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Later Life Career Transitions: Exploration of Factors and Turning Points that Influence Career Transitions in Later Life

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Dissertation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to capture participants' descriptions of factors and identification of turning points that profoundly influenced their later life career transition paths. The study sample consisted of 10 individuals age 55 or older with stories of engagement in later life career transitions. Volunteer participants had connections with career transition courses at Marylhurst University or Life by Design NW (Portland Community College). Qualitative method using narrative design allowed interpretation of meanings that surrounded participants' transition factors and turning points, as described in participants' stories of their lived transition experiences. Constructionist perspectives recognized the narrative was a joint construction between listener and teller and the story could be told differently in diverse contexts. Story construction was based on interviews with each participant, with these interviews creating a narrative text. The constructionist approach suggested that apart from personal reflections, socializing influences shaped participants' narratives. Factors of particular significance included age, health, education, work, economics, family, key people, emotions, and older adult stereotypes. The study concluded that descriptive turning points represented transformational catalysts, pivoting around life changes and events, a sense of calling, and epiphanies. Discovery of flow, acceptance of low points, and understanding of life's frailties allowed participants to reconcile fears and external circumstances so they could embrace their passions for work and celebrate their worth and wisdom – making meaningful contributions to society. Methodology and purpose of this study combined elements not similarly combined in other studies found in literature, giving heightened significance to study's results. Timing was a substantive aspect of this study's relevance,

as many in our society – including the influx of Baby Boomers currently reaching retirement age – were experiencing factors and turning points explored in this study.

Keywords: calling, career, factors, later life, narrative, stories, transition, turning points

Chapter 1: Introduction

The contextual framework of this study involved individuals who had been engaged in careers comprised of one or several occupations. These career paths represented their vocations in life, which may have been personally and professionally fulfilling. They were pursued not only for the fulfillment that could be achieved, but because they provided monetary sustenance for life's needs and amenities.

Yet life events intersected with and influenced changes to participants' career paths. These represented turning points – confrontations with "doors" in life that presented possibilities for career transition opportunities, challenges, or a mixture of both. For some participants, when events intersected with careers, they caused career transitions that were made out of necessity for continued monetary sustenance, often beyond the years such individuals expected to be gainfully employed. For others, those intersections represented opportunities for career transitions created out of vocational choice, rather than out of economic necessity. Some participants resonated with blended aspects of both scenarios, and the universal goal became acting on a career transition that held the deepest potential for personal and professional meaning. Alboher (2013) referred to this blended intersection as the coalescence of "purpose, passion, and a paycheck… continued work that combine[d] personal meaning with social purpose" (p. 3). Whether transition occurred from opportunity, need, or both, the importance to the world of business was that participants' valuable skills were being transferred to

organizations that could use those skills, rather than being lost to the sense that participants were *too old* to be of value in the workplace (Alboher, 2013).

Various factors influenced the act of transition, and these were uniquely described by each participant. Factors could be described as "hinges" that influenced the opening of "doors." Commonly found factors in literature were echoed by participants, and they included age, health, education, work, economics, family, key people, emotions, and older adult stereotypes. For all participants, the act of transition evolved through turning points in their lives. For some, the turning points were a cataclysmic event. But for others, there was a dawning awareness that the career one had embraced could be enhanced, enlarged, or exchanged by transitioning to another career that held more meaning – and it could be expressed as a later life calling. The catalyst for awareness could arise from a personal or professional turning point, or it could form through cumulative turning points in an individual's life (Denzin, 1988; Riessman, 1993). Acting on this awareness was generally barred - usually for financial reasons - during the period when participants were creating career security or raising a family. For some participants, career transition in later life remained barred unless financial factors were considered, even when transition was seen as calling. But for other participants, a place in life had been reached where financial factors were not in the fore, giving more possibilities to the range of transition opportunities.

This study indicated that for some, claiming their authentic purpose resulted from finally finding flow – a fit between skills, demands, and passion for use of their abilities in later life (Csikszentmihalyi 1975, 1988, 1990, 1999, 2003). Often, finding flow involved coming to terms with low points (University of Michigan, n.d.) in their lives

that allowed them to move beyond the periods of loss, despair, or other difficult situations and embrace who they really were – even, and especially, in later life. They could act outside the social norms imposed by society and act in powerful, selfless, authentic ways by giving back to others and society through employment of valued skills. Fears and lack of confidence that may once have paralyzed plans for later life career transitions were eased or reconciled as they became more in touch with their true passions. In embracing their passion for career transition, blockages represented by participants' described factors were recognized for their reality and dealt with. Often, that meant re-educating themselves, taking financial and professional risks, overcoming family misgivings, and finding paths of motivational enablement. It meant silencing the internalized, socially-influenced voices that whispered – or sometimes screamed – words of disabling discouragement. In this study, participants described grasping the brass ring of opportunity as they considered and responded to varied versions of later life career transitions. Later life was not a time to fade in what they could offer society - it was their time to thrive!

The following is a discussion of keywords used in the study, some of which can be subjective in their connotation and which need clarified for their usage in understanding interpretations of this study. They are discussed in alphabetical order.

The significance of *calling* was quite personal in nature. For many, their vocational career was seen as their calling because they used their gifts of interest, expertise, and energy to craft each rung in the ladder of their career. However, those were the very gifts that could be extended in a uniquely personal manner to seek and experience calling. When this calling came in later life, an individual would not

primarily focus on slowing down, but instead would focus on rededicating themselves to an endeavor that they believe in (Hart, 2008). Identifying that endeavor would not likely be a single decision but rather a dedicated-pursuit process to discern the factors involved in the pursuit (Lips-Wiersma & Mcmorland, 2006). As used in this study, *calling* meant a sense of passion for using gifts that might have been present during one's career, but that could be coupled with opportunities manifested in later life when they had grown into longings for vocational engagement – engagements with a deeper purpose than those experienced during one's career (Sellers, Thomas, Batts & Ostman, 2005).

The path of an individual's professional *career* was historically quite fixed in its range - a person generally had a career for life, be it merchant, lawyer, doctor, or educator. Today there were varied career paths that a person might undertake throughout their professional life, but they all pertained to the individual being paid for their expertise, with that expertise often including recognition for the levels of education and experience the individual has attained. For the purposes of this study, an individual's *career* referred to their work related roles over their professional lifespan (Watts, n.d.). The essence of this concept was captured in the following description, which stated that career development is: "a lifelong process of getting ready to choose, choosing, and, typically, continuing to make choices from among the many occupations available in our society" (Brown & Brooks, 1996, p. xv).

This study explored and discussed *factors* that might influence an individual to make a later life career transition. As used in this study the term meant circumstances or conditions that could influence or bring about such a transition (McKechnie, Ed., 1965). Some factors that had meaning to participants included age, health, education, work,

economics, family, key people, emotions, and older adult stereotypes. These factors represented both personal and social influences. A major benefit of the narrative approach used in this study was that, unlike many strictly modern approaches, a great deal of narrative research embraced the notion of an autonomous self, capable of making informed decisions (Jackson, 1998). Instead, the construction of self and of individual experience was recognized as being a socially and culturally mediated process (Haigh, 2008; Jackson, 1998).

Later life was a relative term. In its least complex meaning, it was a time that followed mid-life. In practice, the term was more complex because the nature of mid-life was so imprecise. When an individual was experiencing their mid-life years, later life could seem very near at hand if a personal condition such as failing health was a looming factor. But later life might seem a distant concept for others, because their time of mid-life had become quite expansive and they had no intentions of breaking the stride of career and community involvement for many years. Yet later life did eventually arrive for all who were given length of years, and societal nudges related to this reality might be influential in one's perception of life's stages. Nudges might be in the form of AARP bulletins that began arriving around age 55, reminders from Social Security concerning entitlements that would become available at certain ages, and the unrelenting comments from peers expressing their personal countdowns until retirement. Perhaps one of the biggest shocks of recognizing later life was to accept the fact that "we are no longer young" (Stortz, 2005). Since *later life* can be a subjective concept, for the purposes of this study it meant the period of life that occurred after a person reached the age of 55 years.

Passage from one's work related roles during their professional lifespan to a career that differed in some manner during later life, was considered the act of *transition* within the context of this study. Each participant experienced varying factors that informed their attitudes, longings, and ultimate decisions for or against entering into this passage of transition. The description of these experienced factors emerged throughout the interview process and represented the core analysis of this study.

A *turning point* represented a catalyst within the process of transition, or that started the process of transition. For the purposes of this study, it was a juncture in an individual's life experiences that affected their trajectory for experiencing transition. Pursuant to Thomsen (2007), these junctures often were outcomes of emotional and important events. Some study participants concurred these events could be described as "awakenings" or "epiphanies" (Denzin, 1988, p. 15; Riessman, 1993, p. 12).

Statement of Problem

Many individuals have reached a place in life where they were successful in their careers; but because of their age, society expected them to move toward retirement and enjoy their "golden years." However, some older individuals have incurred life events that would not allow them to retire; so out of necessity, they were required to seek a career transition that would give them continued security in later life. Other individuals were not prompted by economic necessity, but they were determined that rather than retiring, they wanted to seize the opportunity to transition to another career – and the career might involve a deeper level of meaning, one with a sense of calling. Often, individuals sought later life career transitions both for economic benefits that could

accrue and for professional opportunities that could be developed. Irrespective of the possible scenarios for career transition, the act of such transition in later life broke the mold of retirement-age living that had been set by traditions of society.

As the researcher for this study, it was important to begin with a personal statement. I had reached the traditional age of retirement, but I was acting instead on a career transition in later life, and I was doing so with a sense of calling. In preparing for this juncture in my life, I had embraced career transition as an act of stewardship when I framed it in the context of Matthew 14:15-21. I viewed the skills of my professional career and my continued energy, acuity, and ability as my treasure. Just as the five loaves and two fish represented the lad's treasure in the Matthew story, I could transition my treasure into a later life career - one that also represented a personal sense of calling - by turning it over to the Lord so He could bless it, multiply the investment, and use it for His glory. Although this study with participants was not based on a spiritual premise, if a participant did discern a spiritual aspect of calling in their transition, the study allowed for that expression.

The problem lay with recognizing turning points in one's life and discerning factors that provided enablement for changing trajectory and making a career transition in later life. Later life was a vulnerable time for individuals, and a life-changing transition could raise the ante both for risk and opportunity. It was crucial to discover the physical, emotional, and professional factors that went into the price of the ante.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore factors relevant to participants' career transitioning and to identify turning points that led to actionable considerations for career transitions in later life. This was done by exploring, identifying, and analyzing meanings that surrounded participant's transition factors and turning points, as described by participants in stories of their lived transition experiences (Denzin, 1988; Merriam, 2002; Moustakas, 1994; Riessman, 1993; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Some constructionist narrative scholars argued that individuals constructed their reality through interaction with their social worlds, and a primary goal of this study was to understand the participants' meanings as they engaged with the world they were interpreting (Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2002).

The qualitative method was the best approach for achieving the study's purpose because it allowed for exploration of how and why transition factors and turning points might contain relevant meanings in the experiences of participants (Creswell, 2009). Narrative design allowed researcher to relate these experiences by telling participants' stories of influential factors, a turning point or cumulative turning points, changed trajectories, and resultant transitions (Denzin, 1988; Riessman, 1993).

Timing was a significant factor for the relevance of this study. Many in our society - including the influx of Baby Boomers reaching retirement age in 2012 and beyond - were seeking answers to this study's research questions. The study's approach explored those questions, using participants' own words, thereby creating a unique design for this area of research. Current literature revealed studies incidental to retirement,

career transitions, re-careering, and later life social issues, with AARP and MetLife Foundation providing much of the research leadership. However, these seminal studies (together with related studies referenced under "Significance of the Study") employed quantitative methodology that left unanswered aspects of "how" or "why;" or they use qualitative methodology, but did not explore the spectrum or focus of issues contained in this study; and none use a narrative approach. Therefore, this study substantively contributed to the body of research relevant to *later life career transitions*.

