this on having amassed a number of qualifying degrees and experience both here and abroad. However, his journey took three years, and was laden with unexpected obstacles. He relied on his belief that he knows when it is time to leave

and does not need to wait until someone tells him to do so. He finds that there is some freedom in moving on, and that he has relied on his simple faith that the universe is kind and that even poverty is a spiritual gift [especially] if you are accustomed to experiencing and seeing nothing. Even with this patience and overarching phenomenological lens, he had to ask of himself, “will I be able to fit into a new challenge”. And with that is some anxiety, because as he suggests, “accountability is tough when you are the new kid on the block.” And for him evidenced by his statement that, “hierarchy is frustrating-you have a lot of experience that may not fit the job, and people without the experience [you] I have to answer to.”

Giants

Giants, a 59-year-old White male who spent 33 years in the printing industry, believed that at the time he was laid off, it would be only a temporary hiccup. His company was bought by a large conglomerate which mandated a management operation(s) shift at the end of which, there was some, but very little continuity in general working applications. Shortly into the transition, however, there was yet another shift and the larger company closed the sight where he was based. His immediate thoughts were that he would simply find employment elsewhere without a hitch. The reality was as he states that, “gradually, over the course of time, I realized that my job did not exist anymore, and that led to some anxiety. I realized I was looking at less money.” To fill in some of the financial gaps, he managed to land several part time jobs including one with Federal Express. A job where he employed his organizational skills, not only for determining where to make deliveries, but also in sorting and ordering the packages so that they aligned with the designated destination. After doing this for four years he landed a job within a state court system. Here, his organizational skills would once again come into play in an unfamiliar employment arena. As he states, “I’m in the courts, and I go in there, I have no idea. I was the first employee [hired there] in seven years, because they

had an unofficial hiring freeze. So, they didn't train me – nobody even remembered how to train anybody except for me to look and watch what [they] I do and try to mimic it.”

Mavis

Mavis, a 58-year-old White female, worked for 30 years with a major electronics firm. She met her company's efforts at downsizing as an opportunity to recover from the burnout she experienced during her 3-decade tenure to relocate to another state and venture into the world of real estate. Anticipating the career segue to be similar in practice as her previous career, she thought she would be able to lean on her well-established network. However, that proved not to be the case, as not only did she miss the social interaction of her previous day to day job, as she states, “I miss the people who had become my friends at work. And interestingly, [for] most of those people, we're not in contact anymore. So, I'm not sure by fault of mine and/or fault of theirs, but we just don't have that much in common anymore.” Knowing that pursuing a career in real estate would mean additional credentialing and licensure, she also knew that as an independent contractor she would be solely responsible and accountable for her success. Coming from over 30 years in a single profession to one where she had to discover the rudiments unique to the practice of real estate contributed to creeping self-doubt. She relied on her practice of perseverance that lead her to her desired performance levels in the past, and successfully launched her real estate career.

Brooklyn

Brooklyn, a 58-year-old White female, worked as an Executive Assistant for 25 years, refused to let her separation from the workforce define her. She believes that her skill base is such that it is transferable to something that will help her maintain her livelihood. And even though she stated she understands that change is the current business practice more often than not, she states that “change is hard. You know what I mean? Change is hard. And when you are used to doing things the old-fashioned way,

sometimes it's hard to go – even for people that are not re-entering the workforce, but especially when you are re-entering, you have to act confident and act like you can do this.” It was through this lens that she reached out to anyone and everyone she knew to get any kind of lead that would pave the way for her to get back into the workforce. After months of applying, and searching she signed up with an agency that had a temporary need for a person in an administrative capacity. She covered the position for four months, and within that time she managed to secure a position with the same company in Quality Compliance. In both positions while helping her to maintain her livelihood, she stated that she still makes significantly less than she did in her previous employment.

Annalise

Annalise, a 64-year-old Black female, amassed a 35-year career as an Administrative Assistant for a major financial corporation before she was part of the layoffs embedded in the organization's restructuring. She needed to maintain her livelihood and signed up with a several employment agencies. She managed to string together several temporary positions, often with breaks in between assignments and none offering any benefits or the security of longevity. After a year, she relocated to another state, and got hired in an administrative capacity for an entertainment magazine. Because of the passing of the owner and publisher and the leadership of the magazine shifting, this too, turned out to be temporary. This time she registered with a number of employment agencies simultaneously to hopefully ward off gaps in assignments and to pursue the potential of an assignment going from temporary to permanent. She also went to job fairs and went back to school for different certifications in varied fields, none of which paved the way to viable employment. After two years, an employment agency placed her in a firm as a full time DNA collector, making significantly less than she did during her tenure as an Administrative Assistant.

Summary

The most compelling result of using the participant profiles as a lens to align the data, is the ability to hone in on the contextual fabric that underscores participant perceptions, experiences, and concerns as they transition from separation from, to re-entering the workforce. One key connective element is that 7 of the 12 participants (58%) relocated to another state during the transition with another participant considering relocating as a viable option and relief from extended periods of separation from the workforce.

The following section illustrates participants' concerns where they discussed salient experiences during their period of transition to re-entering the workforce. It is not meant to be an exhaustive delineation of responses. Rather, it is exemplifying participant interview responses that resonated concerns as affective elements fundamental to the process of undertaking the transition from separation from the workforce to the learning components filtered by challenges. This also included obstacles identified and overcome, to core activities vital to operationalizing workforce re-entry.

The following is a cumulative accounting representing the findings.

Finding #1

An overwhelming majority (92%) of participants described feeling passé, as an older worker when separated from the workforce after the age of 50.

Participants were asked to describe their perceptions and experiences when faced with transitioning from the workforce after the age of 50. To enhance the understanding of these perceptions and experiences, the participants were asked to specify thoughts and feelings attached to the condition of workforce separation at this point in their lives and to do so without positive or negative attachment. Just to provide through the vehicle of interview questions, those thoughts and feelings that stood out as, and remembered as

being particularly salient during this time period. Feeling passé (or no longer being needed) as an older worker was cited by a vast majority (92%) of participants for this study. See Appendix H Frequency Table 5 for a comprehensive detailed listing of reported perceptions and experiences.

Table 5. Summary of Finding #1

FINDING # 1

An overwhelming majority (92%) of participants described feeling passé as an older worker when separated from the workforce after the age of 50.

Participants described their experiences and perceptions of having to re-enter the workforce as follows:

- Feeling Passé** (11 of 12, 92%)
- Being Displaced** (5 of 12, 42%)
- Different Values** (10 of 12, 83%)
- Loyalty for Service Not Reciprocated** (6 of 12, 50%)
- What do I do now** (10 of 12, 83%)
- How do I get back to work** (7 of 12, 58%)

Transitioning from the Workforce

While transitions may often imply change, that change attached to a value structure that has guided actions in the workforce and how we respond to that change may dictate our subsequent impressions. When certain factors of change are present, the value of roles in workplaces may also be subject to change. Participant Plato describes his concern as follows, “when troubles hit the first thing that leaves is perspective”.

Feeling passé. Participant Brooklyn agrees with Plato:

So, it’s a constant thing every single day, especially when—it certainly doesn’t help your ego when somebody says, for whatever reason, our working relationship is over. Because employment now, the big words are it’s at-will employment. They make sure when you’re hired that you know this, so that they can tell you at any moment, they can tell you to go for no reason because it’s at will. And it certainly doesn’t make anybody feel good. And growing up these days, where people work under these conditions and

are let go or businesses are bought or mergers or whatever, and people lose jobs like babies used to lose teeth. It's just part of life now.

And yet, for service that you may have felt was substantial enough to continue working, a belief held after having maintained the job and position for a significant amount of time, you are summarily dismissed and left to feel that you are no longer of value at least on the workforce front. To this point Sebastian offers, “no-one should feel lesser.”

Annalise had a similar sentiment and hers was expressed in terms of generational differences when applying for jobs after being separated from the work force: “I had to fill out the application an agency sent me. I left my resume and filled out the application. I called the company the next day and they said it took me too long to fill out the application. One of the drawbacks is working for younger people.”

Feelings of being passé and no longer of value exist in the workforce and as Mavis explains it is perhaps endemic: “And people tended to stay at their jobs for 40 or 50 years or whatever, where today it's a much more mobile society. I think that doesn't help, either, with this age discrimination situation. So, yeah. Yeah. Until—and I don't know what you do to even—because, quite frankly, I'm tired. I don't want to get out there and protest.” Fred's experience is congruent with that of what Mavis expressed as he declares that even when looking for a part-time job “again, who is hiring 50 year olds and older? Persons with experience brings something to the table. Young people leave, older people stay. Everything is looked at in the short term.”

Having gone through the experience of displacement after the age of 50, Marco tried to guide his friend through the lens of his experience and negotiating both job salvation and compensation strategically before the potential for layoff may hit:

And that's the same thing that my friend did, but the problem was that his buddies would say, ‘no you're wrong. You need to get as much money as fast as you can and then just get out of there because once you hit 50, they're going to let you go and you're screwed.’ [Marco], I regret not doing that because I could have made several million dollars. And this guy was a big

shot. He was sent to Europe, and he didn't negotiate right, and they took advantage of him.

Being displaced. After having spent years in a perfunctory routine of going to a place of employment, completing the tasks required and performing duties to carve out a career trajectory, what does one do when confronted with sudden displacement from this type of what ostensibly seemed to be steady employment? Templeton explains that his job was so much a part of him that it was part and parcel of his identification and how he defined his life. In short, he describes his experience as one of fear, and confusion being faced with unanticipated forced change, "I was afraid. I was making good money, but I was scared. What was I going to do with my life? I was really scared and in a kind of daze, my safety net was gone." Fred agrees with Templeton, but more importantly, after feelings of anger for the sheer act of displacement, he felt "guilty for not being able to help out his family financially". Fred also had feelings of betrayal and anger, "Why me? I thought I was doing a great job. Not at the high-end salary [he] felt that there were other people who should have gotten laid off-I was a friend of the boss –it doesn't matter who you are or how well you sound for who gets laid off." Plato also found that the initial displacement from the workforce was something that created a condition that was, "a little bit of anxiety producing, to get into something new."

Brooklyn, however, equated separation from employment as a sign of changing times, a kind of visceral internal battle between longevity and embarrassment as she explains: "back in the day, it wasn't like that in our parents' time. I mean, people got a job and they never lost a job, and if they did it was like a horror show. It was the most embarrassing thing. You couldn't even tell somebody if a parent lost a job."

Different values. Being the new kid on the block after amassing a significant work career can be challenging especially as Plato explains: "Colleagues and attitudes can make or break the situation. Accountability was tough when you were the new kid on the block". And expectations are managed differently when you are no longer part of

organized work, as Fred explains, “Because I worked for so many years-you have standards though. I used to get calls from some of my old co-workers. I thought I could get back. Sometimes I would get a call to do some consulting work, but it wasn’t full time or didn’t last long.”

Chloe’s take is that in general, “values and morals are different. We have to adjust to this automated environment and or operation. We need to adapt to the automated generation [and] way of doing things. We don’t mail anymore, everything is done by computers.” Sebastian adds to this idea of differing value structures when transitioning and still in search of full-time employment, he found a part time job. When it came to his compensation, he discovered “there was a trust issue, he [his boss] had money and only wanted log entries when we were present in the facility.” There was no accounting or compensation for travel no matter how far you traveled to and from jobs.

Loyalty for service. Annalise found out that loyalty for service was selective and present earlier in her career even before she was separated from employment after the age of 50: “back then I learned the term ‘a good fit.’ Even back then I was about 40 and I knew it was shaky.”

Fred experienced loyalty of service for some time and expected it to continue only to find out that the condition of being laid off re-positions the expectations of loyalty:

Loyalty means nothing anymore 15-20 years yet [you get] laid off that’s kind of tough too because you have a certain mindset –very difficult to transition to another profession because you have a certain mindset. You could go back to school but there are financial burdens there. If I saw the head boss today [hesitates and turns his head], I wouldn’t even talk to him- and we were even friends.

Brooklyn defines loyalty in the workforce as being external to any specific job and more consistent and truer to various shifts in employment while remaining in the workforce: “That’s another issue. In our generation growing up with having to learn how to not feel shame. It’s almost like a badge of honor now, you know? How many jobs have

you changed or lost for whatever reason? It's something that you have to learn to not be embarrassed about."

What do I do now? Giants explains the sense of translating the realization of being in the state of transition from the work workforce as a complete turnaround from a regular routine of consistent task performance in an organized work environment:

That was a problem for me. When you mention it that way, organized, I had—no matter what, my life was organized for 30 years. I went to a job, and I did the same job. I was really good at it. It was easy for me, and then it was gone. So, I missed the organization. And I looked for that immediately. I said, oh, geez, all of a sudden, I'm waking up, I'm making the bed in the morning. And I went through a period where I just said, all right, let me—I've never collected unemployment. And I would get up in the morning, and I didn't know what to do. And I was thinking about what are the steps?

Fred describes the transition as one of an assault on his entire being, both body and soul, which eats away at the core. "When you are working 20-25 years it's certainly a shock to the body. You don't have that routine anymore. Routine is a big factor that you don't have. Here is a reason for getting up in the morning. Also helps your self-worth." Chloe's experience was similar to that of Fred's, provoking extreme thoughts and concerns, "I was there for the majority of my adult life, now I had to concentrate on going back to the workforce. I was terrified. I panicked."