Research Questions

1. How does ones' past impact discernment of current factors related to career transition?
2. How does one discern in later life the factors that are meaningful to career transitioning? What are those factors (examples could range from more psychological factors to more social forces: age, health, economic, educational, workforce, family influences, key people, and older adult stereotypes)? Why are they meaningful?
3. What are the single or cumulative turning points that create one's interest, need, or desire for a later life career transition (examples could include: life changes, key events, and passion or calling)? Why are they turning points? What role did epiphany play and what are the different types of epiphanies?
4. Why do some aspects of calling reach the depths of one's soul, causing rededication to a more meaningful existence (an example could include:

realization of value niches that have profound implications for development of later life strategies)?

5. What enduring changes in one's beliefs about self and society occur as a result of factors and turning points experienced in later life (examples could include: *epiphany* or *awakening*, causing creation of a more insightful person for ways to re-emerge with stronger, more meaningful career contributions)?

Delimitations and Limitations

To select participants, an initial application was used for screening volunteers who were age 55 or older and who expressed either an interest or a level of experience in later life career transitions. Participant selections were made by the researcher, based on researcher's rationale for each applicant's interest or experience in the study's purpose (Creswell, 2007; Groenewald, 2004). Thus the participant selection process represented a "purposeful sampling," that would not allow for broadly generalizing the findings to an extended population (Creswell, 2007, p. 76). However, the concept of transferability could apply at some level to most research methodologies (Colorado State University, 2013). In qualitative research, "transferability is applied by the *readers* of the research….It invites readers of the research to make connections between elements of a study and their own experience" (Colorado State University, 2013, p.2). The findings could have social connotations beyond the sample population if individuals in that extended population were drawn to the study's purpose.

Before conducting participant interviews, researcher pilot tested interview questions for clarity of the study's purpose. Following the pilot testing, the time period

for collecting study information was approximately two months. One initial in-depth, face-to-face interview and one follow-up telephone interview was conducted by researcher with each participant during that period. This interview process did not allow for tracking changes in participants' attitudes over a timeframe extending beyond the period of this study, although participants were asked to describe past experiences that led them to their current transition considerations.

There were no preconceived outcomes in this study, but the study was limited to experiences bearing relevance to later life career transitions. There was significant uniformity in the level of communication and writing skills of participants, so no limitation developed from a participant's inability to articulate their experiences (Creswell, 2009). Researcher guarded against limitations on interpretation of participants' meanings due to biases of researcher caused by her personal involvement in a later life career transition (Creswell, 2009; Iacono, Brown, & Holtham, 2009). As a guard against bias, researcher relied on skills learned during the course of her career for listening to the position of clients, discerning the meaning of their positions, and representing those positions in her lived professional role.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The discussion that follows represented concepts found in literature relating to the purpose, problem, and questions of this dissertation study; and it incorporated factors and turning points described in the lived experiences of this study's participants. Discussion format was based on three constructs: later life career transitions, factors influencing transition, and turning points for transition.

Later Life Career Transitions

Literary metaphors abounded for describing the concept of career transitions in later life. Metaphors conjured somewhat hazy meanings because often they borrowed from unrelated genres of sports, theatre, or culture. Well recognized metaphors and those who wrote about them included: *encore* (Freedman, 2007), *next chapter* (Feldman, 2012), *prime time* (Freedman, 1999), *re-careering* (Docksai, 2009), *renaissance* (Dreher, 2006), *second act* (Essick, 2011), and *second half* (Drucker, 2005). Whatever metaphor one might have invoked to title this engagement, the act usually involved change – including the end of traditional retirement as our society has known it (Kotz, 2010). Those entering later life career transitions tended not to be as influenced by chronological age as by intentions to keep stride with career and community involvement for many years to come (Johnson, Kawachi, & Lewis, 2009). However, studies on later life issues often

recognized an initial age for later life categorization, setting that age between 50 and 55 years (Johnson et al., 2009; Lakin, Mullane, & Robinson, 2011). This study considered *later life* as a period that occurred after a person reached the age of 55 years.

Careers were often an accumulation of a worker's information and knowledge that they could combine and make available for future employment situations (Arthur, 2008). There were varied career paths a person might take, and the paths might continue into later life (Johnson et al., 2009; Lakin et al., 2011). Drucker (2005) indicated that most workers were not "finished" when they reached the 40 year mark of their career, they [were] more likely "bored;" and increasingly, that was leading to "second careers" (p. 13). When career transitions were embraced later in life, individuals tended to seek work that was: "personally fulfilling, contributed to the greater good, and generated income" (Ruffenach, 2012. p. 40). Mills (2008) stated later life careers should be developed with a sense of joy, and with an eye on significance rather than success. Freedman (2007) posited that over the trajectory of one's career, the focus often shifted from money to meaning. For the purposes of this study, an individual's *career* referred to their work related roles over the trajectory of their professional lifespan (Watts, n.d.).

Transition referred to a process, or to the result of a process (Halliday, 2012). The process could be a tangle of known and unknown passages when career transitions caused older adults to "leave their old roles and relationships to journey into a terra incognita, the region of later life for which our culture provides no maps and precious little in terms of models for positive aging" (Dreher, 2006, p. 107). But when career transition was viewed as a process of revival, individuals were energized by the opportunity for flowing into vital engagements with life, and this flow was a significant

aspect of healthy aging (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Within the context of this study, passage from one's work related roles during their professional lifespan to a career that differed in some manner during later life was considered the act of *transition.*

To better understand the construct of later life career transitions, it could be helpful to understand historical perspectives on later life and evolution of an older adult's perspectives on later life.

Historical perspectives on later life. For most of history, individuals did not retire – "people worked until they dropped" (Dychtwald, Erickson, & Morison, 2004, p. 52). However, by the early 20th century, the view tended to be that "old age began at 60, the life span was three-score and ten, and few people survived past that" (Pollock, 2007, p. 112). Individuals were expected to work until old age and then cease their gainful employment, with the remainder of their years being financed by savings (generally from land ownership), family, and charity (Pollock, 2007). But in 1929, when the country experienced the Great Depression with its high unemployment and intense poverty, most economic norms were devastated. Retirement age adults were the most vulnerable because they could not compete for the limited work that was available and they had no money remaining for retirement due to the depression wiping out their savings. The majority of the older population was living in dire straits during this period.

As a result, on August 14, 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the bill enacting the Social Security Act, which became one of his greatest "New Deal" legacies (Rizzo, 2010, p. 1). One purpose of the Act was to encourage workers not to retire until age 65, because by 1935 people had begun to live longer (Pollock, 2007). The main

purpose of the act was to provide economic surety to retired workers as well as to create a way for working adults to add to their personal retirement through the government administered Social Security program (Mooney, 2009).

In American society, the Social Security check that arrived in the mailbox on a given date each month became the great economic equalizer for later life. With the monthly pension check from Social Security in hand, many older adults began experiencing their "golden years of retirement, in which one traveled and played golf" (Pollock, 2007, p. 112). That view held plausibility for a number of years until rising costs, diminished investments, and unhealthy lifestyles began to take their toll. Today, many older adults were finding Social Security was not an adequate safety net for retirement living (Hunsberger, 2013). Thus, they sought to prolong their working years. The conundrum for some was represented in the following statement: "Saving for retirement is something that Humans find difficult. They have to solve a complicated mathematical problem to know how much to save, and then they have to exert a lot of willpower for a long time to execute the plan" (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009, p. 107). The problem of saving for retirement was highlighted by the 2013 Retirement Confidence Survey, where it was found: "More than half of workers report they and/or their spouse have less than $25,000 in total savings and investments…including 28 percent who have less than $1,000" (Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2013, p. 3). Lack of retirement income or retirement savings could be a factor for nudging older adults into taking a positive view of later life career transitions – transitions that brought not only more financial security, but that involved meaning and purpose in the passage from one career to another.

Evolution of perspectives on later life. As adults aged, their perspectives on later life evolved – "our goals at 15 are certainly different from our goals at age 55" (Tybout & Calder, Eds., 2010, p. 16). Older individuals were more likely than younger individuals "to be motivated by the following subjectively derived values: autonomy, social connectedness, altruism, personal growth, and revitalization" (Bradley & Longino, 2001, p. 20; Wolfe, 2005). Some of the values might be linked, with an example being seniors who wanted independence (need for autonomy), yet had a concern about loneliness (need for social connectedness). The values of personal or career growth and revitalization also might be linked, with stories of American heroes who reached their height of power and fame later in life being particularly inspirational to older adults (Bradley & Longino, 2001).

These core values were important for active older adults who wanted to seize opportunities afforded by time and ability for personal or career growth and revitalization. Activities that embraced these values included pursuits furthering one's education and perhaps allowing one to transition in later life from a chosen career to a deeper calling. The essence of these values was exemplified by their revitalizing power – the giving of renewed vigor to body, mind, and soul. This vigor often had the altruistic outcome of "giving back," with many individuals over age 55 viewing later life as a time to contribute to society (Court, Farrell, & Forsyth, 2007, p. 8).

Wolfe (2005) discussed the developmental processes and influences that characterized the "seasons of life" (p. 17). Older adults were in the fall and winter seasons. The main developmental objective of those in the fall season was for a more balanced inner self through higher self-understanding (Wolfe, 2005). The main

developmental objective of those in the winter season was to reach a purer form of essence that deepens life's satisfactions (Wolfe, 2005). These development objectives overlay core values, and they were value niches that could have profound implications for development of later life strategies (Vesperi, 2001).

In addition to core values and developmental processes, there were other phenomena influencing later life perspectives. Baby Boomers entering retirement were healthier and better educated than past cohorts of retirees, allowing current retirement age individuals to work longer if they choose to - and in most professions, employers could not force someone to retire (Clark, 2013). "Sure, we need to save more, set goals and tackle systemic problems. But…with luck we'll stay productive and engaged a little longer" (Clark, 2013, p. 51).

Factors Influencing Transition

This study explored factors that might influence an individual to make a later life career transition. As used in this study, factors meant circumstances or conditions that could influence or bring about such a transition (McKechnie, Ed., 1965). Factors described in the stories of participants closely aligned with those found in literature. Factors that had meaning to participants were age, health, education, work, economics, family, key people, emotions, and older adult stereotypes. Individual points of view on factors influencing transition ranged from the psychological to the social as individuals constituted realities of their world through their stories (Denzin, 2001; Lieblich, Rivka, & Zilber, 1998; Riessman 1993).

It was important that narrative accounts had a structure of events that demonstrated connectedness or coherence, as well as a sense of movement through time (Gergen & Gergen, 1986). Within this study, there was no scientific means of discerning *ought* from *is* when connecting points of view within a range, but individuals described "what they h[e]ld to be reasonable values or goals at a given time" (Gergen & Gergen, 1986, p. 37). The following discussion of factors influencing transition did not attempt to determine where each factor fell in the psychological to social range of views, but rather recognized there often was a blend that occurred within the range between psychological and social views, and one impacted the other.

Age factors. "Age is a moving target" (Bradley & Longino, 2001, p. 17). For many older adults, chronological age did not define the way they thought about themselves. Older adults might have a perceived age that did not necessarily correlate with their chronological age. In support of this concept, Bradley and Longino (2001) referenced the Moschis (1994) study which found older individuals who were healthy and active might perceive themselves to be 75% to 80% of their actual chronological age. The Moschis (1994) study concurred with Featherstone and Hepworth (1993), who postulated the age one felt might not be the same as the age one appeared to be. Physical appearances changed with age, and it could surprise older adults to realize that they looked different from the "unchanging image in [their] head" (Bradley & Longino, 2001, p. 18). Older adults might cling to a more youthful self-image because it resonated as a personally valued stereotype within their constituted world of reality.

In 2000, the National Council on Aging conducted a national survey by the Louis Harris polling organization on the public and personal perceptions of aging in the U.S.

(Bradley & Longino, 2001). The findings of this survey were compared to an almost identical survey in 1974, which was a generation earlier. It was found that the proportion of older Americans who were concerned about "health, income, loneliness and crime as a serious personal problem" had substantially declined in the 25 years (Bradley & Longino, 2001, p. 17). It appeared this decrease in concern for traditional age-related problems was caused by an "erosion of chronological age as a central indicator of the experience of aging" (Whitelaw, 2000, p. 370). Younger respondents indicated more concern with old-age problems than older respondents did themselves. Bradley and Longino (2001) stated this meant age was not the defining focus for who older people thought they were; however, younger people tended to have a more defined idea about what they thought comprised old age.

Biggs (1999) indicated that the sense of identity adults had in later life was often based on what they had achieved in the past and on what they hoped to accomplish in the future. Unless individuals were ill, they often did not feel old – "old" was the identifier for someone confined to a nursing home, an image from which they wanted to distance themselves (Biggs, 1999). For active seniors, the body's aging image was not the core of their identity, particularly if they identified with people who were younger than they. A career change in later life could celebrate opportunities that were identified - not with age, but rather with what the older adult could still accomplish.

With life expectancies increasing and age-related identities decreasing, individuals were freed in later life to opt for meaningful career changes. Many were doing so because they did not want to retire and engage in a life of pure leisure – they

perceived that as a choice that would leave them "bored and restless" (Dychtwald et al., 2004, p. 18).

Health factors. All factors in this review referenced aspects of health as issues in later life career transitions. Health issues might be personal or they might involve key persons in an individual's sphere of relationships. One's own good health could generate a well-spring of opportunity, but failing health in oneself or dependent-others could create situations where "life gets in the way" (Alboher, 2013, p. 244).

Sometimes a health diagnoses forced recognition that life was fragile; yet the result might also be impetus for transitioning to a career with more meaning. Meaningful work could be a boon to health, but in later life individuals needed to find ways to work that matched up with energy and physical boundaries (Joffe, Friedlander, & Mansfield, 2008). It might be argued that engagement in later life careers was an aid to mental well-being because individuals felt they had less to prove – less at risk – than in earlier stages of their professional careers (Alboher, 2013). This might create a sense of mental freedom in an older adult. They were enabled to focus more "on the impact of their work than on climbing the ladder, and they [were] fueled less by ego than by knowing their work [had] meaning" (Alboher, 2013, p. 239).

When health factors become an influence in later stages of life, successful career transition likely would depend on schedule flexibility for education, family, and work-related factors and on financial options for economic-related factors (Alboher, 2013). Correlating health factors with all other transition factors meant individuals engaged in the transitioning process needed to seek career fits that were right for them in their lived situations (Yost, 2004).

Education factors. There were several significant motivators for older adults "invading campuses" (Allen, 2002, p. 21): They needed to upgrade their skills and knowledge to meet changes in technology; they changed careers more frequently than previous generations, which might require new levels of postsecondary education for career transitions; and they continued to be healthy and active long past the age of traditional retirement. Adding to those factors, Manheimer (2005) stated intellectual stimulation and sociability were also top motivators for older adults taking on the role of student. These motivating factors pointed to the conclusion that some older adults had the luxury of choosing their student role, while others had to seek it out of necessity.

Age could be a barrier to education. Age carried accompanying responsibilities that could complicate decisions about personal and family time commitments. In a survey of older students at Portland Community College, 90% were taking credit-bearing courses, and nearly eight out of 10 respondents cited time constraints as the leading obstacle (Portland Community College, 2007). As one older adult student stated: "I have had family deaths, births, family illnesses, and custody battles, all of which I was involved in because I was a grandparent" (Lakin et al., 2011, p. 18; Portland Community College, 2007). This seemed a striking comment that got to the core of older adults who were engaged in learning – these individuals could be both parents *and* grandparents within their family structure. In today's troubled society that could mean a double load of responsibility on older adults that had to be balanced against desires and demands for new skills. Even if time and responsibilities could be juggled in a manner that opened the way for learning, the complexity of that juggling act could become an overwhelming obstacle over time, placing ultimate degree attainment in peril (Bound & Turner, 2010).

Attitudes could also pose barriers, both external and internal, for older adults. Ageism on campus could occur - the older student's image of themselves as being mentally fit and productive might not fit the established stereotypes some held for older adults (Lakin et al., 2011). This could be acted out in ways that made older students feel they were a bother to instructors and classmates, or they were unworthy of the efforts expended on their learning experiences. But perhaps more significantly, older students might need to overcome their own negative attitudes about navigating their learning transitions. Classes likely would be more interactive than when they were last in school and use of technology would be the norm for delivery of information and assignments. Thus, they would need to flow with the system rather than feeling alienated or annoyed by the current system. Transitioning to this learning environment could be difficult for the older student with a self-concept of being responsible and in control of their own decisions - they might resent or resist situations where they felt younger individuals were imposing their wills on the training process (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). Effective transition meant older students had to navigate beyond social factors in their learning environment and recognize the psychological influences of attitudes that could impede learning experiences.

Flexible scheduling, streamlined registration, and alternative delivery models were ways some institutions were meeting the challenge for accommodating older adult students (Ayers & Narduzzi, 2009). Although an economic return on education in later life was difficult to measure (Peterson, 2006), older students brought value to the institutional environment; and they took away personal and professional success stories when they accomplished their educational goals.

Workforce factors. In a study by Stork (2008), it was noted older workers had certain expectations: Older workers wanted jobs that were challenging, that had task variety, and that allowed for greater control over their work schedules. Not unlike younger workers, the older workers valued fair treatment, trust, and respect in their employment relationship. However, the age factor was a significant concern of older workers, evidenced by the sense that "employers prefer[red] younger workers to older workers" (Stork, 2008, p. 176). Even if this were not correct, Stork (2008) indicated the mere perception was enough to cause concern on the part of some older workers that they were limited in their career options and opportunities.

Calo (2008) acknowledged similar concerns to those expressed by older workers in the Stork (2008) survey. He observed that older workers had to deal with organizations that assumed the older workers had the same motivations in later years that they did when they were younger. He made the distinction: "Older workers are not necessarily less motivated than when they were younger, but they are differently motivated" (Calo, 2008, p. 413). This motivational change could be underpinned by the dwindling time span older workers faced in which to financially prepare for retirement expectations. Time to accumulate retirement savings may have collided with decreased earnings on retirement plans and increased debt due to the economic downturn, causing what Court et al. (2007) referred to as "shattered expectations" (p. 7). The collision may be accompanied by health insurance concerns and age-related health issues of the older worker or the worker's spouse. These causal factors for changed career perspectives could lead to work-related stress, which only fueled older workers' greatest concern: the perception they were "unwilling or unable to perform or [were] burned out and less

motivated than younger workers" (Moseley & Dessinger, 2008, p. 6). If an organization held this perception, then being nudged into retirement (or worse, early retirement without adequate retirement resources) may have been a fulfillment of the older worker's greatest concern. Thus, remaining or returning to an intergenerational workplace could present both challenges and opportunities for older adults (Venneberg & Wilkinson, 2008).

The workforce-related concerns that have been listed provided only one perspective, however. Positive workforce factors existed, and they included the fact that many older workers wanted to "learn, grow, try new things, and be productive indefinitely" (Dychtwald et al., 2004, p. 54). Older workers could experience a sense of self-worth when they contributed to a business enterprise, and they often thrived in the society of professional peers (Dychtwald et al., 2004).

Positive workforce factors could create win-win situations for both the older workers and for their employers, but the situations might require some modifications when compared to the traditional workforce. Older workers might benefit from flex programs that offered opportunities to combine work with other later-life pursuits, such as time to enjoy family, travel, and volunteer work. Transitioning into a career that allowed this flexibility could create the lifestyle blend desired by the older worker. It also could provide employers with skilled "leaders on demand" (Dychtwald et al., 2004, p. 54) when corporate managerial tasks did not require full time engagement. The positive quality for employers was they did not need to invest heavily in training because an older worker already had leadership experience, skills, and abilities. In addition, the older worker might be able to serve in mentoring or knowledge-sharing roles as part of

their work-related accomplishments (Dychtwald et al., 2004). Even if a re-careering worker needed to refresh or upgrade some of their skills in order to make a career transition, the investment was a good one for both the worker and the organization as long as the older worker remained "productive and healthy" (Dychtwald et al., 2004 p. 57).

Economic factors. The Social Security system that was established 78 years ago, was created as a foundation for retirement, but it was never intended to provide an individual's total pension during their retirement years (Standard & Poor's, n.d.). Financial analysts have indicated retirees needs at least 80% of their pre-retirement income to maintain the same standard of living they had during their final years of employment (Powell, 2009). However many older Americans have not provided for their retirement years, other than to rely heavily on Social Security for maintaining a respectable quality of life. According to statistics, 64% of qualified Social Security beneficiaries received at least half their retirement income from the program, and for more than half of those households, Social Security programs represented 90% or more of their retirement income (Maloney & Schumer, 2010; Tyler, 2010). For those individuals, later life could mean living from one pension check to the next, and unforeseen expenses such as health care costs not covered by Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance could cause them to go deeply into debt.

As Baby Boomers reached later life, many were facing the prospect of "shattered expectations" (Court et al., 2007, p. 7). They were a generation who lived through years of unprecedented prosperity and they expected that prosperity to carry them through retirement. However many were now coping with life circumstances that posed

significant financial and physical challenges (Court et al., 2007). Because of the recent economic downturn, they were realizing they could not maintain their lifestyle unless they continued to work. Many had chronic health problems brought on by stress, obesity, and lack of exercise. This was a cohort that was unprepared for its economic and health conditions. It was a cohort that was writing "the playbook for future generations" (Kadet, 2012, p. 68) as anticipated retirements stretched decades-long before they fully arrived for some.

Family factors. Greenhaus and Foley (2007) asked: "How can individuals derive substantial satisfaction and fulfillment from those roles in life that matter" (p. 131)? When considering a career transition in later life, one of the factors that mattered was the balanced integration of an individual's work-related role with their family-related role (Peracchi & Welch, 1994). For many workers, the intersection of work and family could be the juncture that created the most stress, fear, and anxiety; and unless the juncture was satisfactorily bridged, it could detract from the worker's potential contribution (Valcour, Bailyn, & Quijada, 2007). This could be particularly true when older workers were transitioning from one career to another and were simultaneously facing tensions of re-careering with strains of family issues. Family issues might involve such matters as health impairments of a spouse, financial needs of children, or education assistance for grandchildren (Gelardin & Muscat, 2010). When these types of issues were present, re-careering might be forced through work necessity, rather than by chosen means (Gelardin & Muscat, 2010).

In the case of an individual who chose to re-career in later life simply because they wanted to remain professionally productive and challenged, there could be great

encouragement by some family members. Or, there could be a discouraging lack of family understanding for why the individual was continuing to work rather than retiring. In the latter instance, there could be almost a stigma attached to later life career goals without commensurate economic need for the career. But whatever the reason for later life career transitions, career participation rates for those over 55 were remaining strong, and they were actually going up for women as women with an increasing history of career goal attainment reached later life (Peracchi & Welch, 1994). This seemed to indicate many individuals engaged in later life careers have availed themselves of support systems to bridge the gap between career demands and family constraints.

Key people factors. Family, friends, teachers, co-workers, peers, and leaders were among those who played key roles in the journey an individual traveled toward later life. When the influence was generally positive, it could create relational connections that were central to the process of healthy aging (Pope, 2012). However, the influence might be negative, and it might hold an individual back from finding their passion or moving ahead professionally. Lewis (2013) referred to this type of influence as "the invisible strings of important people in your life" (p. 1). When someone had a level of influence that built or broke another person, the one creating influence became a key person in the life of the one being influenced (Bubblews, 2012).

Heidegger (1927) and Sarte (1948) recognized the importance of key people in the lived experiences of individuals when they posited one's awareness of self-identity was rooted in the relatedness one had with others (McDonald, 2008). Self-identity could be described as: "a synthesis of one's past, one's future possibilities, and being ahead of oneself in making a present" (Heidegger, 1927, p. 350). In seeking one's self-identity,

fundamental conditions of relatedness with others often were negotiated (McDonald, 2008). Negotiations could bring freedom to those seeking authentic self-awareness – something like "pulling away their masks and learning to be more open and genuine with others" (McDonald, 2008, p. 108).

Self-belief could be a major aspect of self-identity as it helped determine opportunities we could develop and undertake. But confidence in our abilities might be reduced if others underestimated what we were capable of doing (Lifechariot, n.d.). Vulnerable older adults might doubt their own judgment from simple reactions of key people they trusted. Thus, older adults needed to develop a strong internal frame of reference if they were to believe in what they could still accomplish. Without that internal frame of reference, lack of self-belief might be a barrier to actualization of career opportunities (Lifechariot, n.d.).