Plato's approach to the phenomenon of transition from the workforce mirrored his admitted ability to adapt to change even in the face of indistinctness as he states, "When you experiment with life and have interests there are clues you pick up and you know what you need, you begin to explore what you need. I needed licenses, for example, 'how do I move into a residency for the chaplaincy'—I made a plan and I did it."

Lost. Perceptions of the transition from the workforce later in life manifested in various thoughts. For Chloe the perceived manifestation was one of misplacing herself, she presents this as, "I had no intention of ever retiring, this was devastating."

Feelings attached to the reality of having to transition from the workforce were tantamount to not only being lost but also being frozen in the moment of discovery as Brooklyn explains, “well, you don’t even know—right. You just get stuck. The job that I had two jobs ago—I remember when they let me go, and coming home and just being like, what am I going to do? What am I going to do?”

In a similar state, Giants looked in this kind of posterior air that surrounded him in the hopes that there would be help right around the corner. He describes this as, “There was nobody really to sit down with me and say, all right, do this, do that. What do you want to do? People did suggest to me, go to a career counselor. You’re an older person. See what you can do. And I said, oh, what the heck do they know about my life?”

Finding #2

All participants (100%) reported transitioning from full time employment to learn new ways to earn a living, as the most critical challenge they faced.

Participants were asked to describe the obstacles and challenges they faced when transitioning from the workforce after the age of 50. To enhance the understanding of these challenges and obstacles, the participants were asked to specify their thoughts attached to the challenges impeding their ability to re-enter the workforce at this point in their lives and to do so without positive or negative attachment. The vehicle for which, the interview questions provided the platform for those ideas and events that stood out as, and remembered as, being particularly salient during this time. All the participants (100%) cited transition as the most challenging component in the process of re-entering the workforce. See Appendix I: Frequency Table 6 for a comprehensive detailed listing of reported challenges and obstacles to returning to the workforce.

Table 6. Summary of Finding #2

FINDING #2

All participants (100%) reported transitioning from full time employment to learn new ways to earn a living, as the most critical challenge they faced.

Participants described the challenges in learning new ways to re-engage in the workforces as follows:

Age Bias – resistance to hiring older workers (10 of 12, 83%)

Experience does not match opportunity (11 of 12, 92%)

Not Taking Action (6 of 12, 50%)

Embarrassment of being displaced from work (6 of 12, 50%)

Transition (12 of 12, 100%)

Loss of Identity (8 of 12, 67%)

Challenges and Inhibitors

Transitions to the workforce for later-life career changes is often bounded by challenges and inhibitions that vary for the experiences of entering the workforce at younger ages.

Age bias—Resistance to hiring older workers. Brooklyn offers the following age-related comparative experience of entering the workforce and the wish for a collective or learning community, where these experiences could be shared:

—And they're in their twenties and thirties. It's a very different experience. I remember looking for work in my twenties and thirties. You feel like [you're wanted], where they say they love to hire young people. That's great when you're in your twenties and thirties, but then when you're in your fifties and you hear oh, it's a great company, they have all the young people, you kind of feel like well, what are they going to be looking at me for, then? So, just to hear how other people in this day and age bracket were able to manage that.

Mavis equates perceptions of age as being tantamount to possessing a certain skill base that hiring managers may assume is inherently related to age with an inverse functionality. As she notes, rather than the assumption that there is a correlation between level of skill and age, where being older may translate to being the one having acquired

or mastered more skills, there may be the underlying sense that older age is an inhibitor to effective performance:

Honestly and truly, I really believe one of the biggest—and I don't know if it's a skill or what you want to call it, but really having the self-confidence to get out there and go for it because there's so much negativity towards people past the age of 50 nowadays. There's so much, "Oh, you're too old to work. We're not going to hire you," and that's evidenced by people applications or resumes being submitted, and 300 resumes later somebody might call them. But I think it really is—the biggest thing is having good self-confidence and good self-worth, a good resume, and good contacts. I mean, at our age we should have some good contacts in our lives. We should know people who can spread the word about how great we are.

Marco suggests that there are subtle ways in which hiring managers assert age-related barriers to block re-entry into the workforce for the over 50-year-old:

I'm going on one or two interviews I'm going on one or two interviews. I've gone for Fortune 500 companies, but as soon as I get into the room, I start talking and I'm answering all their questions perfectly, I'm thinking I'm going to get to the next round, and the next thing you know, you don't get it. And then over a period of time, especially the last three months, it's slowly diminished, and now all the agencies want to have a face chat with you. And I understand what they want. They want to see my face. They want to see my—they're trying to judge the age.

Annalise suggests that age discrimination may combine elements of racial bias: "It depends on who is actually going to be interviewing you. It depends on their perceptions of you of an older black woman—an older person may have another perspective." To this Clark offers that the differences in perspective may reside in the presence of maturity and in some instances may be a rationale for the presence and practice of ageism: "Maturity has a lot to do with understanding needs and personalities more gracious than younger people." However, you attribute the presence of ageism, Marco finds it distinctively humiliating for him in the present and should serve as a warning to hiring managers who will eventually be in his shoes: "Honestly, I tell you, it is humiliating. I didn't want to say that out loud, but that's the way I feel sometimes. It is humiliating. And I keep on saying to myself, you know what? You may have your little giggles and laughs and stuff

like that, but one day you will be in my shoes, and I hope you're prepared for it." Even more than the hopeful optimism of realization of equitable treatment for all ages, Marco admits that he struggled with anger in his attempts to get back to his field:

Well, you know what? Right now, I'm looking to get back in technology, so I'm kind of digging into the trenches and a little angry, so I have to get past that anger and just say, Okay, I have a job. It's not going to go away right now, I don't think. So, with that said, if I want to apply for a job that I like, then I'm going to try to zone in on that because I think it's the proper job for me. And then if I get the agent or the head hunter on the line, then they can turn around and say, "Listen"—I may just ask the question that you said earlier, which is absolutely right, "What's percentage of people over 50 in the company?"

Chloe sensed that there may have been some insulated fear held by her supervisor that may have manifested itself into what she may have considered a threat against both Chloe's age and experience that may have contributed to her laying Chole off: "the girl I was working with was very difficult. I think she was afraid I was going to take her job." Once the lay-off was realized, Chloe was confronted with the kind of condition that Marco spoke of and that Fred also experienced: "I can't even get a job, [after] 4-5 interviews then when they saw me it was my age, they didn't want to hire me. I am seeing a counselor, but it's been really hard." In Fred's case he lowered his workforce pursuits to entry level positions and he noted: "even then they don't call you back."

Marco continues to propose that there should be a certain assertiveness with hiring managers where the applicant can take a stand to determine whether or not there is any interest in someone like him/her during the interview process and this would go a long way in keeping the perspective applicant's voice in the choice during the hiring process. As he points out, offer a certain amount of fidelity: "Because basically I'm applying for it and I'm over 50, and I just don't want to waste my time. I can be that blunt with the head hunter because he's not hiring me. He's trying to make a commission."

Mavis agrees with Marco's take on the subtle inhibitions that challenge one over 50 years of when attempting to rejoin the workforce. She suggests that it is perplexing

that even in the face of legislation protecting against age discrimination it is still present albeit cloaked. The implementation of discriminatory treatment for age in opposition to legislation is present. And yet, it is also something that is not as easily disputed as discrimination in other areas including denying rights to the disabled:

So, it just amazes me that something as—it's a physical ailment or people who are handicapped, you can't discriminate against those people buying a house. Until they start looking at and people start recognizing that people over the age of 50 or 55 or whatever that magic number is, there is a ton of discrimination going on against people who are in those age brackets. And until somebody probably does a class action lawsuit and somebody loses bazillions of dollars over it, I think we're just going to have to deal with it. And I wonder, did our parents have to deal with this? Did they go through this? And I know that back then jobs were typically more labor.

Marco finds that the type of judgment that Mavis speaks to has been reluctant to any kind of change towards age equity in hiring as he suggests the following scenario is more the rule of for the later life professional looking to re-enter the workforce:

And then he says, "You know what?"—I never get to get to that point because at that point, it's, "Hire me," and that's the part I haven't gotten to. If I felt like I could get to that point, then I know I could win the person over because he knows that I'm not looking for the top salary because I'm a senior and I know this, and I can do this job with my eyes closed. And that's what I'm trying to do on an individual basis, but unsuccessful.

Experience does not match opportunity. Sebastian found that hiring personnel may have a sense of intimidation when reviewing his credentials and instead of proposing to match those credentials to an employment opportunity, he found that in at least one instance the opposite occurred: [the interviewer was] "trying to discourage me on one interview where they tried to talk me out of the job because I was too over qualified."

Balancing expectations of skills can vary and as Marco suggests, can be a mechanism for imbalanced hiring decisions. This is particularly true when hiring outcomes may be clouded in preferences that are elusive at best, and rarely transparent. In so doing, hiring personnel might appear to be satisfying legislation that is to guarantee against age discrimination, when in true manifestation, is more in alignment with s skills

base that will fit a highly unique few. The end result is that the job you performed for decades has changed in the time you have been separated from the workforce. As Marco indicates:

Well, sometimes it's very difficult to apply for a job that you don't feel comfortable with. And then project management five years ago or IT managers five years ago was kind of straightforward. There's certain things that you knew. Today they're looking for that person to do everything. They want them to be a programmer, to understand scripting in Java, and they want them to understand all the servers and multiple things.

Fred found that even by applying for jobs that required very little in the way of skills and professional prowess, he was unable to get any hiring traction: "I applied for jobs [at places like] Babies R Us, Bed Bath, and Beyond. You have to lift 50 pounds. I never got a call. No Calls Back. Even applied for part time jobs again who is hiring 50-60 year olds and older. A person with experience brings something to the table. Young people leave. Older people stay. Everything is looked at in the short term." Marco agrees with Fred's take on how wide the pendulum defining variations in the tasks of his profession has spread:

Well, a lot of the jobs right now that I'm looking at involves the programming aspect of it, and I can't apply for it because I just would be stumped. It's a high, fast-paced world, so if you have to—if you're getting a lot of help desk calls and you've got server problems and all of a sudden you have Internet access and firewall issues, the last thing you want to do is focus on trying to script something. And I understand what they want to do. They're trying to make everything automated so there's less intervention of the technician, but that involves that you hire a programmer and that you project manage that programmer to write those scripts. Some of these companies are not willing to do that. They're trying to take it on the cheap and they're trying to get me to do that and also manage. I can't apply for these jobs.

In an effort to prioritize maintaining his livelihood, Templeton would take any wage-earning opportunity that would come his way, "I would take anything to make a buck. I swept floors, walked dogs and even did people's laundry."

Not taking action. Giants admits transition was not a quick and easy process for him it took some time, as did the realization that a process/plan for transition was needed. He admits that he missed all of the obvious clues:

And it did take a while for me to intuitively develop my own kind of thing where, okay, apply for that job, take that test, stop for the most part wasting these computer applications that nobody will ever read. Go personally to a place. Introduce yourself. Show them that you're in relatively good shape for your age, and that you're capable of doing something. But this came after time, and this came after the gradual realization. I was not the person that was devastated when I lost my job. I said, oh, I'll just go out and get another job. It took time for me to realize what the situation really was.

Giants also suggests that there are many resistors to transition in employment and performance that he highlights as follows:

My company, offered to retrain the strippers and send them to school, which was very expensive, and some of them actually went to work someplace else rather than—they did not see the coming digital printing and that their job was going to no longer exist. And they refused to go to school, and they had to leave. And so, as far as there are resistors of people my age, and maybe you see them. They say, Facebook? I don't have a computer. I can't do that. Sean Penn said the other day, they asked him about social media, and he said, no, I've never had a computer. Why start now?

Embarrassment over the loss of employment. Length of time between transitioning from, to re-entering the workforce for Chloe, and Fred, led to initial periods of embarrassment the aftereffects of which were often compromised health. For Chloe, there were conditions that lacked continuity in medical care and attention. This was also true for Fred who noticed a downturn in his overall physical well-being. Sebastian admitted that he has never been out of work this long in his entire life, and that is humiliating.

Giants was slow to realize the severity of change that he faced:

Okay. My own way of thinking slowed down my—I wish I would have been more adaptive to the—I think I was a little bit set in my ways. I think I was a little bit full of myself that I thought that since I knew a job up and down there was somebody around the corner that would realize that I knew this job up and down. I was slow to realize. A huge impediment was I was

slow to realize that my job, in effect, no longer existed. I missed all of the cues.

Giants also found that his embarrassment led him to contact anyone he thought may have an idea about employment opportunities or any knowledge of anyone who might even know someone who could forecast an employment possibility: “Yeah. I used the good old boy network. I just called anybody I knew. After I got through the initial stage where I wanted to sort of hide the fact that I was unemployed, I started asking anybody I knew, what do you got? What do you got?” Templeton noted that not wanting anyone to know of his unemployed state may also have contributed to his taking any job that came his way.