Relational connections with key people during an individual's life involved a process that began with birth and ended with death. The process likely would have a mix of positive and negative influences. But as one contemplated later life options, the focus needed to be on authentic relationships that allowed individuals to attain their goals with no regrets (Brody, 2012).

Emotion factors. Emotions were "mental states of readiness" that arose from one's "appraisal of events or their own thoughts" and they "may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion, depending on its nature and the meaning for the person having it" (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999, p. 184). Often the emotion had relevance to one's sense of well-being (Bagozzi et al., 1999).

Well-being could be influenced by one's sense of *self.* Mead (1934) posited there was a divided way of thinking about subjectivity: The *I* was the authentic, private self; and the *Me* gave the "ability to take the attitudes of others," and organize them into "sets of attitudes" that gave one their "me," the "self he [was] aware of" (p. 175). Mead (1934) referred to this phenomenon as the *generalized other*, where an individual acted based upon the imagined responses of others in their wider communities or cultures. For Mead (1934), the *I* was the immediate self that felt, perceived, and acted based on the present moment; whereas, the *Me* was the reflective self that recounted past experiences. Jaynes (1976) indicated *I* was a first-person perspective, and *Me* tended to be a third-person perspective for one's concept of *Self.* Crossley (2000) pointed out the way an individual perceived the variety of potential *Me's* was a major determinant for how they decided to act. Leary, Estrada, and Allen (2009) emphasized the importance of understanding *I* and *Me* concepts – which could influence career decisions in later life – by stating:

> People's self-concepts are exceptionally important for human behavior. Without a storehouse of knowledge regarding their own abilities, traits, weaknesses, and preferences, people would have difficulty weighing options and making decisions. These desired and feared selves also provide positive and negative incentives that help to steer people's decisions in beneficial ways. (p. 148)

Oatley and Johnson-Laird (1987) indicated emotions were evoked "at a significant juncture of a plan…typically…when the evaluation (conscious or unconscious) of the likely success of a plan changed" (p. 35). Examples of positive emotions were happiness, elation, and joy which usually led to decisions to continue with one's plan or goal. Examples of negative emotions were frustration, disappointment and anxiety which

could develop from problems with one's plans or failures to achieve desired goals (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Emotions could influence information processing and creative thinking (Bagozzi et al., 1999), with both having significance for accurately assessing opportunities and realities in the pursuit of later life career transitions.

The construct of *flow* was an emotion factor that related to passion for achieving career transition goals, involvement in skill enhancement for realizing goal achievement, and challenges that needed to be overcome if career passions were to be fulfilled. Csikszentmihalyi (1999) described flow experience as a condition in which people were so involved in an activity – such as work - that nothing else seemed to matter at the time. Performing the activity under this condition was experienced as a continuous "flow" from one point in time to the next (Schiefele & Raabe, 2011). Mohan and Nivedita (2012) stated: "The defining characteristic of activities that lead to flow experiences is that they become an end in themselves. While tasks may initially be done for other reasons, ultimately they are done because they are intrinsically rewarding" (p. 9). Flow experiences could be intrinsically rewarding because becoming fully involved in a task allowed a person to stretch his or her skills to the limit (Csikezentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993). Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1988, and 1990) stated that a fit between demands of an activity and the skills or ability of a person to master the activity was the most important prerequisite of experiencing flow. Csikszentmihalyi (2003) posited the ideal condition for flow could be expressed by the formula: "Flow occurs when both challenges and skills are high and equal to each other" (p. 44). Thus, flow resulted at a significant level when there was a combination of high perceived skill and high perceived challenge, because matching one's skill to difficult challenges allowed one to sense personal and

professional growth (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde 1993). One's place in the flow experience could be found by looking for one's passion – what made you excited, what turned you on (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

The construct of *low points* was an emotion factor that presented an outlet for participants' expressed feelings about low points in their journey toward career transition. As posited by Cason (1931): "The most straight-forward and effective way of finding out how a person feels is to ask him" (p. 147). Through study exploration, it was found feelings of passion created flow toward goals, but feelings arising from low points placed question marks on goals. Low points also caused feelings akin to grief with which participants had to come to terms before they could move forward with life, personal growth, and careers. When major negative life events occurred, emotional distress could result – something commonly referred to as a *low point* (University of Michigan, n.d.). Low points tended to be temporary rather than permanent in nature and support of key people could be particularly helpful for coming to terms with causes and solutions for experienced emotional distress (University of Michigan, n.d.). The phrase *coming to terms* was defined as: starting to accept and deal with a difficult or unpleasant situation (TheFreeDictionary, n.d.). Sometimes, coming to terms with causes of low points could mean accepting events that spanned days, years, or decades and that represented loss of parts of their lives (Penzel, n.d.). However, coming to terms with life's low points usually afforded a healing process for overcoming loss. According to Friedman (2011), part of the healing process could involve acceptance of grief because grief was "the normal and natural emotional response to loss" (p. 1). Grief could include "an incredibly wide array of human emotions," and it was also "the most unique and individual of all

human experiences based on our own personality, style, and information or misinformation about dealing with our feelings" (Friedman, 2013, p. 1). Most grief was associated with loss from death and dying; but loss of relationships through divorce, loss of jobs, loss of security – all were examples of losses that could evoke emotional responses, including the response of grief. Healing from losses that created life's low points often could be found by looking for joy and purpose in the present, and living each day productively while coming to terms with feelings about the past (Penzel, n.d.).

Stereotype factors. Stereotypes could set the tone for what was appropriate or possible in our older American culture. As individuals aged, covert and overt messages might come from multiple levels of society (e.g., media, government, workplace, family, physicians). Stereotypical messages "may include verbalizations, jokes, retirement policies, non-verbal cues, separation, and even the ways in which others interact with older persons" (Kuypers & Bengtson, 1973; Morgan, Brosi, & Brosi, 2011, p. 448). Age-based stereotypes were pervasive in our society, and as a result, older individuals might internalize the message.(Kuypers & Bengtson, 1973). Butler (1969) referred to this message internalization as ageism, which was defined as "a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old" (p. 243). Ageism, as a form of stereotyping, could be difficult to identify because there was no definitive point at which one in our society crossed into "old age" (Morgan et al., 2011, p. 448).

Too often, our culture allowed later life to be defined by marketing messages, and those messages might be delivered through the distorted lens of stereotypes. These marketing stereotypes were evidenced by advertising that showed dotty seniors in silly conversations about goods or services such as insurance, health products, or retirement

living (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Marketing stereotypes could create perceptions that carried over into the workplace, particularly the perception that older workers could not learn new technology or adequately train for career changes (Lord & Farrington, 2006).

Older adults might allow marketing stereotypes to feed growing concerns about their changed physical appearances due to aging (Katz, 1999). Consumer culture tended to be enthralled with the image of perfect bodies (Morris, 1998). Adding to the aspects of an older adult's negative body image was cartoon-style advertising that might depict signifiers such as sagging or bulging body parts, liver spots on the hands, bowed legs, stooped backs, and appliances such as canes. Healthy, active older adults who were in good physical condition might find no identification with such stereotypes (Bradley & Longino, 2001). One survey indicated that half of all Baby Boomers were depressed they were no longer young, and some 20% were "actively resisting the aging process" (Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 207).

Turning Points for Transition

Turning points might be impacted by factors that had a spectrum-range from deeply personal to more social in nature. Wherever a turning point fell within the spectrum, it represented a catalyst within the process of transition, or a catalyst that started the process of transition (Denzin, 1988). Turning points often were transformational and could be a key to understanding career decisions (Hodkinson, Sparkes, & Hodkinson, 1996). Turning points might involve some aspect of calling – a purpose that contributed to something of greater importance than themselves (Smith, Arendt, Lahman, Settle & Duff, 2006). Turning points might be of short duration or they

might extend over a period of time, and sometimes they were only recognized with hindsight (Hodkinson et al., 1996). For the purposes of this study, a turning point was the catalyst in an individual's life experiences that affected their trajectory for processing transition.

Change as a turning point. Change could lead to "profound, positive and enduring transformation through reconfiguration of an individual's most deeply held beliefs about self and the world" (Jarvis, 1997, p. v). However, the nature of transformation through change might be affected by the life stage in which it occurred and the lived experiences of the individual involved. Change in later life could come at many levels of living: economic status, marital status (including death of a spouse), health status of oneself or a family member, and employment status – to name some areas most prone to change. Status changes of this nature could lead to many difficult challenges, but they could also lead to opportunities (Gelardin & Muscat, 2010).

Yet when some changes occurred, they might seem more like devastations than opportunities. For instance, careers that were once satisfying and ripe with opportunity could turn stale and unfulfilling, or career paths could become blocked (Singh & Verma, 2003). In an effort to turn stifled careers into opportunity, some older adults might turn away from their professions and seek other pursuits with meaning, such as volunteer work or more family time. Gelardin and Muscat (2010) stated: "As we face later-life issues, many aging individuals become more interested in living each day well rather than desperately seeking security in an unsatisfactory job and life" (p. 30). In this mode, older adults could view the opportunity of retirement as their best alternative. But for

some, retirement could result in a disappointing change of identity called "rolelessness," (Singh & Verma, 2003, p. 5), meaning a loss of self-identity that was tied to one's career.

Thus, change that involved setbacks and hard choices could be a trying time for many in later life. But the trying time could become a turning point that led some to fulfilling career transitions. Those who seized change as an opportunity might also access what was described as "accidental happiness" – the phenomenon of adversity yielding great rewards and joy (Psychology Today, Ed., 2012, p. 20). Opportunity could be "there for the taking by those prepared to embrace the change" (Kamenetz, 2012, p.97).

Change in later life might evoke varying psychological responses in different people. Those with an optimistic viewpoint on change could focus on the excitement of the journey ahead and how to best succeed in the face of change. Those with a pessimistic bent more likely would focus on what had been lost as a result of change. For many individuals experiencing change in middle life, there would be a mingled psychological presence of both optimism and pessimism. Recognizing the positive and negative emotional responses (Bagozzi et al., 1999) and being honest about their influence could assist an individual in determining "what you [had] to gain versus what you [had] to lose" (Kamenetz, 2012, p. 97). When confronting change that could result in a significant life experience, such as a career transition, the pragmatic approach was not to hide from the change, but instead to face it head-on (Kamenetz, 2012). That meant there would be factors to consider that could require additional change, but each aspect and area of change could become a positive turning point, even in later life.

Events as a turning point. An event was defined as "a significant occurrence" (Pickett, Ed., 2008). Lu and Sexton (2010) stated: "An event starts a turning point" (p. 128). Events could occur by chance or they might be part of a routine, but they often involved external factors (Hancock, 2009; Hodkinson et al., 1996; Super, 1981). External factors tend to be "life incidents" (Hancock, 2009, p. 131) that influence career decisions. Life incidents might not be apparent at the time they occurred, but the cumulative outcomes could create conditions "for the occurrence of a major turning point" (Hancock, 2009, p. 132).

When chance intersected with career decisions, a person's career trajectory could be affected by an unplanned event or "happenstance" (Hancock, 2009, p. 123; Miller, 1983). The role of serendipitous chance on an individual's career path was explored by Williams, Soeprapto, Like, Touradji, Hess, and Hill (1998) and they found frequent descriptions of career-related chance events. Responses to career-related opportunities that arose from chance events tended to be more pragmatic than analytic in their approach (Hancock, 2009). An individual's pragmatism might be affected, or even limited, by their social and cultural factors (Hancock, 2009). In later life influences on pragmatism were often related to factors of age, economics, education, family, and career status.

Routine was the opposite condition of chance (Hancock, 2009). Routine in careers could affect life-course transitions. Individuals often formed strong habits within the routine, expecting prior experiences to be repeated, and causing inattention to alternatives (Schafer, Jaeger-Erben, & Bamberg, 2012). The concept of routine was defined by Hodkinson et al. (1996) as "periods in a person's life when nothing dramatic happens" (p. 143). However, Hodkinson et al. (1996) qualified their statement by

indicating that during routines, things did happen which could contribute to career decisions. Some routines confirmed original choices, with career pathways becoming engrained; some routines contradicted original choices due to subsequent experiences, leading to consideration of career transitions; and other routines became evolutionary, leading to eventual transformation of career pathways (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Hodkinson et al., 1996).

Routine did not tend to have the explosive nature of chance on one's decision-making process. But routine could provide a process for decision-making that analyzed where one had been in their career trajectory and where a career transition might lead them in later life.

A catalytic event encompassing both chance and routine was described during the study. Several women participants mentioned involvement in the Women's Movement during the 1960's and 1970's. This was a turning point for some women participants now over age 55.

Calling as a turning point. Calling was described as a turning point for later life career transitions by some study participants. Traditional venues for calling had been related to an individual's sense of responsibility for engagement in Christian service. Sumner (2003) stated the historic depiction had been one of passion, giftedness, or direction that had been placed by God on the heart of an individual. "Giftedness is one of the clues God gives us toward discovering our calling" (Julian, 2009). Scripture had been the basis for this depiction:

> God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God's generosity can flow through you. Are you called

> to be a speaker? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Are you called to help others? Do it with the strength and energy that God supplies. (I Peter 4:10-11, NLT)

When career calling was applied to this depiction, it denoted a sense of God-given gifts and longings that might have been recognized early in life but that had not become manifest until later in life (Sellers et al., 2005). The second half of our lives often was spent trying to recover and reclaim the gift of true self that enabled us to move into our calling. However, we did not find our callings by conforming ourselves to some abstract moral code; we found our callings by claiming authentic selfhood, by being who we were (Palmer, 2000). Individuals built their careers over a lifetime to reflect their professional acumen, but they embraced calling to express a greater sense of purpose – a purpose that contributed to something of greater importance than themselves (Smith et al., 2006).

The deepest vocational question was not what we should do with our life; the more elemental and demanding question asked: Who are we and what is our nature (Palmer, 2000)? Vocation was rooted in the Latin for *voice* (Palmer, 2000). Vocation did not mean a goal we pursued; it meant a calling we heard. The term *vocation* was often used interchangeably with calling, particularly if spiritual constructs were attached to the meaning (Lips-Wiersma, 2002). Yet calling might occur for some individuals without the Christian connotations. For those individuals, gifts and longings might create the basis for calling, but defining that basis as God-created would not be a necessary component for sensing a call. There was a universal nature to career-calling, with or without a God-centered component, and that was a sense that: "The reason I'm here is to do the work that I'm doing with my field. If I [were] to go and do some other job, I would lack

authenticity and integrity" (Sellers et al., 2005, p. 201). Finding our calling included discovery of our gift for serving others in the workplace – a chief form of service could be found in the normal vocations of life (Trueblood, 1967). Even without a God-centered component, the work-related component was sacred because it had an impact on lives (Johnson, 2007). The sacred arose from potential for creating an enduring legacy, something poet T. S. Eliot called "the life of significant soil" (Eliot, 1963, p. 233).

Calling that involved a career transition in later life could become "animated" when the purpose centered on authenticity for "developing and becoming self" and for "expressing self" (Lips-Wiersma, 2002, p. 514). These purposes represented alignment between being true to oneself and transitioning to a career that brought deeper meaning to one's life (Lips-Wiersma, 2002). Alignment of purposes relating to self, allowed individuals to respond to a calling that might go beyond the purpose of self – a purpose that contributed to something of greater importance than themselves (Smith et al., 2006).

Epiphany as a turning point. Often turning points were the outcomes of important insights known as "awakenings" or "epiphanies" (Denzin, 1988, p. 15; Riessman, 1993, p. 12). Epiphany was defined as a revelation of the meaning or essence of something (Pickett, Ed., 2008). Epiphanic revelations had characteristics that could lead to personal transformation (McDonald, 2008). Revelations were transformational because they involved a process that carried one from an antecedent state of inner turmoil or crisis into a realm of meaningful insights that were enduring in nature (Denzin, 1989, 1990; Jarvis, 1997; Jensen, 1999; Lottyniemi, 2001; Miller & C'de Baca, 1993, 2001). The moment of epiphany was usually sudden and it provided profound illumination that was deemed significant to an individual's life – an awareness of something new,

"something that the individual had previously been blind to" (McDonald, 2008, p. 93; referencing Beja, 1993, Denzin, 1989, 1990; Frick, 2001; Goud, 1995; Jarvis, 1997; Jensen, 1999, Miller & C'de Baca, 1993, 2001; Paris, 1997; Schultz, 2001).

Denzin (1989) identified four types of epiphanies: Major epiphanies were significant events that touched every level of a person's life; minor epiphanies were events that might be small but that served as a symbol to bring light to a larger issue in life; cumulative epiphanies were reactions to experiences that had occurred over a period of time; and retrospective epiphanies were those where significance was not realized until one relived the experience and assigned meaning to it. All four types involved experiences that left a mark on an individual's life (Denzin, 1989), and they could be described as revelations that triggered positive, enduring transformation (McDonald, 2008). But "epiphanies do not represent the final goal or endpoint in a journey toward self-becoming" (McDonald, 2008, p. 112).

During vulnerable life stages, such as those of later life, insights that revealed one's authentic self-identity could be pivotal for reconciling meanings of the past with realities of the current (Heidegger, 1927). Authenticity in who we are and how we got there could illuminate the path for what we hope to become – for entering the passage of later life career transition.

Chapter 3: Method

Qualitative Method with Narrative Design

Qualitative research gave participants in the study a voice for describing their human experiences (Denzin, 1988). It did not attempt to measure variables or quantify data, but instead it asked questions for which there were no assumed answers. Because qualitative research did not attempt to measure or generalize the data, the "Why?" could be explored (Milena, Dainora, & Alin, 2008, p. 1282). Jones (2004) said: "In qualitative research, the tyranny of numbers is abandoned for the enigma of words" (p. 98). In accordance with literature on conducting qualitative research, in-depth interviews in this study were an interactive, participatory process, with researcher building rapport and credibility with participants (Creswell, 2009).

Study interviews were conducted at sites that were mutually convenient for participants and researcher. Researcher was able to talk directly with participants about factors they were experiencing in their later life career transitions. Although there was a set of structured questions to guide the interview process and to show the interest of researcher in issues of later life career transitions, all discussions were informal in nature and all questions were open ended so researcher could listen to what participants said and did in their journeys toward transitions (Creswell, 2007). New questions emerged and questions were refined as relationships developed between researcher and participants and as participants' stories unfolded (Creswell, 2009). All questions related

to transition factors participants had experienced and the situational contexts for those experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The structured interview questions were pilot-tested by researcher prior to the interview process for assuring clarity of contextual content.

This study's in-depth interviews elicited "a vivid picture of the participant's perspective" (Milena et al., 2008, p. 1279) on factors and turning points influencing later life career transitions. Researcher's inquiry focused on individual meanings when interpreting participants described complex situations (Creswell, 2007). Because the primary goal of qualitative study was to understand the participants' meanings, it was recognized that participants were constructing their reality through interaction with their social worlds (Merriam, 2002). "Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Crotty, 1998, pp. 42-43). Participants' stories were "always mediated" (Abbott, 2008, p. 20). Mediation had a medium which included the voice, tone, style, and interpretation employed by participants in telling their stories; thus, "what we call the story is really something we construct" (Abbott, 2008, p. 20).

A primary way individuals made sense of experience was by putting it in narrative form (Brunner, 1990; Gee, 1985; Mishler, 1986). Narrative was "the representation of an event or series of events" (Abbott, 2008, p. 13), and event descriptions were given from the first person point of view (Labonte, 2011; Smith, 2008). This study took a constructionist approach which suggested that socializing influences shaped participants' narratives. Participants in this study described their experiences relating to later life career transitions and these descriptions created a narrative text. Experiences described by participants ranged from perception, thought, memory,

imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness while engaged in activity-portions of their experiences; discussions led from conscious experiences into conditions that assisted in giving experiences their intentionality (Smith, 2008). Discussions took the form of stories that gave shape to "disorderly" experiences (Riessman, 1993, p. 26, citing Ginsburg, 1989). Thus, participants related their stories and narrative created meaning from the stories (Labonte, 2011).

Narrative design organized stories participants told about their lived experiences, putting them into a narrative chronology (Creswell, 2009; McDonald, 2008). That was consistent with Labov (1972) who defined narrative as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events" (pp. 359-360). Obtaining an account of a participant's life history was integrated with a "temporal unfolding" of the participant's sense of self-identity (McDonald, 2008, p. 92). The narrative sought to relate a participant's "developmental sequences, milestones, and turning points" (Murray, 2003, p. 103). Understanding participants' lived experiences was viewed through an interpretive lens related to societal issues in participants' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

As prescribed by Merriam (2002), this study's accounts were related "in story format having a beginning, middle, and end" (p. 286). The format for stories was based on interviews with each participant, with these interviews creating a narrative text. In accordance with the constructionist position, the narrative was a joint construction of participants' and researcher's life experiences in answer to the research questions, thus forming a collaborative narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These experiences frequently reflected on turning points in later life, with the narrative being "organized

around consequential events" (Riessman, 1993, p. 3), but the story was told somewhat differently when diverse contexts were revealed (Denzin, 1988; Riessman , 1993).

Researcher depicted participants' experiences surrounding career transition in later life by hearing, recording, and interpreting the participants' voices (Riessman, 1993). Researcher understood she did not have direct access to study participants' experiences and thus needed to be aware of "five levels or kinds of representation in the research process, with porous boundaries between them" (Riessman, 1993, p. 8). These levels were: (1) Attending to experiences by reflecting, remembering, and recollecting them; (2) telling about experiences by forming them into a participant's personal narrative, understanding that meanings may shift in the interaction process; (3) transcribing the experiences from electronic recordings that capture the character of what is heard and from notes that describe verbal and non-verbal communications; (4) analyzing the experiences to recognize "turning points" or "epiphanies" (citing Denzin, 1988, p. 15) and to identify themes that can be summarized; and (5) reading the experiences in the final text by others, who brought their own experiences and interpretations to understanding the narrative (Riessman, 1993).

Descriptive narrative that responded to research questions engaged in the theory of social constructivism, which was combined with interpretivism. Referencing Mertens (1998), Creswell (2007) described this as a worldview wherein individuals sought an understanding of the world in which they worked and lived, and stated:

> They develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the

> meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives. Rather than starting with a theory…, inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning….Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they 'position themselves' in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences. (pp. 20-21)

The narrative text of this study represented an interpretation made by researcher, with the intent of organizing participants' experiences and making sense of participants' meanings. In doing so, researcher was engaged in "interpretative" research (Creswell, 2007, p. 21).

To apply social constructivism to the research questions, researcher asked participants to explore how their life experiences and expectations could lend interpretation to the construct of factors influencing transition and turning points for transition. Examples of factors included age, health, education, work, economics, family, key people, emotions, and older adult stereotypes. Examples of turning points included life changes and events, a sense of calling, and epiphany or awakening to the social and personal significance of one's later life career transition. When the interview process ended, further research was conducted to capture themes and meanings that emerged in

interviews with participants. Thus, literature was used to compare and contrast it with the study findings (Creswell, 2009).

Narrative strategies employed for giving vibrancy, verve, and veracity to this study's portrayal included the following strategies recommended by Creswell (2009): (1) using thematic headings of participants' own words to link described experiences to the narrative; (2) embedding quotes from participants within the body of the narrative to lend credence to the first person approach of this study; (3) indenting quotations from participants to call attention to their significance in the narrative's flow; (4) intertwining participants' descriptions with researcher's interpretations to emphasize the relationship between participants and researcher; (5) using metaphors and analogies to give color and understanding to researcher's interpretations; (6) describing how the study's outcomes may be compared with theories in general literature and ways outcomes may be unique due to lack of general literature relating to the study's purpose.

The rationale for qualitative analysis was: Humans had the capacity to talk, and understanding what they described was largely lost when textual descriptions were quantified (Iacono et al., 2009). In this study, narrative design allowed for free-flow exploration and description of participants' stories without the constraints of measurement to interpret participants' meaning.

Role of Researcher

The researcher was the primary instrument of investigation for this study, just as an artist was the primary instrument of depiction for a painting (McCaslin & Scott, 2003).