Transition. All of the participants reported that they were willing to transition to any employment that would move them toward maintaining their livelihood and provide for their families. The transition was not always one they may have predicted, for example, Annalise and Brooklyn ended up performing job tasks that was diametrically opposed to the work that structured their careers. Annalise went from corporate administrative support to collecting DNA samples. And as she noted, “I never thought I would be collecting DNA samples.” Brooklyn went from a pivotal role in marketing in a small firm to Quality Assurance in a progressive software development company.

Plato, Veronica, and Mavis transitioned with intentionality toward change. All three changing careers and retooling in the process. Plato from a small business owner to a Hospice Chaplain, Rae from an electronics executive to a college professor and Mavis, from 30 years in a Fortune 500 hundred electronics firm to Real Estate.

For Giants there was no immediate inertia driving his transition and as he illustrates his wife is urging him on to take some steps make some movement toward getting back to the workforce:

And of course, my wife is looking at me, and she's saying there's got to be steps here. Why don't you go back to school? Why don't you do this? And I'm like, well, what do I want to do? And all the time I'm looking for

printing jobs, and they're paying like 15 bucks an hour. And I'm like, no, I'm not taking that.

Seven of the participants considered transition on both the employment plain as well as the physical plain and relocated in order to enhance the feasibility of viable employment. This group included, Chloe, Annalise, Clark, Veronica, Mavis, Brooklyn, and Plato.

Loss of identity. Sebastian was so desperate to find himself through his traditional avenues of employment that he was considering taking his family and the community infrastructure they had developed over the years and relocating. To this he asks: "Do I really want to pick up and move at this age? But you lose all your contacts. People are separating to relocate to get a job."

Fred explains that while his work ethic may not be what is expected today, someone who is steadfast in performance and reliability, it was the reason he got up in the morning, it was how he defined himself. And even as he tried different venues to re-enter the workforce, he found there was something missing:

I took [a] class for Medical Billing. Boring classes, it takes a certain kind of span. Being reliable is important. In all the years I worked I was always there. I only missed 2 or 3 days. Mentally, you don't miss work unless you're dead. That's just the way it was then. If you don't take a job seriously why are you there? Reliability and a work ethic.

Giants experienced the same type of separation of identity as self-defined through work and performance that Fred described. Giants exemplifies this:

That was a problem for me. When you mention it that way, organized, I had—no matter what, my life was organized for 30 years. I went to a job, and I did the same job. I was really good at it. It was easy for me, and then it was gone. So, I missed the organization. And I looked for that immediately. I said, oh, geez, all of a sudden I'm waking up, I'm making the bed in the morning. And I went through a period where I just said, all right, let me—I've never collected unemployment. And I would get up in the morning, and I didn't know what to do. And I was thinking about what are the steps?

And Giants continues to offer the perspective from that of the hiring manager as more of a reality than not:

If I got a choice between a 52, 53-year-old man—and I was hired for the courts when I was 56—and a 27-year-old man, I'm taking the 27-year-old man. He's going to be there for a while. I can mold him probably to more than the older guy that's set in his ways. And it took me a long time to this realize and to kind of develop any sense of what the lost organization that I had in my life. If I would have thought more about it in those terms in making a step by step process I would have been better off, but I was just winging it.

Fred found the process of re-entering the workforce in and of itself not yielding to any direction that would support confidence in pursuing re-entry into any viable kind of employment. He found the lack of communication post interview to be equally as disturbing as simply trying to find his way back into the arena of employment: “[employers] Should come back to you with we are going a different way or something.” Sebastian, Chloe, Marco, and Fred did not receive return calls or courtesy emails after completing 4-5 interviews. At least as Fred said: “just let me know if you went in a different direction and maybe tell me what I did wrong.”

Finding # 3

All participants (100%) described having to be willing to find new ways to re-enter the workforce.

Participants were asked to describe how they overcame obstacles and challenges they faced when transitioning from the workforce after the age of 50. To enhance the understanding of overcoming these challenges and obstacles, the participants were asked to specify their thoughts attached to the mechanisms used to combat challenges impeding their ability to re-enter the workforce at this point in their lives, and to do so without positive or negative value attachment. The vehicle for which, the interview questions provided the platform for those ideas and events that stood out as, and remembered as, being particularly noticeable during this time. All participants (100%) cited the willingness to transition as the most salient element in the process of re-entering the workforce. See Appendix J: Frequency Table 7 for a comprehensive detailed listing of

factors participants reported as contributing to their overcoming challenges and obstacles they faced when returning to the workforce.

Table 7. Summary of Finding #3

<p><u>FINDING #3</u> All participants (100%) described having to be willing to find new ways to re-enter the workforce.</p> <p>Participants described learning to overcome obstacles and challenges faced in re-engaging in the workforce in the following ways:</p> <p>Networking with Family, Friends, Colleagues (11 of 12, 92%) Becoming More Marketable (11 of 12, 92%) Persistence (11 of 12, 92%) Willingness to Transition (12 of 12, 100%)</p>
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Overcoming Challenges-Facilitators

Networking. Becoming involuntarily separated from employment may not in and of itself have the feel of possible path toward re-entry into the workforce, as Fred characterizes the experience of being laid off by his supervisor, “if I saw my supervisor now, I wouldn’t speak to him – and we were friends.” Chloe had a similar experience with the individual she reported to, as someone who, ‘was difficult and afraid I was going to take her job.’ Chloe felt that this played a significant part in her being laid off. As her supervisor was younger with fewer years of experience and may have feared being viewed as having less of a skill base. It is for these reasons that networking with friends, and colleagues did not have the appeal for Fred and Chloe. Although, both did report having a brief callback as a result of contact with colleagues at their former places of hire, in both cases they were temporary, and very short lived.

Both Marco and Sebastian hailing from technical fields were able to pick up some wage-earning opportunities in their field through friend and colleague contact, however,

they reported the work as minimal and often having a duration of a few days a month with a miniscule portion of their previous salaries.

Annalise relied on the integrity of information she received first from her family as a conduit from her church community, “at the time, my brother in-law knew someone in the church who worked at a national publishing company. I ended up working at the publishing company as an Administrative Assistant, only to find out the publishing company was facing financial difficulties, and when the CEO died his daughter took over and I was laid off.”

Becoming more marketable. Giving thought to being or even becoming more marketable in order to have a broader reach in the workforce arena after a long career is not a thought that may have come immediately to mind post layoff, as Giants explains,

The local *PennySaver*, we had a healthy *PennySaver* up here in Westchester, and it went from being a 150-page thing to a 40-page thing. *The Journal News* started laying people off, and people were going out of business. I missed all the obvious cues, and looking back now, I’d say how could I not retrain? If I could do something different, I would have started retraining right away. But I failed to realize that my job did not exist anymore. The biggest impediment was myself, being unaware that the game was over as far as printing.

Veronica had a similar sentiment as she pursued a career in higher education and found that while you may have extensive expertise in more than one area, it does not always transfer to another, especially when you make a career move that ostensibly appears to be diametrically opposed to the career pursuits of your past: “I wish I practiced interviewing and [also] wish I had a mentor to craft research statements and CV. Women are particularly poor supporting in that way.” She also found that perhaps the most effective way to re-enter the workforce via a career shift would be to present with fidelity and sincerity, and simply be true to yourself; “Who know[s] what really happened, but what helped was just to be authentic about what kind of professor I intended to be. I think it helped me-connected me with interviews in a way that was meaningful. I also

published articles and in diverse areas. *Leadership and Women's Agency; Economics and Women.*”

Fred supports this belief in presenting yourself with a certain honesty, and that that should speak not only to your inter-relatable skills base but would also speak to your character:

When you've been in the workforce for many years' experience is important. You can handle it better than someone who is new to the industry, you know patterns, you know who to call, you know what clients are looking for; building rapport—you *Trust* them, they trust you. All four focus group members agreed with the need to present yourself with honesty and integrity as well as meshing your skills with needs of the current job market.

Persistence. Brooklyn cites the need for demonstrative self-confidence when overcoming barriers to re-entering the workforce especially in areas where there may be a learning curve. And while you may not want to admit that the learning curve is steeper than you'd like, she believes that there is a kind of survivalist thrust in self confidence that will both propel you toward the job during the interview, and increase your levels of performance once in the job:

Because I work in an environment where people ask for help from their colleagues all the time, but you do it in a way of, “Oh, so, how do you do this? And can you help me with that?” And they're very willing to help, but you can't walk in like, “Oh, my God. I've never seen—I don't know how to use the latest Excel,” and then panic. “How do you do this?”

In overcoming obstacles to re-entering the workforce, Marco was driven on the external incitement from friends to propel his confidence forward and he offers the following analogy as illustration:

I don't know the answer. All I know, a spark of energy comes back into me through my friends, and then next thing I know is I apply, and then next thing I know there's hope, and then I get—it's almost a feeling that—what's the right word I'm looking for? Where it's like a young man asking a girl on a date, and the girl says no, but then all of a sudden the girl says yes. The young man's insides feel all happy, somebody wants me. And that's the feeling I'm looking to get. I'm looking to go out in technology the way I

came in and not the way I'm about to leave. That's the dilemma where my head is at.

Mavis sees the need for self-confidence as most compelling when trying to re-enter the workforce, because if it isn't presented by someone over the age of 50 who can they rely on to do it for them?

Honestly and truly, I really believe one of the biggest—and I don't know if it's a skill or what you want to call it, but really having the self-confidence to get out there and go for it because there's so much negativity towards people past the age of 50 nowadays. There's so much, "Oh, you're too old to work. We're not going to hire you," and that's evidenced by people applications or resumes being submitted, and 300 resumes later somebody might call them. But I think it really is—the biggest thing is having good self-confidence and good self-worth, a good resume, and good contacts. I mean, at our age we should have some good contacts in our lives. We should know people who can spread the word about how great we are.

Annalise moved barriers to her re-entering the workforce by applying to employment agencies often pursuing multiple agencies at a time in the hope of hire.

Willingness to transition. A willingness to transition from the work that may have been done historically and served as defining daily purpose, was a challenge that according to Brooklyn could only be overcome through a manifestation of an internal champion convincing yourself of the need for change:

And you have to kind of say to yourself I'm starting all over again learning something new. And you've got to do it because we have to support ourselves, and you just have to brush all that aside. But talking to other people and saying, "How did you kind of shut that voice up that was making you feel like oh, my God, I can't believe I have to start all over again?" How do you put all that aside and turn it into a positive of well, this is a new experience, and this is something that could be fun, and I get to learn new things and meet new people? You feel like you're in uncharted territory.

As cited earlier, Templeton was so willing to transition to any kind of employment, that he took any wage-earning opportunity that came his way, even doing jobs that he may have considered demeaning during his pre-separation from the workforce. In the process honed his customer service skills. Annalise and Brooklyn had similar sentiments as they both made radical career shifts to the point where they welcomed the change as a

learning adventure where they could become part of something different that held the promise of sustaining their livelihood. Marco agrees and suggest that bridge or gap work between jobs may work to maintain livelihood:

I'll give you an example, if a trader needed support, I could charge them five guys, maybe \$100 a week, so it would be \$500 a week in the heyday. And then I would go in there and take care of the server, take care of their firewall, and then maintain their PCs and answer any trade disputes with the exchanges. That was a pretty full-time job when I was looking for work.

Finding #4

All participants (100%) reported the need to be self-directed in order to re-enter the workforce.

Participants were asked to describe the learning activities they engaged in when transitioning back to the workforce after the age of 50. To generate an understanding of what learning was activated in order to re-enter the workforce, participants were asked to specify their thoughts attached to the activities facilitating reengagement in the workforce. They were asked to respond with reflections on this point in their lives and to do so without positive or negative attachment. The receptacle for which, the interview questions, provided the platform for those ideas and events that stood out as, and were remembered as, being particularly salient during this time. All the participants (100%) cited Self-Directed Learning as a key strategy in implementing their transition back to the workforce. See Appendix K Frequency Table 8 for a comprehensive detailed listing of reported challenges and obstacles to returning to the workforce.

Table 8. Summary of Finding #4

FINDING # 4

All participants (100%) reported the need to be self-directed in order to re-enter the workforce.

Participants described engaging in the following activities as they transitioned back to the workforce:

Dialogue and discussion (11 of 12, 92%)

Employment Resources (6 of 12, 50%)

Self-Directed Learning (12 of 12, 100%)

Reading (Research) (10 of 12, 83%)

Reflection (Pulling on Past Experience) (11 of 12, 92%)

Mentoring (6 of 12, 50%)

Learning Activities

Dialogue and discussion. When looking to transition back to the workforce, the rituals or ease in movement that may have traditionally been applied when executed earlier in one's career search may not be as easily accessible. People who can share their experiences and caveats on similar conditions may not be close at hand or even known. Dialogue and discussion on what to engage in may be sparse, leaving re-entry into the workforce a solitary activity. This is the case as explained by Brooklyn and the need for a support group going through this type of transition:

I think maybe if there was some sort of, for lack of a better word, a support group of other people who were in their late forties and upper age, forties and higher, who were between jobs who could share their experience and what helped them. Because I didn't really know anybody else my age who was looking for work at that point. And it was scary. It was scary to think that what I said earlier, what they might think—I'm too old to hire and she might retire soon, and she might come with health issues. And to hear other people's experiences and see how they were able to kind of manage that and get themselves working.