Researcher's narrative reflected researcher's views and conceptions – her values about what was important (Mishler, 1991).

Part of researcher's role in this study was to make decisions about what to transcribe from interviews. By displaying texts in a certain way, researcher provided grounds for her arguments. Transcription choices made by researcher supported different interpretations and ideological positions (Riessman, 1993). It was important for researcher to focus on meanings given by participants to words they expressed, as well as to observe body language at the times those words were spoken. Through interaction between the researcher and each participant, researcher gained insight into the intentionality and relationship of meanings described by a participant and gained understanding of how meanings were unique to the one expressing them (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1990; Nieswiadomy, 1993). In doing so, researcher realized: She should not superimpose her frame of reference or theories of literature onto interpretations of participant's meanings (Creswell, 2009); researcher should bracket or set aside her own experiences to enter into participant's perspective (Moustakas, 1994).

However, despite the effort and intent to bracket her own experiences in this study, researcher was cognizant she did bring her background, history, and prior understandings to the discussion (Creswell, 2009). In the case of this study, researcher had her own transition experiences that were occurring simultaneously with those of participants. Therefore, researcher revealed these factors to participants so participants could be aware of the context within which their stories were received. But researcher approached her own history, knowledge, and life experiences as sources of enrichment

for exploring and interpreting participants' stories, not as an overlay to participants' stories (Iacono et al., 2009).

Researcher's ethical considerations included: (1) providing participants with information on the nature, purpose, and scope of the study; (2) outlining the interview process and the keeping of a diary that occurred during the study; (3) developing and obtaining each participant's informed consent; (4) ensuring confidentiality of participant's involvement and data; (5) making clear the responsibilities of the researcher and the participant; and (6) detailing how study results would be reported (Creswell, 2009; Iacono et al., 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Data Collection Procedure

The procedure for data collection included setting study boundaries, determining individuals who were interviewed and sites where interviews occurred, selecting data types to be collected, establishing how information was recorded, and identifying ethical issues in data collection (Creswell, 2009). This study found veracity in the position of Iacono et al. (2009): A significant characteristic of qualitative research is that collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting are often carried on in parallel -"The results of one activity can alter the direction of the others" (Iacono et al., 2009, p. 40).

Boundaries for the study. Thematic boundaries consisted of topics related to: (1) meaning of "later life career transitions" as understood by the researcher and discussed with participants at the onset of the interview process, and new meanings as they emerged from participants' stories during the study; and (2) turning point or cumulative

turning points, and factors – including the potential factor of calling - that led or were leading each participant to a career transition in later life.

Instrumentality boundaries consisted of: (1) initial application to screen volunteers who were age 55 or older and who had interest or experience in a "later life career transition" with a suggested meaning of that terms being stated in the application; (2) Demographic form completed by each participant at the beginning of the study to give contextual reference to the interview process; (3) data gathered during the study through the structured questionnaire prepared by researcher for guiding interviews and through e-mail and telephone communications with participants; (4) Interviews conducted during the study between researcher and participants; (5) Observations made of participants by researcher during interviews; (6) Diaries kept by participants from the first interview to the last interview in this study; and (7) Other documents participants provided that were deemed relevant to the study's purpose.

Participants and sites for the study. Participants were not selected by random sampling but were volunteers age 55 or older who were obtained through coordination with staff at Marylhurst University and Life by Design NW (a program affiliated with Portland Community College). These institutions were chosen because they had rich opportunity for student access to re-careering courses and programs. A total of 12 individuals volunteered to be participants, with 10 individuals being selected for actual involvement in the study. Final selection of each participant was based on researcher's judgment of a participant's interest or experience in the study's purpose (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). From this purpose sampling of volunteer participants, stories of three participants were selected by researcher for an in-depth narrative analysis. In order to

reach this number of participants and to learn of other participants and information that could enhance the study's purpose, the approach of snowballing was engaged, whereby one participant recommended another participant (Groenewald, 2004; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Interview sites were locations mutually agreed to by researcher and each participant. Sites varied, based on convenience of the parties at the time of various interviews.

Types of data collected. Before the data collection began, each participant completed three documents: (1) Application for Participation in Study, (2) Demographic Information form, and (3) Informed Consent Agreement prepared by researcher, approved by the university's Human Subjects Committee, and signed by the participant before the study began. The interview process was conducted in extensive person-to-person discussions that occurred over a period of approximately two months. The exact number of interviews was determined by the time it took to reach saturation of the topic with each participant. To open and guide the interview process, the researcher and each participant discussed a questionnaire prepared by researcher with open ended questions relating to possible factors and turning points involved in later life career transitions. Observations were made by researcher of meanings given to words by each participant, of tones and moods that seemed to accompany the words, and of body language that assisted in interpreting the meanings. Participants were asked to keep a written diary or log in electronic format during the study to document and elaborate on interview discussions, record thoughts or concerns that evolved outside the interviews, and express emerging factors in their lives related to career transitions. Written thoughts allowed

participants to state in their own words and voice what they did not say to researcher in person (Creswell, 2009).

Data Recording Procedures

Interview data. Interview data was recorded electronically and in field notes taken by researcher during each interview session, in interview reviews prepared by researcher after each interview session, in notes taken by researcher of phone conversations with participants relative to this study, and in e-mail communications with participants before and after interview sessions (Creswell, 2009). Each participant had a separate electronic and hardcopy file in which recorded data was kept by researcher.

Based on an interview protocol recommended by Creswell (2009), the following discussion identified protocol aspects that were observed in this study: Each set of interview notes had a heading with the date, place, name of researcher and name of participant. Researcher had a standard set of instructions for use in each interview to assure that standard procedures were used from one interview to another. The set of questions that opened the interview had an ice-breaker question, followed by a series of questions that were thematic subsections of the study. During the interview process, participants were asked to explain their thoughts in more detail and encouraged to elaborate on their experiences. Gratitude for the time spent by the participants was given in both oral and written form to each participant.

Observation data. Observation data was included in the interview field notes kept by researcher. Her observations included participant's tone, mood, and body language at the time the interviews was conducted. Groenewald (2004) referred to this as

memoing what researcher heard, saw, experienced, and thought in the course of collecting and reflecting on data obtained during the interview process. Researcher was adept at nearly-verbatim note taking while listening and observing - a result of using this practice throughout the course of her career. Observations were noted as they occurred but expanded upon in the interview review prepared by researcher after each interview.

Document data. All document data was kept by researcher in each participant's separate electronic and hard copy file. Data consisted of documents previously described in the section on "Types of data collected" and as set forth in the Appendices to this paper.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis initially occurred during each interview when researcher made notes giving interpretation of meanings for experiences described orally and in documents from a participant. Data analysis was an ongoing, reflective process throughout the study. The data analysis process involved making sense out of what was said and written by participants (Creswell, 2009). To analyze all forms of data collected during the study, there were steps for capturing the significant statements, meaning units, and essence of a participant's descriptions. Consistent with Creswell, (2009); Moustakas, (1994); Rahschulte, (2010), steps that were used by this study are described in the discussion that follows:

Review was made of field notes and summaries from interview discussions, observations made during the interviews, and documents accompanying the interview process. A sense of overall data content was determined so data could be organized.

Organization was developed along central themes and sub-themes that were expressed in significant statements by participants. Central themes and sub-themes were given detailed coding. Coding also signified separate settings and participants contributing to themes and sub-themes as this allowed researcher to go deeper into an understanding of the meanings of significant statements. In addition to coding the data and documents from the interview process, coding was given to past literature that gave enlightenment to central themes and sub-themes. Coding was outlined in a code sheet prepared by researcher.

In addition to organizing the overall data as just described, three life stories were selected for sharing in more detail. The purpose was to provide readers with a better understanding of the person as a whole – something beyond an integrated theme component. This also breathed individuality into the study, which was a rich attribute of narrative design (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Strategies for Validating Findings

Pursuant to Creswell (2009), researcher incorporated validity strategies to assure the trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility of her findings.

Basic to the validation strategy was the need for constant awareness by researcher to move beyond the partiality of her own experiences and previous understandings when making her interpretation and analysis of a participant's intentional meanings (Finlay, 2009). Having said this, it was recognized by researcher that in this study she did have an interest in the research questions. Following the recommendations of Creswell (2009), it was necessary for researcher to engage in self-reflection on how her background

shaped her findings and to clarify any bias that background might bring to the study (Denzin, 1988).

Interpretations researcher made during the study and in the concluding analysis were validated throughout the span of this process by returning to participants for feedback on the accuracy of intentional meanings attributed to them. This assisted researcher in determining if the essence of participants' described experiences had been correctly reflected by her in the study's themes and in the findings. (Creswell, 2009; Groenewald, 2004). However, in reflecting on participants' stories, researcher understood that a participant's view of truth might be nebulous. In this regard, Reismann (1993) cited The Personal Narratives Group (1989), who stated:

> When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they *are* revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was,' aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences. Unlike the Truth of scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. (p. 261)

Analysis outcomes represented interpretations of researcher in response to research questions and to answers given to research questions by the participants' descriptions of experiences. One way of validating that researcher's interpretations captured participants' meanings was to use direct quotes from participants (FortuneCity, n.d., retrieved 2011). "Rich, thick descriptions" of participants' experiences and settings

in which those experiences were expressed helped create a more realistic perspective to researcher's analysis, and added to the validity of researcher's statements (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). Direct quotes and descriptions did not reveal the individual identity of a participant. Pseudonyms were used instead of actual names, and each participant approved the pseudonym ascribed to their narrative.

Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations were relevant at all phases of the study. In this qualitative study using the narrative approach, it was understood there was a greater degree of ethical vulnerability than in an approach that was not so intrinsically involved with relationships between researcher and participants. In-depth discussions revealed deeply personal stories. There necessarily was need for significant levels of trust between researcher and participants. This trust developed in strength over the span of the study and required constant nurturing for it to be maintained. Creswell (2009) identified areas of ethical concern for the study process, and the following discussion incorporated how those concerns applied to the integrity of this study:

The researcher did not select a research problem that marginalized or disempowered participants. The research problem in this study lay in discerning what factors and turning points led an individual in later life to engage in career transition. Described factors and turning points gave voice to issues of opportunity at a time in participants' lives when society might view those opportunities as being foreclosed. Engagement in this discussion broadened conceptual horizons for participants and empowered them, in some cases, to seize professional opportunities.

There was clear understanding between researcher and participants on central intents and questions for the study. The purpose of this study was stated in the initial application that screened volunteers for the study. The consent form signed by participants before the interview process began stated the purpose of the study and the intent for use of each participant's data. The questionnaire used for opening and guiding the study stated the study's purpose, and any follow-up questionnaires developed as experiences emerged asked questions related to that purpose. Each follow-up interview session began with a dialogue about the purpose of the study and ways participant's described experiences related to research questions.

During the process of data collection participants were not put at risk, interviews did not disrupt other activities at the interview site, researcher did not exercise abusive or coercive tactics to gain information from participants, researcher was sensitive to a participant's stress as a result of their participation in the study and allowed them to have a voice in how their statements would be interpreted, and researcher guarded against and protected the privacy of intimate or harmful information that was disclosed during the data collection process. This study was sensitive to the personal nature of participants' stories, to the heightened stress and vulnerability of relationships with significant others during later life decisions, to the appropriateness and privacy of the interview settings, and to any transference of perceived authority in researcher's role that could have undue influence on her interaction with participants. As a shield against misinterpretation of meanings, participants engaged in a feedback process with researcher during various stages of the study. Accuracy of data analysis and interpretation followed validation strategies that have been stated for this study.

Basic to the data gathering process was the Informed Consent form that was prepared by researcher, approved by the university's Human Subjects Committee, and signed by each participant before any data collection began. As recommended by Creswell (2009), the form included identification of researcher, description of how participants were selected, description of the study's purpose and problem, location of interview sites, explanation of expected involvement by each participant, guarantee for identity source confidentiality relating to any data used in the study (unless the participant agrees in writing to be specifically identified), assurance a participant could withdraw at any time, and a listing of contact information for researcher. The consent stated researcher owned all data that was developed or that was submitted by participants during the study.