On the other hand, Clark found a much different experience of dialogue and discussion, as being one that propelled the creativity that would fuel her marketability: "We are always having this discussion and talk about what will sell as opposed to what

you want to make. I think it is important to make things that are important to you and therefore never compromise on what you make.” Plato supports Clark in the movement toward something new and breaking through the comfort bubble that emulates from potential static of job longevity and approaches the activity of dialogue and discussion as necessary to learning something new. He suggests: “Willing to be uncomfortable and learn new things. Listen actively, listen. [We] live in a society that celebrates Narcissism and that is counterintuitive when it is all about me.”

However, Marco found that discussion with colleagues was an activity that was bifurcated. On the one hand, it served to affirm his skills base, and on the other, it encouraged him to dig into the transition of the new employment venture:

So, [L] and I would be walking, and she would talk financial, and I was telling her how I supported the financial, and we just became friends. She was going through a hard time in the workforce. Got laid off, and blah-blah-blah. And I would be texting her and stuff like that, sending her all—now she does that to me. There are times where you get down, and then all of a sudden, I would see three emails come by, “Look, I found this job.” And that helps a lot because that creates a spark when you’re almost feeling like giving up and just saying, Okay, you beat me. She says, “Reapply.” And then I get agencies calling me, and then we start talking.

Employment resources. Similar to Fred’s attending job clubs, and Annalise attending job fairs, Giant found that his transition back to the workforce could be helped by going to job recruiting events. Even though as states, it was kind of a mixed experience with having to admit his employment status:

What I did was, and what I was advised to do as—when I started collecting unemployment, the Putnam County—I was in Putnam County at the time—they would make you attend these job things, and they would bring people in, and they talked about all this stuff and had all this electronic networking stuff. And really, what it always came down to for me was saying, and spread the word, even though you kind of were uncomfortable letting people know that you weren’t working.

Marco, on the other hand, welcomed suggestions for any activities that would enhance his marketability even if it included rebranding: “It was through another person, my old

boss that also had to reinvent himself, that came up with the idea of coming up with three different resumes and tweaking the times. So, I said, you know what? He's not wrong, he's right, so let's try this."

Self-directed learning. Infusing the goal of re-entering the work force with individual centric learning activities was readily embraced by Mavis:

But the biggest thing really was taking advantage of the classes that were available. And our real estate firm, the broker in the firm, he would hold weekly meetings, and then they would do an area-wide monthly meeting. And, so, going to those classes and going to those meetings where you learn stuff was really helpful. And that gets right back to working with others in your field who are experts, because you learn from them as well.

Veronica not only tried to define her transition pathway from corporate workforce separation to a career in higher education, but also sought to discover the needed rudiments for this change: "I knew I needed to do some adjunct work and I networked with similar people as I was going to school and went on line to look for advice, for jobs [that] converted from adjunct to full time-not too many people."

Giants found that by directing his own learning he could manage familiarity with the tasks of interviewing and obtaining a new job:

That's fine for him, but for people like me that are over 50, have a computer, on your own time, and just start fiddling around with the programs, and make yourself familiar so that when you do go for a job interview you don't look like a complete idiot. And that's where we're headed.

A focus group participant agreed with Giants and suggested that you have to research and know the organization, and added, "act like you want to join their team."

Another focus group member held onto the contention that you have to be willing to take charge of preparing for the job interview and the job, and that you may not have the benefit of guiding hands to support you. So, go out there and do your own diligence to get and keep the job.

Reading (research). Research can be a key element in successful preparation for entry into the workforce on all levels. This holds a particular imperative when re-entering the workforce after a separation from such. It can serve to shore up self-advocacy in hiring conditions where you have to convince hiring staff of your value to the organization; and of course, offer a mutual fit. Chloe found that after her separation from her employment research was both informative and therapeutic: “To keep me from going insane and depressed I did a lot of research.” Also, having come from careers that required unique skill sets, Sebastian and Marco continued their research to keep current in their fields. As the fields of technology change with each passing moment, they both reported the need to stay current and competitive not only for any employment opportunities that may arise, but also to hone their skills for current application.

Mavis and Veronica studied the nuances of the fields they were entering. Mavis through real estate coursework, and individual readings and Veronica through the annals of higher education. Giants, after trying many other avenues, and once deciding to take a civil service exam, prepared as he did when working for FedEx. He organized the information he needed in order to successfully pass the exam.

Reflection (pulling from past experience). Reflecting and pulling from past experience can couch current workforce endeavors in a light that becomes constructive as Clark explains:

I think you have to come with a history of satisfaction with your work over the years. As a Rec [recreational] Therapist I had the opportunity to create and meet people’s functional needs and it was never boring or dull and that is what I continue to do to this day. When I am with the groups I learn to do new and different techniques-a continuous growth. You want to feel you continue to grow and not deteriorate.

Mavis found gratitude in her ability to reach back and pull up those experiences that had proven successful in her previous employment endeavors:

Yeah. Again, I think it just came down to when I would hit the proverbial wall I would kind of talk myself down from the ledge and say you

had this past success. You sold this house or you were able to find a house for these buyers. And you made mistakes, but you corrected them, and you moved forward. So, for me it was really looking back and reminding myself of my own success and kind of taking those lessons that I learned in those successes and telling myself I can do that again. So, that's kind of how I always have dealt with failures or roadblocks or whatever, just saying you made it happen before, so there's no reason why you can't make it happen now.

This is congruent with the sentiment Clark expressed while knee deep in the transition process:

I found if I needed to learn what to do I was independent in my decision making and I brought my leadership skills to the group. I naturally have these skills from the work I did previously. We all have those skills that we bring with us. We also manage our personalities. We are mature enough to accommodate each other.

Mentoring. Mavis her greatest asset during transition was that of a mentor who she trusted and who would be able to provide her with a reliable sense of the lay of the land, particularly significant in real estate. However, an ancillary occurrence happened in the process, because of her background and comfort with her skill level she was able to generate a kind of inverse mentoring which assisted the more routed people but also enhanced her learning as well:

So, being able to—even being new at this, I was able to help more seasoned, experienced people who I was working with—other agents—so, I think that helped me as well. But just taking advantage of all those classes, working with people who—I had agents who would call me up occasionally and say, hey, I'm having trouble with this particular software or whatever, help me walk through it. And, so, I was able to do some of that. That helped.

Summary

The findings supported by the voices of the participants yielded a depiction of fidelity in representation of both the participants responses to the interview questions, and the research questions under study.

The first finding that participants described felt being of less value even passé as an older worker when separated from the workforce after the age of 50. These affects were drawn upon the condition of being separated from the workforce after the age of 50 and the impact of being sorted out based on age.

The second finding was that all participants reported transition as most challenging to their learning new ways to earn a living. This comes with the awareness that leaving a long-standing career especially when that departure has been thrust upon, does not necessarily predict preparation, and as a result transitioning back into the workforce becomes more challenging than one could both predict and manage in the short term.

The third finding mirrored that of the second finding as all of the participants described learning to have a willingness to transition as a significant factor in overcoming the challenges they faced with re-engaging in the workforce. This was precluded by the need to sustain their livelihoods, as well as a willingness to remain part of their communities. This was also true for the 7 who relocated, and their drive to build and maintain their place in their new communities.

The fourth finding that all participants reported that activities of Self-Directed Learning were key factors in their transitioning efforts to re-engage in the workforce, was a finding that hinged on self-reliance to determine the preparation, skills and knowledge needed in order to so successfully. While mentoring was reported by less than half the participants as being in place during the transition, half reported that having someone undergoing a similar condition of this type of transition would have been helpful. One participant reported that because of her background, she was able to mentor even seasoned professionals in her new career. This placed her in a cyclic mentor-learner-mentee role.

As the researcher continued to seek deeper understanding(s) of the findings she linked each of the research questions to the major findings. The researcher was then able to address the fundamental question of the study-how do workers over the age of 50 re-

enter the workforce. It was through the responses to this inquiry, that the researcher was able to develop the analytic categories that were key to conceptualizing the findings through an analytic and interpretive lens. The description that underscores the findings that individuals separated from the workforce over the age of 50 and seeking to re-enter should recognize the need to engage in employment pathways that differ from traditional careers, translated to the first Analytic Category. A willingness to transition to new ways of employment through their own self-directed efforts, became the next Analytic Category. The findings were then channeled through these analytic categories.

The following chapter will analyze, interpret and synthesize the data that was reported in this chapter. To facilitate this, the main findings have been formatted into two analytic categories that directly connect to the four major findings of the present study. Table 9 illustrates the analytic categories as they connect to the Research Questions and the major findings.

Table 9. Analytic Categories for: How Individuals 50 Years of Age and Over Manage to Re-engage in the Workforce

Research Questions	Finding Statement	
How did participants describe their learning experiences of re-entering the workforce?	An overwhelming majority (92%) of participants described feeling passé as an older worker when separated from the workforce.	Individuals 50+ manage to re-enter the workforce by:
How did participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?	All participants (100%) reported transition as most challenging to their learning new ways to earn a living.	Recognizing the need to engage in employment pathways that vary from traditional careers, and
How did participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they face in re-engaging in the workforce?	All participants (100%) described learning to have a willingness to transition as a significant factor on overcoming the challenges they faced with re-engaging in the workforce.	Being willing to transition to new ways of employment through their own self-directed efforts.
What activities did participants learn that help them transition to re-engagement?	All participants (100%) reported that activities of Self-Directed Learning were key factors in their transitioning efforts to re-engage in the workforce.	

Chapter V

ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS, AND INTERPRETATION

The purpose of this study was to explore with 12 adults, 50 years of age and above, faced with extended job loss and the need to continue working to earn a living, their perceptions of how they learn to transition and re-engage in the workforce.

To realize this purpose the following research questions were presented:

- (1) How did participants describe their learning experiences of re-entry into the workforce?
- (2) How did participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?
- (3) How did participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they face in re-engaging in the workforce?
- (4) What activities did participants learn that helped them transition to re-engagement?

From participants' responses to the research questions, the following four main findings emerged:

- (1) An overwhelming majority (92%) of participants described feeling passé, as an older worker when separated from the workforce after the age of 50.
- (2) All participants (100%) reported transitioning from full time employment to learn new ways to earn a living as the most critical challenged they faced.

- (3) All participants (100%) described having to be willing to find new ways to re-enter the workforce.
- (4) All participants (100%) reported the need to be self-directed in order to re-enter the workforce.

This chapter details the researcher's subjective confluence of analysis examining and synthesizing the ways in which individuals aged 50 and above transition from separation from the workforce to re-entry. From an exploration of the data two analytic categories have emerged:

- (1) A recognition for the need to engage in employment pathways that vary from previous careers.
- (2) A willingness to transition to re-engagement in the workforce and the need to prepare for new employment through efforts of Self-Directed Learning.

Initiating the analysis of these critical elements, the participants have been grouped into three categories to delineate complementary themes by way of participant perspectives.

Participant Groupings

Participants have been categorized into three groups: Resistors, Adaptors and Innovators. The groups were formed by their responses to the interview questions and the narratives that evolved and developed organically during the interview process. This was reinforced by their answers to the participant survey question: *Please provide a brief description of how you acquired your current position.*

Resistors

Resistors are the group that remained steadfast in their hopes for re-entering the workforce with the same recognition of their talents they had come to appreciate. They reported not shying away from work, rather, shying away from work that was not a

suitable fit. Upon realizing that their livelihood was suffering as was their standing in the community, they each did seek employment outside of their traditional fields. This group reported affects of resilient anger, disappointment and bouts with depression. The group is evenly split between male (2) and female (2), with a mean age of 59.5 years. The mean length of time spent in their pre-separation from employment careers was 24.5 years. While each did re-enter the workforce, they did so at salaries significantly below what they benefitted from in their previous employment. In each case they continue to seek the type of employment they had in the past.

Adaptors

Adaptors predominantly female (3 out of 4), with a mean age of 57.25 years. They presented as the group finding transition to any re-engagement in employment as long as it would assist them with sustaining their livelihood. All reported assimilating to new work environments by asking questions and figuring out how to translate the tasks before them. Three of the group relocated in the process of transition. For all three, relocating was a critical part of the transition process. In general, all of the Adaptors view their current employment status as obligatory with latitude to change if necessary. Although, it must be noted that while they have adapted to their current employment, they have also adapted to their compensation being far below what they experienced in their previous careers.

Innovators

Innovators have a mean age of 66 years, and like Adaptors, the gender definition is evenly split with two females, and two males. Three of the group relocated as part of their transition, which enhanced their efforts to re-enter the workforce in entrepreneurial ways. Though they reported that the start-up of their entrepreneurial ventures may have been a slow burn, once started, their ventures realized more sustainable momentum. Similar to the Adaptors, three of the Innovators relocated as part of their transition process.

However, they differ from both the Resistors and the Adaptors as they focused on being the sole proprietor of a venture, making them less risk adverse than the other two groups.

Table 10 indicates the participant groupings against each of the categories in addition to comments that reflect why individual participants were assigned to distinctive groups.

Table 10. Participant Groupings

Group Category	Participant	Comments
Resistors (4) Transitioned to employment with the hope of re-entering the workforce on the same skill level they experienced prior to their separation from the workforce.	Marco	Ambushed by his company's downward trend, he sincerely felt he would be able to re-enter the job market fueled by his 30 years of Infrastructure experience. He accepted a job as an Administrator and continues to apply for employment in Financial Infrastructure.
	Sebastian	A technology wizard managing to maintain his skill set post lay-off with part-time free-lance work. He is still seeking to be re-instated in the technology field where his skill would be realized, utilized, and appreciated.
	Chloe	Chloe devoted 38 years to CAD engineering work for Army installations where she continued to finely tune her unique skills, not realizing or prepared for any type of layoff, she managed to transition to some consulting work albeit temporary, and with a significantly diminished compensation.
	Fred	For over 25 years as an analyst, Fred was not prepared for being laid off. Especially in view of individuals he considered to have less than acceptable performance levels remaining on the job. After over a year he found some consultant work that was short lived.
Adaptors (4) Re-entered the workforce through employment pathways that differed from their previous careers	Veronica	Divorced herself from her previous career and re-entered the workforce as a professor in higher education.
	Annalise	Upon tirelessly contacting employment agencies she accepted a position as a DNA collector. A position requiring vastly different skills than her previous career as an Administrative Assistant in the corporate arena.
	Brooklyn	Once separated from the workforce, Brooklyn accepted a part-time position that turned into full time employment. Even though she admitted that change is hard.
	Giants	Giants did not believe that the industry (printing) he had relied on for decades would in fact be in large part engulfed by individual-driven technology. However, he knew he had to find employment and first accepted a position with FedEx and then took a civil service test to enter the court system.

Table 10 (continued)

Group Category	Participant	Comments
Innovators (4) Transitioned to the Workforce in Entrepreneurial Ways.	Templeton	While suffering fear and anxiety upon being separated from a career he knew for over 30 years, Templeton segued his customer service skills, to re-enter the workforce as an owner-driver car service.
	Mavis	Mavis checked to her interest in real estate once she separated from the workforce. Even with the understanding that she could fall back on the techniques she used for optimal performance in her previous employment, she didn't let her self-doubt take over.
	Plato	Plato has always known when it was time to leave and that remained his Modus Operandi when he entered the Chaplaincy. He did so with the fervor and interest in being the guiding resource for individuals in hospice.
	Clark	Clark, realizing that her separation from the workforce was not a true ticket to retirement, honed her craft skills to mastery and revenue bearing interests.

The participant categories are fundamental to the following analytic discourse.

Analysis

The analysis is delineated here through analytic categories that import meaning to the data offered in the Findings Chapter. In Chapter IV the data culled through interviews is presented in an objective format specifying the findings. In the present chapter the findings are analyzed and presented as a subjective discourse with connectivity to current literature.

First Analytic Category

Recognizing the need to engage in employment pathways that vary from traditional careers. This Analytic Category directly connects to research questions 1 and 2: *How did participants describe their learning experiences of re-entering the workforce?* and *How did participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?*

Re-engagement and overcoming challenges speak to an impetus incentivizing individual motivation. The most prominent element in this type of inspiration to move in a focused direction, is that the individual's intrinsic drive generates a kind of mobility

that has at its core motivation. This is then an individual-centric drive owing in large part to the process being founded in maintaining respect and equity (see Wlodowski, 1999). For Deci and Ryan (2000), motivation implies movement. In the case of the present study, motivation is at the core of re-engagement in the workforce. This relationship between motivation and engagement is aligned with the findings of Kordbacheh et al. (2014). The following perspective domain of the three participant groups constructs the foundation upon which the first analytic category is based.

The Resistors benefitted from solid career mobility that was couched in their performance. This in turn lead them to enjoy career longevity. This may also have been the factor that impeded their motivation to seek employment that was not as good a fit as they had enjoyed for so many years. Case in point, the old adage “if it’s not broken why fix it” (or a similar adaptation of the same sentiment), would be a direct application to this group. They were doing well in their careers, were not given any forecast that they would not be able to continue to do the same until they were ready to retire. So, upon being separated from employment why would they think for a moment that they should not seek employment with the same attributes as with the positions they were forced to leave? Especially with the understanding that all four in this group came from high-earning, high-profile careers. Their primary motivation then, is to achieve re-entry into the workforce equal to levels previous of employment.

Adaptors, however, readily waved the impetus for re-engagement into the workforce with levels of career attainment comparable to what they enjoyed in their previous careers. This may be attributed in large part to the fact that three of the four members of this group are female, and that historically women have not enjoyed the same levels of employment benefits as men. Therefore, there is this innate drive to keep the family going even if that means having to accept positions that do not have the same levels of professional profile(s) as they experienced in the past. Oftentimes women are not considered the primary breadwinner, however, in the rudiments of daily life, the

primary maintainer. For the lone male in this group, he too, was motivated by the need to maintain his livelihood and willing to accept a change in career without the trappings of his previous career to do so.

Innovators, on the other hand, having an even split between male and female (2 and 2), also have the highest mean age of 66 years, and were ready for the challenge of independent proprietorship. It is tantamount to saying, ‘well I am not ready to retire and withdraw, I am ready to re-engage in the workforce.’ I am also not willing to venture back into the employment realm with yet another potential ax threatening lay-off(s), hanging over my head, so I will work for myself. This was their chance to go out on a limb, ‘after-all in many cases isn’t that where’re the fruit is?’(author unknown) In the case of the Innovators they re-imagined themselves in divergent positions deviating from the boss employee scenario by merging the two. They were motivated to try something new and something they powered and controlled as primary proprietor.

Table 11. Evidence Table-Re-Engagement

Group Category	Participant	Comments
Resistors (4) Motivated to accept employment to continue to maintain their livelihood, however, they consider this to be a holding pattern and a temporary solution.	Marco	Motivated by the need to continue working, Marco applied to many jobs rarely getting a call back. On the occasions of telephone interviews, he would often be called in for a follow-up interview. He believes that that was a courtesy reply simply to determine his age. He became leery of applying for jobs he did not see as a good fit. While he accepted a job as an Administrator, he remains hopeful that he can re-enter the workforce with a position comparable to one he left.
	Sebastian	Sebastian has benefitted from part time employment where his technology skills can be utilized, however, nothing has led to full time employment and he believes he is part of a population of scape goats that were let go so that companies can restructure, and that there is no real window back that would allow him to work and be compensated at the capacity he was accustomed to. He also believes that this is due to his age, and that the hiring community is potentially not looking to engage people over 50 regardless of skill level. While in a part-time job holding pattern, he is also motivated to keep up with the current trends in his field.
	Chloe	While upon being separated from the workforce, Chloe accepted a position as a consultant, she did not view this as something that would lead to permanent employment and therefore, sustain her livelihood. She feels she has a great deal to offer, however, has become discouraged by not being able to find a door of opportunity where she would be welcomed to use her skills.

Table 11 (continued)

Group Category	Participant	Comments
	Fred	Fred has also had a few positions that were temporary, and in each instance he hoped the position would turn into something permanent. This has led to feelings of guilt where he has had to rely on his family. His levels of motivation to re-enter the job market continued to decrease under the cloud of not getting a response back from any of the permanent positions he applied.
Adaptors (4) Maintaining The status quo by keeping their livelihood going without much regard to previous professional levels.	Veronica	Upon her separation from the workforce, Veronica was so discouraged by the corporate arena she was part of, at the point of employment separation she regrouped and returned to school. She relocated to the Pacific Northwest, completed her doctorate and accepted an assistant professorship. Connecting a life-long interest with the need to sustain her livelihood.
	Annalise	Annalise was always motivated to keep working. So, once separated from the workforce, she returned to her tried and true method of securing employment. She relentlessly applied to employment agencies, garnering a few positions she would string together to make up for any gaps in employment.
	Brooklyn	Brooklyn realized that employment outside of the civil service arena was at will, and that while her parents and their parents were able to advance their careers through retirement, this was not the current way of the employment world. She relocated and willing pursued various employment opportunities. She landed a position from which she was promoted twice.
	Giants	Having worked his entire adult life, Giants believed at first, that his lay-off was only temporary. Upon realizing, that it was not a temporary condition, he too, strung together a number of part time jobs until he passed the civil service test to work in the court system.
Innovators (4) Motivated by the lure of self- proprietorship , they pursued employment independent of the trappings of the employee- boss paradigm.	Templeton	With support from family and friends encouraging him to move in a direction independent of the traditional work environment, Templeton was motivated to put his customer service skills to work as an owner-driver car service.
	Mavis	Motivated to carve out a career in real estate, Mavis became an independent real estate contractor. She received support from family. Although, garnering support from friends was not as feasible once she was separated from her previous employment, owing in large part to relocating and to having as she noted: 'little in common' now that she shifted careers and was no longer in the same proximity to them or the previous job.
	Plato	Motivated by his beliefs and the understanding that he needs to keep things both going and in order Plato has known when it was time for him to leave and has planned accordingly. This was evident when he opened his small business and when he transitioned to Hospice Chaplaincy.
	Clark	Not ready for complete retirement and needed to supplement her income to maintain her livelihood, Clark was motivated to morph her hobby into an award-winning revenue bearing independent venture. She honed her skills and calibrated her mastery through the ongoing support of her craft group.

Second Analytic Category

Being willing to transition to new ways of employment through their own self-directed efforts. This analytic category directly linked to research questions 3 and 4: *How did participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they faced in re-engaging in the workforce?* and *What activities did participants learn that helped them transition to re-engagement?*

Similar to the first analytic category discussed above, this analytic category is based on the findings in the previous chapter. It was designed to illustrate participants' use of self-directed learning as a key factor in their re-engagement in the workforce.

Self-directed learning on the continuum of Adult Education theory, takes its operational place within the core of the individual. That is to say, the motivation to drive the individual to engage in self-directed learning is dependent upon individual scope and perspective (see Bandura, 2001). This perspective is wholly initiated through individual choice (Brookfield, 2013). For the participants discussed here, the initiative to engage in self-directed learning while present for all, manifested itself as Bandura (2001) suggests through either reflection (active) or by proxy (passive). In varying scope, the utilization of self-directed learning as applied to re-entry into the workforce, is in itself, empowered learning (see Brookfield, 2013). The following perspective domain of the three participant groups constructs the foundation upon which the second analytic category is based.

Resistors, those participants willing to transition to self-sustaining employment, were in a holding pattern for employment that mirrored their previous work experience. However, they were both active in their pursuit of reflecting on their previous experiences, and dynamic in joining social milieus such as job clubs, and efforts to become more marketable. These efforts connected them to workforce re-engagement. The positioning was not close to the level of professional attainment that was once an essential element of their lives. In order to fill the gap, they stayed up-to-date and current

in their fields including continued network outreach. By so doing, they were able to present themselves in hiring circumstances with both their current and institutional knowledge.

Adaptors undertook self-directed learning as a means to master the hiring process in their favor. They prepared and armed themselves with the current knowledge of the organization and continued to hone their universal skills so that upon re-entry to the workforce, they could assimilate with greater ease. Once hired, their self-directed learning was used to immerse themselves into the job and its potential, by asking questions, and finding ways to blend into the workforce on the back(s) of their previous experience. Like the Resistors, the Adaptors, stayed current in their fields. However, unlike the Resistors the Adaptors were driven by a self-directed intentionality to garner knowledge and skills that could be layered onto their existing skills base in support of job performance as well as the potential for longevity.

Similar to the Adaptors, Innovators were thrust into efforts of self-directed learning by the sheer nature of entering fields for which they had no, or very little knowledge from which to draw. Their efforts were absorbed into a laser-focus concentration that prepared them to complete the requisite tasks unique to their new independent venture. This included studying /training for licensure requirements as well as the rudiments fundamental to their unique workforce entity. They were able to draw upon their transferable skills to build a confluence of efforts that led them to their independent endeavors. Some of the self-directed learning for the Innovators was channeled through either mentors or trusted advisors already vested in their fields. Table 12 demonstrates how self-directed learning influenced participants' re-entry into the workforce.

Table 12. The Influence of Self-Directed Learning

Group Category	Participant	Comments
Resistors 4 Engaged in Self-Directed efforts for Readiness to re-enter the workforce on the levels in which they left	Marco	While adept in his field, he encountered extreme variations in expectations from hiring staff. A number of years ago, he recalls applying for these positions was pretty straight forward. He knew what was a good fit and would prepare accordingly. Now while he still keeps his managerial and technical (IT) skills current and they have applicability in his present position, he finds the expectations in his field are unrealistic as they presuppose a 'Jack-of-all-Trades. Marco did welcome any ideas that came his way for rebranding.
	Sebastian	Sebastian keeps his professional affiliations current especially those that are at the forefront of progressive innovation and uses this knowledge to increase his skill(s) base. He noted that staying current is nowhere more important than in the IT/Tech fields.
	Chloe	Chloe has always had the predisposition for research, which admittedly is needed in highly technical and professions requiring finite skills. So, her efforts for increasing her knowledge base is a natural inclination. Still hoping that one day there will be a viable professional receptacle for her talents.
	Fred	Fred engaged in return to work job classes and researched current trends in any field that required client accommodation. This led him to a few temporary consulting positions.
Adaptors (4) Employed self-directed efforts both prior to and on the job	Veronica	Veronica led her own way when looking to find out the preferred format for applying to higher education positions, including finding out the expectations for a curriculum vitae (CV). She then developed and proposed her coursework. Activities that were contradictory to those of her past experience in the corporate arena.
	Annalise	Annalise told of the necessity to learn on her own in the corporate world; and post lay-off to undertake whatever learning would secure her a position that would formulate her re-entry into the workforce. Before landing her position as a DNA Collector, she took coursework in Medical Billing. Later, learned and honed in on the skills required in her current position through inquiries, reading and researching the fundamentals of the position.
	Brooklyn	It has always been Brooklyn's approach to ask questions. This served her well in her current position. It effected a kind of determination of the expectations of the task and the products being developed. While she wished there was a group to refer to in a similar condition, she managed to keep her skills current and continue to update them in her current position.
	Giants	Through focused self-directed efforts Giants sought to become familiar with the interview process. He then studied independently for a civil service exam. Upon his re-entry back to the workforce he became familiar with all aspects of the tasks before him, through both independent and collaborative efforts.