The writing for the study did not use biased language or fraudulent practices, it was sensitive to how the results could affect participants, and it recognized those who give researcher assistance in the study. Detailed description was given of the study's procedures so readers of the study could make a scholarly decision on credibility. This study's data was based on stories described by participants. In interpreting meanings of those stories, researcher was sensitive to how the study process and results could affect participants, and included participants in a feedback loop to deal with this issue. Researcher exercised caution so biases would not occur in the writing relating to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability or age.

Chapter 4: Results

Participants were purposively selected by researcher, based on their interest in the research topic and on their age. The range of participants' ages - 55 to 72 years - gave breadth of perspective to turning points and factors influencing participants' career transition experiences. Five women participants were connected with re-careering courses at Marylhurst University (Marylhurst, Oregon); three women and two men participants were connected with re-careering courses at Life by Design NW (a program of Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon). All participants were college educated and all participants were married at some point in time, with multiple marriages and divorces being the experience for several participants. Education and family issues were significant factors for creation of turning points in the lived experiences of each participant. These and other described experiences influenced the path each had taken toward later life career transition.

Participants' residences ranged from the Central Oregon Coast to rural Clackamas, Columbia, and Multnomah Counties and most participants were still engaged in some form of gainful employment. Thus, it was necessary to find interview sites that were mutually convenient from a travel and time perspective for both participants and researcher. Two participants lived on the Central Oregon Coast and were interviewed at researcher's home in Lincoln City, Oregon. One participant lived in Milwaukie, Oregon, near researcher's second home, and came there for the interview. The remaining seven

participants were interviewed in mutually selected venues in Clackamas, Damascus, Newberg, Portland, and West Linn, Oregon. The commonality of all chosen interview sites was the ability to talk privately without interruption for a period of approximately two hours per interview.

After completion of the face-to-face interview with each participant, follow-up thoughts related to the research topic were communicated in e-mail diaries or logs submitted by participant to researcher over a six week period. This resulted in explorations that clarified or deepened meanings expressed in the initial interview and in intervening diary entries. In some cases, communications began with words to the effect: "Here is more you should know about me…I did not tell you this during our interview." Expressions of this nature were consistent with Creswell's (2009) position that diaries allowed participants to write in their own words and voice what they might not say to researcher in person.

Described results used the following approach: A brief overview of each participant was presented, followed by themes that emerged from interview data across participants (Armstrong, 1994; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Interview themes were supported and illustrated by narrative experiences and quotations from all participants, and they were structured around main themes identified in the research questions (Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Tal, 2004). Three participants were selected by researcher for more extensive presentation of main themes, with their examples and quotations bearing greater thematic illustration than those presented in the general interview themes. This approach provided succinctness and clarity to significant results found through thematic analysis (Haigh, 2008; King, 2006).

Overview of Participants

Names of study participants were changed to protect confidentiality (Murtagh, Lopes, & Lyons, 2011). Table 1 summarizes participants' pseudonyms, ages, previous careers, and career transition paths. Researcher suggested pseudonyms for each participant, but participants were allowed to make final decisions on selection of their pseudonyms. For some participants, this name selection seemed to deepen their connection with the study's purpose. It was about them!

Table 1

Participant Descriptions

Pseudonym	Age	Career Path	Career Transition Path
Sharon	61	Communications and Public Relations Specialist	Geriatric Care Management
Lana	55+	Financial Sales Associate; Cosmetic and Retail Clothing Sales	Pastoral Ministry (Counseling Focus)
Karen	55+	Paralegal; Business Management	Business IT Analyst
Lawrence	55	Hospitality Industry; Distributor Sales	Biodiesel Fuel Sales (Environmental Focus)
Mary	72	Travel Industry; Real Estate Sales	Writing; Garden Design
Annalisa	65	Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	Retreat Center Director (Inter-faith)
Joy	58	US Government (ATF) Inspector; Retail Shop Owner	Social Worker (MSW)
Celeste	71	Community College Instructor	Career Specialist (Seminars and Volunteer)
Daniel	55	Quality Assurance Specialist	Engineering Design (Built Environment)

Table 1, cont'd

Valerie (Val)	60	Teacher; Tutoring Business Owner	Volunteer Tutoring (Training and Administration)

Sharon. Sharon was an active 61 year old, coming from a Zumba exercise class just prior to our scheduled interview. She was born in Aurora, Illinois, moved to the San Fernando Valley (near Los Angeles) where she lived through her high school years, and attended Cal State (one semester) as well as a number of California junior colleges. She married her first husband just before age 20, and because he was in the Army, they lived in many places. After having two children, the family moved to Oregon where they had two more children. At age 33 she enrolled in classes at Portland Community College, hoping to work toward a teaching degree in Education. *"*But my marriage was breaking and I needed to earn money," she said; so she began working for a Public Relations Agency, "and I loved it!" she exclaimed. Sharon was told by the agency's general manager that they would pay for her education if she would get her degree in Communications, which encouraged her to complete that degree at age 35. Sharon's employer transferred her to the Silicon Valley because of her expertise with semiconductors, and she worked there in the communications industry from age 35 to 50, eventually becoming owner of the company for which she was employed. In 2000 she became a *"*virtual agency*,"* working from home so she could spend more time with her family. When she and her husband moved back to Oregon in 2006, the economy had started to slow, and she declared: *"*The crash of 2008 meant work was scarce - it was a perfect opportunity to go back to school*."* During her studies for a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies at Marylhurst University, her 95 year old father became very ill.

She described his *"*agonizing and degrading experience of dying" as the prod that led her to a Master's degree in 2012 with a focus on Gerontology. Sharon still had three small clients she served through her communication business, but she had developed a new fledgling company with the goal of transitioning into a career involving geriatric care management.

Lana. Lana's actual age was unknown to the researcher, but application and demographic information she provided indicated she was over 55. She came to the interview smartly dressed and exuded an air of the professional woman she had been during her career as a brokerage firm sales associate**.** Employment with the last brokerage firm in Portland, Oregon, ended in 2009 when she was laid off during the economic downturn. Lana discerned that event was an opportunity to complete her degree which she had not pursued since the 1980's while living in the Midwest. She said she chose Marylhurst University because: *"*It was more diverse, Catholic, conservative, and close to home, and it accepted all my credits from 30 years earlier. Marylhurst University reminded me of back home." In June, 2012, she received her BA in Interdisciplinary Studies with concentrations in organizational communications, health care management, and gerontology. Since receiving her degree, she had sold Mary Kay Cosmetics because she needed to work, but she had also seen it as a positive means for *"*lifting spirits.*"* She expounded on this with a rhetorical question: *"*What 85 year old woman would not like to be pampered, or what 30 year old woman who has put herself on the last list would not like to be pampered?" For many years, she also had done volunteer work with organizations like her church and advocacy groups. A combination of her volunteer experience, career relationships, and personality had sometimes cast her

in the role of non-professional adviser to those with whom she worked. She explained: "I've not done counseling, not professionally; but I've put two marriages back together." She said she sensed a gift for counseling others. This gift had led her to apply for admission to two universities in the Portland area for a Masters in Pastoral Ministry (MAPM) with a focus on counseling, and both had accepted her. Lana said that as she aged, "religion had become more important," so her first goal was to get her master's degree - because that would allow her to make a transition into this later life career of professional counseling ministry.

Karen. In my interview, we did not discuss Karen's specific age, but her application and demographic information indicated she was over 55 years. Although she had not been directed to do so, Karen brought with her to the interview a number of documents to help explain her complex personal, career, and education journey. She started college classes in architectural engineering at Washington State University and worked part time as a legal secretary to support herself. During her junior year in college, she got married, quit college, and began working full time to *"*put my husband through college." When her husband graduated, Karen returned to college to finish her degree in Business Administration and Economics. In her senior year she began an independent study project with a Seattle architectural firm and they offered her a position as Associate Director of Contract Development. Over the next five years her work for them involved commercial programming and planning for clients and a liaison capacity for marketing and contract development. Then she added: "I advanced in responsibilities for the same salary as my husband, and he felt threatened by the recognition and by my thoughts for a career path. As my career advanced, my husband became insecure from my career status."

Their marriage dissolved. In 1984 Karen moved from the architectural firm to a law firm that handled arbitration and litigation for architectural firms where she worked as a complex case paralegal. She attended two years of law school and worked as a law clerk, eventually moving to Portland in 1991 to resume law school studies at Lewis & Clark Law School. Soon thereafter, life became measurably more complex. In 1993, Karen was in a serious seven-car collision in which she received closed head injuries. As a result of the accident, Karen said: "I had difficulty with intake and processing issues, and qualified for cognitive rehabilitation in 1994." When home rehabilitation ended in 1995 due to her HMO directing rehab funds to stroke patients, she went to Portland Community College to continue to re-engage and to stimulate brain processes. She said: "I took math and reading courses at grade school level to aid my recovery – math placement tested at 5th grade and reading at 7th grade levels." Despite her disabilities, she drew on stored knowledge in business and law, partnering with Portland area lawyers and supporting herself by teaching classes through Small Business Development Center programs and at Portland Community College – "I had a lot of knowledge inside myself." In 1997, her community college teaching spun off into a consulting practice for the construction industry, including manual writing and IT preparation for Y2K. However, Karen declared: "By 2008, the construction industry was tanking, my employer restructured, and my consulting work stopped. It was good timing for me to seize the opportunity for my master's degree." She attended Texas A & M University for a Masters of Industrial Distribution (Supply Chain Management) through coursework and work study projects for cross industry experience in chemical and fluid power and other distribution models that were growing in prominence. "I graduated at the top of my class

with a 4.32 GPA in May, 2010," she stated with pride. But on returning to Oregon after graduation, she found work was scarce. She stated: "It might have been different if I had stayed in Texas, but as an Oregon homeowner I felt the need to return and address declining property value issues that had developed." After much searching for an employment "fit," a friend helped her land a contract position with an IT software developer. That employer laid her off in June, 2012, due to changed business conditions. Government assistance programs for homeowners ended, and she lost her home. Looking toward the future, she took courses to become a Certified Business Analyst Professional (CBAP). Her career transition goal was to combine her background of experience, education, and expertise through her newly obtained certification. She declared: "I'm doing this so I can compete for opportunities and contribute to the changing and dynamic business climate."

Lawrence. Lawrence was 55 and had lived his entire life in Oregon. During high school he had been both a ballet dancer – "not good enough to get to New York," and a football player on two state championship football teams – "coaches loved it that their big player also danced…that fed my ego. I have always been successful." Lawrence went one year to Oregon State University and finished at Portland State University, attaining a BS in business with a focus in human resources. Self-assessments taken during entrepreneurial business courses helped him understand: "I did not want to run a business, but I could be a champion for someone else. I could be a big fish in a small pond working for someone else." He began his career in the hospitality industry and was very successful because: "I knew what motivated people." But he determined there was a limited future for him there, so he accepted an employment opportunity with a beverage

distributing company as a fine wine salesperson. He said he was hired "not because I knew wine, but because they wanted to tap my relationship with the downtown bar scene." Lawrence worked his way up in the distributing industry for 20 years, eventually becoming a company shareholder when employees bought out a majority interest in the company through their ESOP plan. In 2010, changes in marketing needs by the company led to his lay off; but, he said: "I left as owner of company stock I once could not afford to buy." After taking six months off, he enrolled in a Life by Design NW course at Portland Community College during Spring Term 2011. In that course he was asked to: "imagine the best job for you," and that led him to his career transition. He was interested in using his sales skills for an industry that was environmentally progressive. Lawrence knew the owner of a relatively new biodiesel company – a man who had offered him a job several years before in another company, but Lawrence could not afford the wages of the offered job at that time because he had two children ready for college. However, after the financial security he received in the severance from his previous employer, he said he could "afford to take more risks" on pay. He contacted the biodiesel company owner and arranged a deal in June, 2011, that included "getting a piece of every gallon of used cooking oil he brought into the company" – the basic commodity needed for formulating biodiesel fuel. In making this career transition, he said his goals were to: "help the environment, make a bit of money, and use his experience to help the biodiesel company become employee owned."