Table 12 (continued)

Group Category	Participant	Comments
Innovators (4) Self-directed efforts were exigent for Innovators as they initiated sole-proprietor ventures.	Templeton	To jumpstart his car service, Templeton researched areas for safe client pick-up and drop-off. He worked through time frames to ensure accessibility to designations. He also did dry runs to main modes of transportation such as airports. In so doing, he was able to provide his clients with quality customer service.
	Mavis	Mavis focused her foray into real estate on two plains. First, she prepared independently and took the coursework she needed for licensure, and studied independently, and second, she enlisted the help of mentor in the field who guided her entry and her staying power.
	Plato	Plato completed the requisite coursework that would satisfy his application for Hospice Chaplain. In the process, managed to maintain a broad breath of knowledge and do so autonomously. This skill, coupled with that inherent in the Chaplaincy, has enabled him to afford the unique customer service delivery that has aided his clientele.
	Clark	Traditionally, Clark has weaved both creative and professional pursuits, so transitioning as an entrepreneur followed that same path. She relied on her previous professional successes to transport her to her independent venture. Her self-directed efforts were couched in activities with professional groups where learning and honing techniques were shared. Independent of those activities, she studied technique(s) that would enhance her skills, and now has reached levels of mastery.

Summary of Analysis

Analyzing the participants' responses was first initiated through the development of two analytic categories. Each category is aligned to two of the four research questions upon which this study was based. The categories were then viewed through the perspective of the participant groups, the Resistors, the Adaptors and the Innovators. The Resistors re-entered the workforce with the hope that they would have the benefit of returning to the levels of employment that titled them to certain professional attainment. The Adaptors had an easier port of re-entry to the workforce, as they were willing to take employment regardless of positionality. They were willing to take advantage of a wage-earning opportunity that would help them to maintain their livelihood and assimilate accordingly. The Innovators re-entered the workforce through entrepreneurial pathways. Similar to the Resistors and the Adaptors, they were at the positive end of prolific careers, and decided rather than to pursue the traditional employee-boss/organizational employment they had known or decades, they would become sole proprietors.

Interpretation

Interpretation provides the opportunity for additional clarity and a way to discern a more in depth-sense that can add inference to the data collected. Through the lens of the researcher, the participants' responses to the research questions can be assessed in a broad depiction of the "why" that underscores the participants' perspectives and experiences. This entails returning to each analytic category through the perspectives of each participant group.

First Analytic Category

Recognizing the need to engage in employment pathways that vary from traditional careers.

Additional exploration of this analytic category uncovered the need to recognize that engagement in the workforce after separation may need to be viewed in terms of steering away from the tried and true previous career pursuits. For the Resistors this was a task that was not easily accomplished. Not so much in the vein of needing to return to the workforce, rather, in terms of hoping to be reinstated to their previous professional stature. The placement need not be in the same place, so they were not expecting a call back – although it must be noted that they may have welcomed a call back if such a scenario would present itself. Especially if they could step back into their old professional shoes. This did not mean that they were not at all motivated to undertake employment that would indeed position them to maintain their livelihood. Rather, they would accept that as a holding place until they can return to their rightful position. So, why did this group believe that they should return to their positions of the past? One explanation is as Marco so delicately suggested: 'it's like when you ask a girl out on a date, you hope she says yes'. If she doesn't, there is disappointment and fear for any future tries as they may result in the same pejorative effects. And with any directional support from hiring staff this group felt they could not truly navigate the hiring process as they did not once

receive a call back from an interview. Their post separation transitions were, for the most part, temporary. This group was also comprised of three males and one female. The males were notably privileged as representatives of the dominant class and became accustomed to that way of life. Yet, the insidiousness of age discrimination did not make such exceptional demarcations. Trying to understand that is without question a heavy lift. This does not, by any means underscore the exemplary performance that promoted them and granted them career longevity up to the point of workforce separation. This was also the case with lone female in the group. She had performed for over 38 years in a highly technical position only to be released without warning. And she too suffered without fully understanding the why other than perhaps, she was released because of her age. She then struggles with ‘what has that to do with my mind?’ And yet, for this group, it is understandable why they would want to return to the same professional stature they enjoyed for so many years and why it is hard to engage in a workforce endeavor that does not represent their years of work and organizational dedication. For the Adaptors, there was an easier return to the workforce. They are predominantly female and traditionally, women do not, and have yet to, benefit from pay equity. They do however, benefit from the proverbial glass ceilings to the C-Suite. However, there is the prevailing expectation that they will be the maintainers of the family, home, and community. In that vein, it is not surprising that the Adaptors have an intrinsic drive to simply keep things going. This also plays into the care-giver scenario often associated with the female figure. She is the one who will take care. That is evident in the portrayals of athletes on screen who say, ‘thank you mom,’ perhaps because she was the one who fed and cared for them (you). Therefore, for the Adaptors to receive a significantly decrease in their salary, that is a matter of course especially when pay inequity is prevalent. The Innovators were motivated by their successful performances in the past to move forward and engage in the workforce on their own terms as sole proprietors. They translated their workforce separation into ‘you don’t want to hire me, fine I will work for myself.’ This group with

the oldest mean age (66) of the three groups, was not willing to give ageism another chance. Venturing out on their own satisfied their need to re-enter the workforce and their need to do so without the trappings of organized employment hanging over their heads. The message of engagement and not retirement was clear for this group. That does not set aside the challenges that occurred during this process, rather it speaks to the support they had to pursue this, and the innate desire to make it happen, and to stay active.

Once re-engaged in the workforce all of the participants needed to weigh the options of work that varied from what they participated in in the past, as salvations for entering the workforce after the age of 50.

Second Analytic Category

Being willing to transition to new ways of employment through their own self-directed efforts.

Through further assessment of this analytic category, a more in-depth portrayal of the importance of participants' self-directed efforts to re-engage in the workforce were disclosed.

For the Resisters, they all hailed from careers that pre-supposed a natural inclination for research that would keep them ahead of the game in both the global competitive sense as well as the internal organizational sense. However, there was also an intrinsic drive that promoted self-directed efforts. This may be owing to the fact that each of them thrust performance levels through their own self-directed efforts supplementing those offered by the organization. After-all, doesn't high performance spell job security? Well, in many instances it has, depending of course on who is wielding the gavel. The Adaptors, on the other hand pay no never mind to who is holding the gavel. Whomever it is, will no doubt rule in favor of the prevailing traditions of how women are perceived or inequities in workforce traditions such as pay inequity. This has led the way to self-directed efforts as a mainstay of personal survival and the tradition of

care for themselves, their family and their communities. The members in this group describe their willingness to embrace self-directed efforts as a key empowering factor. This is a choice resting in the individual as depicted by Brookfield (2013). This group described their self-directed efforts as essential both in securing a job and in learning the nuances of the job. As noted by Giants, the lone male of the group.

The Innovators used self-directed efforts as a rite of passage. They could not have initiated an entrepreneurial venture without individual discovery. Clark and Mavis suggested that individual self-directed efforts are key elements not only in honing your skills base, but also in broadening your product/service reach. Unlike Resistors and Adaptors, Innovators are solely responsible for obtaining, securing, and maintaining their client base. They also report on the importance of working with mentors during this process. For each, they achieved levels of both being mentored and mentoring others. There was an interchange of skills where information was transmitted on a learning continuum and where the collective knowledge base continues to grow.

Summary of Interpretation

The researcher explored the experiences of the participants as they were categorized in three groups: The Resistors, the Adaptors and the Innovators. The Resistors, while holding onto the hope of re-engaging in the workforce on the same plain as they left, did gain access to re-engagement post-separation, albeit with temporary positions or positions with significant decreases in salary. The Adaptors, on the other hand took advantage of wage-earning opportunities that came their way. This was coupled with the understanding that these opportunities would assist them in sustaining their livelihood, and that was tantamount to maintaining the status quo. The Innovators, like the Adaptors sought career change that varied from their previous career experience. However, they were diametrically opposed to employment that resembled any

organizational hierarchy and chose self-employment. The Innovators were even less risk adverse than the Adaptors.

Summary of Analysis, Synthesis, and Interpretation

This study explored the perceptions and experiences of individuals who were separated from the workforce after the age of 50, and what that transition looks like to re-engage. The findings identified transitioning back to the workplace with a willingness to view careers that vary from their previous work experience as viable opportunities to assist in maintaining their livelihood. The findings also revealed that self-directed efforts are key driving forces enhancing this shift back to the workforce.

Based on responses to interview questions the participants were placed into three categories to inform the Analysis and Interpretation. The categories were as follows: The Resistors, the Adaptors and the Innovators. The individuals designated as Resistors, did not resist change as their grouping might declare, rather, they believed that with their vast professional experience and finite skills, that they should be able to work under similar conditions as appointed by their previous performance levels. As a result, they did transition to employment post separation, however, it was often temporary and at salaries a fraction of what they had in the past. In this respect, they may have had the hardest time adjusting to transitioning back to the workforce. The Adaptors had an easier time in transition, however, as they accepted the transition as necessary and something they had to undergo in order to maintain their livelihood. The Innovators, like the Adaptors did not challenge the transition, rather, they selected to be workforce paradigm change agents and become sole-proprietors dependent upon their own efforts for self-maintenance.

Revisiting Assumptions

In Chapter I the researcher proclaimed that the present research would be approached through an axiological lens. While this was an admitted bias of the researcher, the researcher continues to hold the belief that there is inherent value in exploring the journey of individuals who transitioned back to the workforce after the age of 50. Support for this belief was securely vested in the willingness of the participants to be interviewed and their admitted commitment to the interview process.

In addition, the researcher offered three core assumptions upon which the research was based. The first assumption that older/late-life displaced workers would have developed a set of competencies comprised of attitudes, behaviors and skills underpinning ventures of re-engaging into the workforce, was supported by the findings. In each case the participants did hone existing and develop new attitudes, behaviors and skills as they transitioned back to the workforce. For all participants interviewed (100%), they exhibited attitudes of needing to sustain their livelihood, and this was manifested in behaviors of research and networking to find employment pathways and put themselves forward as viable candidates or employment opportunities.

The second assumption that workforce re-engagement can sustain livelihoods for late-life displaced workers, was also maintained by the findings. In each case, the participants were able to sustain their livelihoods through workforce re-engagement. However, in many of the cases the term of sustainability varied owing to disparate earnings between the position prior to workforce separation and the current position. In some instances, this disparity in earnings was tempered through relocation that leveled-out standard of living. The third assumption held by the researcher was that older/late life displaced workers have found self-sustaining opportunities through re-engagement that have allowed them to continue to contribute to their communities, and become less reliant on economic support systems, was born out by the findings to be true. All

participants transitioned back to the workforce. As a result of capturing re-employment, they did not exhibit the need for dependence on any economic supports (i.e., Food stamps, or housing support), subsidizing their livelihood.

Contributions to the Literature

Based on the findings of the present study, the researcher has identified the following as ways in which the findings can contribute to the literature. The first circles around the workforce disruption playing out as displacement after the age of 50. Many articles pinpointing this condition, based their findings on earlier displacements that occurred over ten years ago. The implication would be that this occurrence of workforce displacement for workers over the age of 50 is no longer happening and therefore not an issue. The exception to this trend in the literature is Gronberg's 2018 work depicted the downsizing of IBM where they have developed policy that leans toward the hiring and maintenance of millennials and the ousting of individuals over the age of 50. The findings presented here preclude the notion that the practice of age-related displacement is a thing of the past.

Ancillary to the potential contribution listed above, is that the literature does not examine the value of the older worker. This is especially true of the older worker who has amassed a certain amount of institutional knowledge and as a result, as the findings suggest here, can and should continue to be part of the workforce on levels that support their professional attainment. Increase in age does not determine decrease in knowledge or ability to learn.

Finally, the literature holds some nods to the presence and practice of ageism in the workforce. However, it is sparse in highlighting hiring practices that permit displacement due to age. Admittedly, one factor contributing to the presence and successful practice of ageism in the workforce may be attributed to the insidiousness of ageism and how easily

it is to cloak. This dissertation expands this discussion and the body of literature examining ageism in the workforce.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore with 12 adults, 50 years of age and above, faced with extended job loss and the need to continue working to earn a living, their perceptions of how they learn to transition and re-engage in the workforce.

To realize this purpose the following research questions were presented:

- (1) How did participants describe their learning experiences of re-entry into the workforce?
- (2) How did participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?
- (3) How did participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they face in re-engaging in the workforce?
- (4) What activities did participants learn that helped them transition to re-engagement?

Through this exploratory examination, the researcher has been able to discern and gain insight into how individuals displaced after the age of 50 re-engage in the workforce. Through surveying the findings, data analysis and interpretation, the researcher advances the following four conclusions. The first conclusion is directly related to the first finding that an overwhelming majority of people displaced from the workforce felt they were no longer valued. The second conclusion correlates to the second finding that all participants reported transitioning from full time employment to

learn new ways to earn a living as the most critical challenged they faced. The third conclusion directly relates to the finding that there has to be a willingness on the part of the displaced worker over 50 to look to new pathways to re-enter the workforce. The fourth conclusion directly links to the fourth finding that self-directed efforts are needed in order to find new ways to earn a living.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1

Individuals displaced after the age of 50 need to feel valued.

This conclusion is aligned with Finding #1: *An overwhelming majority (92%) of participants described feeling passé, as an older worker when separated from the workforce after the age of 50.* This finding concretized insight for the researcher on why individuals displaced from the workforce feel passé or devalued. Placed in a condition of being separated from the workforce after the age of 50, and after having amassed a number of years of dedicated performance, may position you as being undervalued and underappreciated in essence, feeling passé and no longer needed. This is evidence in support of the exigency of respect and equity that Wlodkowski (1999) speaks of as driving factors of motivation. While often attributed to intrinsic motivation for remaining in the workforce, for the current research paradigm, it is viewed as an attribution to regaining one's place in the workforce. In particular, for individuals over 50 seeking to navigate that transition. Sebastian, one of the participants cited earlier, expressed it most powerfully when he stated that, "no-one should be made to feel lesser". This sentiment resonated with the of the majority of the participants as they perceived that their value in their profession had come under question, and under question that was not performance based, rather, based on factors of discrimination beyond their control. Since the

participants felt passé it is concluded that they cannot depend on the continuation of their careers after the age of 50.

Conclusion 2

After 50 it is very difficult to secure employment that is equal to the level(s) of previous employment.

This conclusion is aligned with Finding #2 that *all participants (100%) reported transitioning from full time employment to learn new ways to earn a living as the most critical challenged they faced.* This finding authenticated for the researcher, the challenge of obtaining employment that is on par to previous employment after the age of 50. Given the lack of preparation on financial and psychological plains (see Sadick, 2012), when pushed out of the workforce due to practices of age discrimination (see Hennekamis, 2015), the individuals prey to this condition will not be able to secure employment that is equitable to previous employment. This is due to bias hiring practices that are executed within the face of anti-age discrimination legislation (see Mehta, 2014). The challenge of re-entering the workforce after 50 is laden with double edged swords. On the one hand, you are seeking to re-engage in the workforce in earnest, and are met with hiring staff that are coding their age discrimination practices by either not calling you back for additional interviews or by simply as participant Marco stated, “You are fine on the phone, once they call you in, you know it’s just to see your face and tell your age.” Another participant, Sebastian believed that the condition is totally system-wide, believing that once they put you out you cannot get back in.

Conclusion 3

Getting back into the workforce requires individuals to be motivated to re-engage.

This conclusion is directly aligned to Finding #3: *All participants (100%) described having to be willing to find new ways to re-enter the workforce.* For the researcher, this validated the need to embrace creative ways to re-engage in the

workforce. All participants reported engaging in the workforce became a creative endeavor in practice. This is particularly salient as the need to overcome the challenges of ageism in the workforce can be a prevailing obstacle. However, while all of the participants did manage re-engagement, as motivated by the requisite for sustainability, the duration of motivation varied with individual expectation. For example, for the Resistors re-engagement was initially met with temporary positions, while the Adaptors exhibited more creativity in accepting opportunity and found positions with more permanency. The Innovators by nature of the self-proprietorship had to build their revenue bearing opportunities.

Conclusion 4

If people are not self-directed, the less likely they are to find new ways to earn a living.

This conclusion is directly related to Finding #4: *All participants reported the need to be self-directed to re-enter the workforce.* This finding brought a perspective to the researcher crystallizing the importance of the need for self-directed efforts to re-enter the workforce. Given the individual-centric nature of entering the workforce, the focus lies in self-directed efforts to enhance engagement (see Bandura, 2001; Candy, 1991; Drucker, 2005). All participants encountered the need to first initiate self-directed efforts during the process of discovery for re-engagement in the workforce, and then, once hired, the need to engage in efforts of self-directed learning to navigate the tasks before them. This is then, was reported as a vital component of maintaining the employment since in each case, it varied from their previous positions. Self-directed efforts are essential in order to obtain and secure a place in the workforce.

This study examined the transition of individuals aged 50+ who were displaced from the workforce and their experiences re-entering. The transition varied in form and placement for the participants. Some viewed the transition as a temporary shift in

organizational structure and once settled they hoped to be called back to reclaim their place. Other participants saw the transition as having immediacy to maintain their livelihood, so they sought out opportunities that were likely to provide more permanency. And finally, there were participants who no longer wanted to be part of organizational structures and branched out on their own. In all cases, there were challenges of ageism that not only generated the change from their existing careers, but also thrust them into similar confrontations as they transitioned to new employment ventures.

Recommendations

The incentive for this study was the current presence of workforce displacement for individuals aged 50 and above. The 2013 Gallop Poll as well as the 2013 NY Times article discussed in Chapter 1 found that extended periods of employment separation for older workers can have catastrophic effects on their health. This makes the findings of the present study notable as the participants did manage to transition back to the workforce and thereby staving off the potential devastating effects to their health. The researcher found that there are key factors that are more relevant for the 50+ year old displaced worker to re-engage in the workforce. Among those, is the need to look at employment opportunities that vary from previous careers. Another is the need to become involved in self-directed efforts with the aim of generating greater likelihood to find new ways of earning a living.

The researcher holds that there are a number of recommendations that are directly linked to the conclusions and can be poised for operational implementation across a number of domains. These can be put forward by the following groups: Individuals 50+ who have been separated from the workforce, hiring representatives, and adult educators.

Individuals 50+ Who Have Been Displaced from the Workforce

The core of this study was the transition of the displaced older worker back to the workforce. Given the challenges expressed in both the interview questions and the narratives told by the participants, it is clear their journeys hold stories and lessons that can aid many who find themselves displaced from the workforce and need to re-engage. Based on this, the researcher offers the following:

1. Keep your skills current
2. Maintain professional affiliations
3. Utilize familiar networking bases such as family, friends, and colleagues
4. View employment opportunities that vary from previous careers as potentially viable, including exploring the suitability of entrepreneurship.
5. Involve yourself in self-directed efforts, including establishing an organization's appetite to hire and maintain older workers.

Transitioning to the workforce is competitive where applications may be judged on the criteria of the hiring announcement. The only determination of the latter is through the hiring staff.

By keeping skills current, that makes one more marketable and more prepared to assist any organization with its bottom line. Utilizing the connections of family and friends cannot be understated as they not only have a vested interest in helping, because of their connection to you, they also offer the most appropriate avenues of support. Displaced individuals should be open to various employment prospects, not only to support broadening the employment opportunity reach, but also represent chances to re-enter the workforce with greater ease. Finally, all older workers separated from the workforce should submit to self-directed efforts. In so doing, they are more likely to chime in on new ways to earn a living.

Individuals Responsible for Hiring

Individuals responsible for oversight of hiring should first make sure that the appropriate protective legislation against any form of discrimination is being followed. This would include safeguarding against ageism. In addition to these measures, it is recommended that hiring personnel and organizations in general should:

1. Provide counseling prior to and post organizational shifts that include displacement
2. Provide conduits for continued training and development
3. Communicate intent through efficient channels prior to implementing change

By providing counseling for wellbeing augmenting counseling for economic stability, organizations can better equip their employees to manage the change and the ambiguity inherent in the shifts. Through existing training and development channels the organization can provide ongoing training and re-training of their employees so that they can better prepare them for the changing skills required in the 21st century.

Communication channels should be open so that employees are aware of organizational shifts prior to their implementation. This coupled with training and counseling would better equip all employees, most importantly those exiting.

Adult Educators

Educational practitioners in both higher education and continuing education programs can assist the displaced older worker in the following ways:

1. Generate short-term skills-specific programs and course work dealing with the nuances of working in the 21st century.
2. Offer course work/training on procedural rights when confronted with age discrimination.
3. Offer more certificate bearing programs that mirror the skill needs of the 21st century.

Adult education is the standard bearer of adult and continuing education however, it is often stagnant in terms of coursework and resources offered reflecting current trends. For example, coursework on financial literacy and economic maintenance would be

welcomed. The participants in the current study noted that oftentimes the price of training/re-training is prohibitive, and that one-off or single classes designed for adults looking to enhance their skills are vastly needed. They also found that the job clubs and job fairs often subsidized by programming aimed at employing the chronically unemployed, (those individuals receiving subsidies, or transitioning from penal systems), are not suitable programming for them. The participants of this study have a history of employment, whereas the group encouraged to participate in job clubs may have to develop a work history to establish and build a career.

With this in mind, adult educators may want to consider the following actionable steps that can lead to viable programming for the population transitioning from the workforce after the age of 50:

Facilitating Mentoring workshops (in group format)- this would include the components of responsibility for mentors and mentees as outlined in the work of Drago-Severson (2014). Specific program components and curriculum would mirror those of the US Department of Energy's Office of Learning and Workforce as delineated by Robinson (2014) to include: " skills enhancement, organizational development and culture change, Professional Identity, Career Development, Leadership and Management Development, and Workforce Engagement" (p. 4).

This type of mentoring workshop would be best facilitated collaboratively by a team of adult educators and trusted advisors. Trusted advisors would hail from various career fields and experienced separation from the workforce after the age of 50. An example of such a core of trusted advisors can be found within SCORE, New York City's cadre of mentors offering free advice on establishing and maintaining a business. Similar services and resources can be found in Mentoring USA and ENABLE. The workshop(s) would culminate in a commodity of a viable action plan that would forge the structured continuation of the mentor-mentee relationship through workforce re-engagement and sustainability.

Additional coursework/workshop(s) would emphasize the value of experience. Through exploration of mapping prior experience onto new experience with the connectivity of honoring the value of already existing experience. This course would link capacity through a conduit of value. The potential application would be of transferable, as well as task specific skills requisite to meeting 21st century workforce demands.

Further Research

There are three areas the researcher recognizes for further research. First, Additional revisiting of individuals who have transitioned from the workforce, to determine length of time on the job post separation and potential for salary equity with previous employment, would further the discovery on the effects of workplace separation. In addition, as the population continues to age, studying the employment outlook for individuals 50+, would enhance understandings around how the population at this point is managed on economic, health and general sustainability.

Additional research revisiting the interests of the present topic through a Transformative Learning lens would connect current Adult Education theory with the practice of moving displaced older workers to a deeper understanding of how they are managing to make meaning of the nuances that accompany being separated from the workforce after the age of 50.

Finally, the ancillary findings of the present study disclosed in the participant descriptions and narratives suggest that there are only two outcomes for the displaced older worker. One, is to accept a position with significantly lower compensation, and the other is to venture out on one's own as an entrepreneur. Therefore, a longitudinal study that expands on the present work as well as the work of Robertson and Merriam (2005), would enhance understandings surrounding self-directed learning for older and the need for continued engagement in the workforce and the community.

Additional research in all of these areas would add to the knowledge base on workforce development and older workers and hold the potential for influencing and informing policy as it relates to aging in place. It would also provide inclusion of the voice of the individuals that policy would affect.

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Appendix A

Coding Scheme

1. Experiences and Perceptions (RQ1)

- **EP1**-Feeling passé (as an older worker)
- **EP2**-Being Displaced (why me?)
- **EP3**- Different values (No longer of value to others)
- **EP4**-Loyalty for service not reciprocated by organization
- **EP5**-What do I do now? (Feelings of fear, panic, desperation, depression, devastation).
- **EP6**-Lost (don't know how to get back to work?)

2. Challenges/ Inhibitors (RQ2)

- **CI1**-Resistance to hiring older workers (Age bias, over 50)
- **CI2**-Experience does not match job opportunity (Overqualified in for some employment options, underqualified for others-lack of technical skills)
- **CI3**- Not taking action (Embarrassment over the loss of employment)
- **CI4**-Embarrassment over how long it is taking to get back to work (The longer away from work the harder it is to get a job have to justify what [I] have been doing all this time, need to contribute to the family and household
Feelings of guilt for not contributing to the household)
- **CI5**-Transition (Unable to maintain same position in the community)
- **CI6**-Loss of Identity (Bad/no Advice, self-doubt)

3. Overcoming Challenges/Facilitators (RQ3)

- **OCF1**-Networking (with family, friends and colleagues)
- **OCF2**-Becoming more marketable (Willingness to discover/learn what skills are needed in the current marketplace, pursuing varying employment opportunities congruent with previous employment and differing from previous employment, Researching through internet and employment services/resources, licenses, credentials)
- **OCF3**-Persistence (self-confidence, reliable, confident, teachable)
- **OCF4**-Willingness to take any job (transition to employment different from previous employment experience(s), starting over again, learning something new)

4. Learning/Activities (RQ4)

- **LA1**-Dialogue and discussion with family, friends, neighbors, colleagues
- **LA2**-Participating employment resources job clubs, rebranding, resume/interview development)
- **LA3**-Being Self-Directed (Learning directed for/guided by outcomes, individual centric and intentional learning)

- **LA4-Reading**
- **LA5-Reflection (Pulling from past experience)**
- **LA6-Mentoring**

Appendix B

Participant Demographic Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study.

To understand later life career transition the following demographic information is being collected. Please complete the survey below and return it to me via email:

deb2155@tc.columbia.edu.

Please note all the information collected in this questionnaire is, and will be kept completely confidential, and will only be used in connection with this research study.

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Race or Ethnic Group: _____
4. State or Country of Residence: _____
5. Current profession/employment: _____
6. Is current profession/employment in same or related field as previous employment:
Yes() No() please check which best applies
7. Previous profession/employment: _____
8. Length of time spent in previous profession/employment: _____
9. Length of time between previous profession/employment and present
employment: _____
10. Are the rates of wage/earnings/compensation the same for present
profession/employment? If no, which is less? Present () Previous () please check
which best applies.
11. Please provide a brief description of how you acquired your current position

THANK YOU!

Your time and participation are greatly appreciated and will contribute to the body of information and growing knowledge base on the experience of later-life career transition.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

How do participants describe their learning experiences of re-entry into the workforce?

1. Think back to when you were faced with transitioning from employment. You were faced with unemployment after having been in the workforce for many years. What were some of your thoughts at the time?
2. How did you begin to manage the steps of rejoining the workforce?
3. When you were no longer part of organized work, how did you know what was needed to re-enter the workforce, and what were the steps you took to do so?

How do participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?

1. How would you describe some of the things that may have impeded or were in the way of your re-entering the workforce?
2. How did you learn to find wage earning opportunities?
3. What kind of skills/knowledge do you believe need to be in place for successful re-entry into the workforce later in life?

How do participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they face in re-engaging in the workforce?

1. How did you learn to overcome barriers to re-entering the workforce later in life?
2. What characteristics do you believe were needed for this kind of workforce re-engagement?
3. What would have been helpful to you?

What activities do participants learn that help them transition to re-engagement in the workforce?

1. What actions/activities did you undertake that helped you during this time of transition?
2. What actions were most helpful?
3. What actions were least helpful?

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York, NY 10027
212-678-3000

Protocol Title: A Tendency of Mind Rewriting the Story: An Exploration of Later-Life Career Transition

Principal Investigator: Deborah Brooks Lawrence
917-319-2542, deb2155@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in this research study called “A Tendency of Mind: Later-Life Career Transition.” You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are 50 years of age and above and have experienced a later-life re-engagement into the workforce. Approximately twenty people will participate in this study and it will take 1 hour of your time to complete.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

This study is being done to determine how to best facilitate learning strategies for employment re-engagement for adults who were displaced from the workforce after the age of 50.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by Deborah Brooks Lawrence, a doctoral candidate at Teacher’s College, Columbia University. You will be asked to discuss your experiences with later life workforce transition. This interview will be audio-recorded. After the audio-recording is written down (transcribed) the audio-recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. You will be given a pseudonym or false name/de-identified code in order to keep your identity confidential.

In addition to the interview, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Interviews will be face to face conducted either in person or online via an internet platform such as Skype or Zoom. The consent form will be signed either in person or electronically. The demographic information will be completed and data aggregated electronically using Qualtrics.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. **However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.**

I will take precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of adult education to better understand the best way to facilitate learning strategies for later life career transitions.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when you have completed the interview filled out the questionnaire. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you haven't finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

The investigator will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio-recording will be written down and the audio-recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym. De-identified codes will be used, however, the master list identifying the subject is kept locked and separate from the list of codes.

For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor (grant agency), and/or members of the Teachers College Office of Sponsored Programs may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the principal investigator.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO AND OR VIDEO RECORDING

Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in this research study.

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

___ I consent to allow written, or audio taped materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College

___ I **do not** consent to allow written, video and/or audio taped materials viewed outside of Teachers College Columbia University

OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Deborah Brooks Lawrence at 917.319.2542 or deb2155@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

Appendix E

Informed Consent-Focus Group

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York, NY 10027
212-678-3000

Protocol Title: A Tendency of Mind Rewriting the Story: An Exploration of Later-Life Career Transition
Focus Group

Principal Investigator: Deborah Brooks Lawrence
917-319-2542, deb2155@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to participate in this research study called “A Tendency of Mind: Later-Life Career Transition.” You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are 50 years of age and above and have experienced a later-life re-engagement into the workforce. Approximately 4-5 individuals will participate in this focus group and it will take 1 hour of your time to complete.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

This study is being done to determine how to best facilitate learning strategies for employment re-engagement for adults who were displaced from the workforce after the age of 50.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate, you will participate in a focus group led by Deborah Brooks Lawrence, a doctoral candidate at Teacher’s College, Columbia University. You will be asked to participate in an online focus group to discuss your experiences with later life workforce transition. This focus group will be audio-recorded. After the audio-recording is written down (transcribed) the audio-recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate. The focus group will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. You will be given a pseudonym or false name/de-identified code in order to keep your identity confidential.

In addition to the focus group, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The focus group will be conducted online through FocusGroupIT. The consent form will be sent to you electronically and discussed prior to the start of the Focus Group. The demographic information on the survey will be completed and data aggregated electronically using Qualtrics.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. **However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.**

I will take precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity. Pseudonym will be used instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the field of adult education to better understand the best way to facilitate learning strategies for later life career transitions.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when you have completed filled out the questionnaire and completed the focus group. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you haven't finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

The investigator will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio-recording will be written down and the audio-recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym. De-identified codes will be used, however, the master list identifying participants is kept locked and separate from the list of codes.

For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor (grant agency), and/or members of the Teachers College Office of Sponsored Programs may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the principal investigator.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO AND OR VIDEO RECORDING

Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in this research study.

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

___ I consent to allow written, or audio taped materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College.

___ I **do not** consent to allow written, video and/or audio taped materials viewed outside of Teachers College Columbia University.

OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Deborah Brooks Lawrence at 917.319.2542 or deb2155@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

Appendix F

Recruitment Script for Online and In-person Interviews

Dear NAME:

I am Deborah Brooks Lawrence, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University. I am conducting a research study examining the Experiences of Later-Life Workforce Engagement and you are invited to participate in the study.

As a participant in this qualitative study you will be asked to discuss your experience in re-engaging back into the workforce after the age of 50.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked complete a demographic inventory which is anticipated to take approximately 10 minutes of your time, and a semi-structured interview which will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded.

Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and that at all times your identity as a participant will be kept confidential and de-identified for both the demographic survey and the qualitative interview during and after the study.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me at deb2155@tc.columbia.edu or (212.442.0973).

I thank you in advance for your consideration to participate in this study of discovery.

Yours to equitable opportunity for all

,
Deborah Brooks Lawrence
Doctoral Candidate
Teachers College, Columbia University

Appendix G

Recruitment Script for Focus Group

Dear NAME:

I am Deborah Brooks Lawrence, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University. I am conducting a research study examining the Experiences of Later-Life Workforce Engagement and you are invited to participate in the study.

As a participant in this qualitative study you will be asked to discuss your experience in re-engaging back into the workforce after the age of 50.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked complete a demographic inventory which is anticipated to take approximately 10 minutes of your time, and an online focus group which will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded.

Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and that at all times your identity as a participant will be kept confidential and de-identified for both the demographic survey and the focus group during and after the study.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me at deb2155@tc.columbia.edu or (212.442.0973).

I thank you in advance for your consideration to participate in this study of discovery.

Yours to equitable Opportunity for All,

Deborah Brooks Lawrence
Doctoral Candidate
Teachers College, Columbia University

Appendix H

Distribution Chart – Findings 1

RQ 1: How did participants describe their experiences of having to re-enter the workforce?

Participants	Description of Experiences and Perceptions					
	Feeling passé as an older worker	Being Displaced Why Me?	Different Values	Loyalty for Service not reciprocated By organization	What do I Do now?	How do I get back to work?
Fred	x	x	X	x	x	x
Plato	x	x	X		x	x
Annalise	x	x	X	x		x
Clark			X			
Templeton	x	x	X	x	x	x
Veronica	x		X		x	
Sebastian	x		X		x	
Chloe	x		X	x	x	x
Marco	x	x	X		x	
Giants	x		X	x	x	x
Mavis	x				x	
Brooklyn	x			x	x	x
Totals	11	5	10	6	10	7
%	92%	42%	83%	50%	83%	58%

Major Finding: An overwhelming majority (92%) of participants described experiencing feeling passé as an older worker.

Appendix I

Distribution Chart – Findings #2

RQ 2- How did participants describe their challenges in learning new ways of earning and sustaining their livelihood?

N=12	Descriptions of Challenges in Learning New Ways of Earning					
Participants	Resistance to hiring older Workers (Age Bias)	Experience does not Match Opportunity (Overqualified)	Not Taking Action	Embarrassment over Long period of work displacement	Transition	Loss of Identity (Bad Advice/Self-doubt)
Fred	x	x	X		x	x
Plato		x			x	
Annalise	x	x			x	x
Clark					x	
Templeton	x	x		x	x	x
Veronica	x	x	X	x	x	x
Sebastian	x	x	X	x	x	x
Chloe	x	x	X		x	x
Marco	x	x	X	x	x	
Giants	x	x	X	x	x	x
Mavis	x	x			x	x
Brooklyn	x	x			x	
Total	10	11	6	6	12	8
%	83%	92%	50%	50%	100%	67%

Major Finding: All participants described transitioning to other employment opportunities as challenging.

Appendix J

Distribution Chart – Findings #3

RQ3 – How did participants learn to overcome obstacles and challenges they faced in re-engaging in the workforce?

N=12				
Participants	Networking with Family, Friends, Colleagues	Becoming More Marketable	Persistence (Self-Confidence)	Willingness to Transition (Take any Job, learning something new)
Fred	x	X	x	x
Plato		X	x	x
Annalise	x	X	x	x
Clark			x	x
Templeton	x	X	x	x
Veronica	x	X	x	x
Sebastian	x	X	x	x
Chloe	x	X		x
Marco	x	X	x	x
Giants	x	X	x	x
Mavis	x	X	x	x
Brooklyn		X	x	x
Total	11	11	11	12
%	92%	92%	92%	100%

Major Finding: All participants described a willingness to transition and learn something new as a means of overcoming challenges and obstacles to re-engaging in the workforce.

Appendix K

Distribution Chart – Findings #4

RQ4 – What activities did participants learn to undertake that helped them transition to re-engaged in the workforce?

N=12	Descriptions of Learning Activities					
Participants	Dialogue and discussion with Colleagues, Friends, Family, Neighbors	Employment Resources	Self-Directed Learning	Reading (Research)	Reflection (Pulling on Past Experience)	Mentoring
Fred	x	x	x	X		
Plato		x	x	X	x	
Annalise	x	x	x	X	x	x
Clark	x		x		x	x
Templeton	x	x	x	X	x	x
Veronica	x		x	X	x	
Sebastian	x	x	x	X	x	
Chloe		x	x	X	x	
Marco	x	x	x	X	x	
Giants	x	x	x	X	x	x
Mavis	x		x	X	x	x
Brooklyn	x		x		x	
Total	11	6	12	10	11	5
%	92%	50%	100%	83%	92%	50%

Major Finding: All participants (100%) described undertaking Self-Directed learning as an activity that helped them transition to re-engagement in the workforce.

Appendix L

Demographic Breakdown

Participant	Age	Gender	Racial/ Ethnic Identification	State of Residence	Current Employment	Previous Employment/ Profession	Time in Years in Previous Employment	Length of time Between Previous Employment and Current
Marco	61	Male	White	New York	Administrator	Senior Infrastructure Manager with 15 Years as Project Manager	30	1.5 Years
Templeton	68	Male	White	New Jersey	Retired	Support Staff Exxon	28	8 months
Veronica	56	Female	Multiple	WA	Professor	Co-owner consulting Firm	3	7 Years
Chole	65	Female	Black/AA	Georgia	Mechanical Engineer Technician	CAD Engineering Design Drafter	38	2 weeks
Sebastian	50	Male	Hispanic	New York	Freelance Technology Professional	IT Manager/Facilities Director	8	Still looking
Fred	62	Male	White	New York	Compliance Analyst	Nielson Analyst	15-20 Years	2 Years
Clark	75	Female	White	New York	Entrepreneur, Consultant, Educator	Educator, Director of Therapeutic Recreation	44 Years	1 Year
Plato	63	Male	Not disclosed	South Carolina	Hospice Chaplain	Small Business Owner/Educator	6 Years	3 Years
Giants	59	Male	White	Westchester, NY	Court Clerk	Printing	33 Years	4 Years
Mavis	58	Female	White	Nevada	Real Estate Agent	Electronics	30 Years	4 Years
Brooklyn	58	Female	White	Rhode Island	Quality Compliance	Executive Assistant	25 Years	3 months
Annalise	64	Female	Black/AA	Illinois	DNA Collector	Administrative Assistant	35 Years	2 years

N = 12

Average/Mean Age = 61.58; Number of States Represented = 8; Number of Professions Represented = 12; Average Years spent in previous profession/Employment = 25; Average length of time between previous and current employment = 1.8 years (3 still looking)