Mary. At age 72, Mary was the oldest study participant (but still one year younger than researcher). She grew up in a rural area of California's San Joaquin Valley and described her youth as an "ideal time." Unlike many girls of her day, she went on to

college right out of high school. Then in 1959, during her sophomore year, she married - and her college ended. She stated: "In those years, I worked so my husband could go to school." Mary and her husband had three children, and for a period of 18 years, she helped support the family by working her way up through the travel industry. She reflected: "I was in management without a degree – that was the way it was then." In the late 1970s she went back to the local community college and focused on courses in literature and writing, but her first husband's career caused them to move before she could complete her degree. She stated: "He was not supportive of my education goals or writing interests" - they eventually divorced. Her second husband, who she declared "my best friend" before they were married, encouraged her to go into real estate after her children finished high school. But tragedy struck when her youngest son was killed in 1988; and, she said: "I decided to just drop out for a while." Her second marriage also ended and Mary moved to Hawaii for three years. She considered taking classes there, but she met a man who was to become her third husband, and she chose not to re-enter college while they were forming a relationship. In 2000 they married, moved to Oregon, and Mary was able to start classes at Marylhurst University. In 2004, she obtained her BA at age 63, and her senior paper was published as a journal article – confirming her gift for writing that had been put on hold for so many years. By the time of her college graduation, Mary and her husband were retirement age; however, she said: "The economy caused financial stress that was not conducive to retirement." As a result, she became an SRS Certified Realtor and never got back to her writing. In early 2013, Mary and her husband decided: "it was time to do something else," resulting in their move to the Oregon Coast. To supplement their retirement income, her husband worked as a

writing teacher at the local community college. She was using her writing skills to assist her husband in getting some of his writing published. That venture was a mutual career transition for Mary and her husband – although it was more about her husband's writing and her skillful support. Mary also hoped to make a quantum leap into another career transition that would be entirely her own – garden design. She was taking Master Gardner courses to prepare and assist her in her planned transition.

Annalisa. Annalisa was 65 and was retired from a 30 year nursing career. In 1966 she graduated from a Catholic high school in Eugene, Oregon - "I had poor grades, and did not know what I wanted to do," she stated. Through her dad's encouragement, she received her LPN degree at Lane Community College, finding that field highly regarded for a career. When she moved to Seattle in 1972, she took more general education classes - "and I found I was bright. I had thought I was kind of dumb." That spurred her on over the next 20 years to get 90 college credits. Those credits applied toward her four year degree when she began classes at Marylhurst University in 2010 and culminated in her graduation in 2013. Her degree had been attained at great effort, because after retiring in 2002, she and her husband had moved to the Oregon Coast. That meant multiple, long commutes each week to take classes at Marylhurst University, located on the outskirts of Portland, Oregon. However, because she was retired, she could devote her attention more fully to her course work. Her husband, whom she married when she was age 39, was always supportive of her going back to school -"as long as we had the money." And money likely would have been an issue had she not received a small inheritance from her father's estate that paid most of her Marylhurst tuition. Annalisa was 56 years old when she retired, but not long after moving to the

coast, it occurred to her that she might turn her location into her next vocation - "what a great place for a retreat center." In the intervening years she had not acted on this thought, but it was revived in 2011 during a World Religion Class at Marylhurst University when she had an interview with a person described as: "someone not of my own faith" – a Jewish Rabbi from Eugene. The thought grew in 2012 when she visited a Shabbat service held in the rabbi's home, and they talked extensively about her desire to open a coastal retreat center. He expressed a desire to join in her venture, and planning began for an interfaith retreat center on the Central Oregon Coast. However, planning and development had not gone as smoothly as Annalisa had hoped because her husband had multiple "concerns" about the venture. But Annalisa was determined she would succeed with this career transition and she was encouraged her husband's concerns were somewhat diminishing.

Joy. Joy was age 58 and was one of five siblings. She and a biological sister were given up for adoption when Joy was three months old. She was told: "The adoptions occurred due to family financial concerns." Her adoptive family consisted of a brother who was also adopted, her mother who she described as a person with "serious mental issues," and her father who was frequently away from home as a traveling salesman. Joy started college right out of high school, but she left after three months because: "I was in love with a guy in Seattle – it threw me out of balance looking for somebody to love me." In 1973 she married her first husband and they had one son in 1978. During the marriage she took some community college courses; but, she said: "M*y* head wasn't on right to stay in college and I wasn't in a good marriage." Her first marriage ended in divorce, and she subsequently married and divorced a second husband

by whom she had a daughter in 1982. Joy was in and out of community colleges until the mid-1990s while working full time to support her family as a US Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) inspector. In 1994 Joy married her third husband, and she continued working as an ATF inspector until 2000, a year after the 1999 deaths of both her adoptive brother and adoptive father. These deaths occurred on top of the grief she still carried from her adoptive mother's suicide death in 1988. In 2000, she described herself as so emotionally drained she "could not go on"- so she quit her job. Then due to a sizeable inheritance from her adoptive father's estate, Joy and her husband decided to move to the Oregon Coast where they opened a tourist retail shop – a venture that soon turned into a financial "disaster." The couple returned to the Portland area and Joy said: "I struggled over the next 10 years with emotional incapacitation." During this time she was on medications and treatment for her condition, and her husband remained "supportive." He was a psychiatric Registered Nurse and, she said: "He helped me understand myself." After hip replacement surgery restored some of her physical health, Joy became interested in returning to the workplace; but, she stated: "It had to be something I was passionate about." In 2010, she was able to transfer 27 previously acquired community college credits to Marylhurst University, and she graduated in 2013 with a degree in Psychology. Her goal was to continue her education over the next 14 months so she could attain a Masters in Social Work (MSW) degree and transition to her new career as a social worker – work she felt drawn to, at least in part, "because of my life experiences."

Celeste. Celeste, who was 71, grew up in the northwest part of Portland, Oregon. She described herself as having "little ambition" when she finished high school. At age

21, she married her first husband and they had one daughter. Her husband worked for an airline when they first married, then military service sent him to Germany until he returned to Seattle where he became a police officer. When the subject of her going to college came up over the years, he was not supportive – "it was his way of controlling me." To assist in family finances, she worked a number of years for a nuclear power company; but in 1993 she and some 1500 other employees received their layoff notices. She declared: "This came at a particularly hard time for me – not only was I being laid off from work, but my mother was dying of a brain tumor and my 28 year marriage was ending in divorce." However, almost immediately after her divorce, she described herself as "swept off my feet by a very educated man who took me everywhere – I thought I had a chance at a new life." They married and moved to Eastern Oregon where he got a job teaching high school and Celeste found work in a community college. They eventually moved to Southern Oregon where he became an assistant principal in a middle school and she was able to obtain her associate's degree. Celeste spent several years working for community colleges as a career development and job search specialist. She did not pursue a four year degree because, she explained: "There was no need for it in my field of work." When her second marriage failed she decided to move away from the area where her former husband still worked. She needed full time employment and, based on her past experience, she felt she could do well in employment counseling. As a result, she applied for a community college position in the Portland area and was hired as a career specialist. She exclaimed: "At age 59 I landed my first dream job." She continued working at the community college until retirement; then at age 67 she transitioned into what she described as her "second dream job" – speaking at workshops and forums on

topics of employee training, job placement, and career search success. She more recently had transitioned to working as a volunteer for organizations like her church, holding workshops and giving job placement guidance for those seeking work. She stated: "I tell people how to get jobs, I don't get people jobs." As part of this transition process, Celeste had connected with a state employment entity, and that contact could result in a paid contract for holding government-sponsored workshops. At age 71, that would be a new phase of her career transition.

Daniel. Daniel was age 55 and the youngest study participant. Growing up in the Midwest with three younger siblings, his youth was filled with memories of a family that "moved a lot" due to his father's employment as a chain store manager. Daniel recalled family members engaging "more in arguments than real communication" during those growing up years. Daniel wanted to be a marine biologist, but his parents did not see that as a "marketable" choice, so he attended the University of Wisconsin/Madison for his BS in Industrial Engineering. Following graduation, he worked short periods for both an oil company and a meat packing company; but, he declared: "They were not good fits – I wanted to move into the world of mechanical engineering and engage in my creative design side." So he returned to school at University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee and attained his BS in Mechanical Engineering. In 1988, he was hired by a firm in Chicago as a quotations engineer. After a year and a half in Chicago, he got an offer to work for Lego in Denmark – an offer he accepted as a "grand experiment," even though it meant a 50% pay cut. While in Denmark, he was married for a period of five years; but, he reflected: "I did not have the tools to make marriage work," so the marriage ended. Daniel then moved to Japan for about three years, working in the field of quality

assurance certification for corporations seeking that designation. In 1998 Daniel began studies at Open University/Milton-Keynes, UK where he received his MS in Environmental Decision Making. While working on his masters, Daniel returned to the US and worked with a Pacific Northwest environmental non-profit organization as an auditor to verify organization compliance with quality standards. He also was involved in many non-profits on a volunteer basis, such as Business for Social Responsibility and helped institute a library for Ecotrust. In 2000 after completing his Masters in Environmental Decision Making from a British based university, he enrolled in an Environmental Sustainability class at Portland State University to study the metrics of sustainability. During the course, he developed a way to measure a product's level of sustainability relative to earth's caring capacity. However, Daniel did not have the funds to proceed with his education unless he could get financing from investors interested in his concepts. He said: "I went around the world presenting the concept of life cycle assessments, but I could not get funding," so doctoral education plans were abandoned. Since 2000, he free-lanced for several certifiers to verify organizational compliance with various environmental standards. His intention was to foster sustainable behavior through standards and development, but eventually he realized the impact that the built environment had on the environment – 45% of all greenhouse gasses attributed to heating and cooling buildings. He began dreaming of transitioning to a career that fostered sustainable behavior in the "built environment." Daniel's incentive was fed by courses he took regarding the built environment, and his understanding for: "how buildings could be net zero in energy and water – socially, economically, environmentally, and equitably." He created a model of this idea and began working with volunteers who shared his vision,

eventually developing a website and seeking opportunities for advancing his ideas. His incentive had been overshadowed, however, by the realization he could not turn his dream into a viable concept on his own. His finances were nearly depleted and he faced the prospect of transitioning back to the "workforce of corporate America," even if his ideals were not fully fulfilled in that employment.

Valerie (Val). Val was age 60. She grew up in San Francisco surrounded by an extended family of immigrants from Nicaragua – her paternal and maternal grandmothers knew each other there before coming to California. She remembered richly traditional family gatherings - "big parties with dancing, singing, and food." Another significant memory was of the lady who lived as a boarder in her grandmother's homes - "a school teacher who shared her teaching experiences with me and inspired me to think about a teaching career." Val did not take a direct educational path between high school and college. After graduating from high school in 1971, she married and "had children first at an early age." However, she knew: "Teaching was in my blood." Thus, after family commitments allowed, she started college classes at a community college and completed her teaching degree at San Francisco State, including attainment of fifth year teaching credentials in 1983. Val began her teaching career in a bi-lingual fourth grade class in South San Francisco, but moved to Portland, Oregon, in 1989 where she taught in Portland Public Schools' TAG program, particularly with math curriculum and classes. When state funding cuts as a result of Measure 5 ended the TAG program, she moved to private sector teaching. She had a concern for "students at risk" which led her to open her own tutoring business in 1995, working as a subcontractor for various Portland area school districts. She stated: "Many of my clients were girls who were pregnant and in

need of tutoring to get their GED's." Val's tutoring business began slowing down in 2005, causing her to look at other venues for her tutoring services. She became coordinator of the SMART (Start Making a Reader Today) program for some Portland area schools, working two days a week to train volunteer who had retired from their jobs. But then: "SMART had a bump in funding and they decided to drop the paid coordinator's position." In 2008 Val closed her tutoring business and transferred to OASIS as an intergenerational tutoring program strategist, training adults over 50 years of age to be volunteer reading, writing, and math tutors for elementary grade students. By 2010, funding cuts had eliminated all positions except two, and Val took over duties of both tutoring and volunteer administration. Then in 2012, the national OASIS organization was defunded, and Val "became unemployed." Since then she has attended workshops at Life by Design NW and Mercy Corp. to develop plans for a career transition – one that would: "continue using my education and volunteer administration experience, but with a strong volunteer component."

Study Participants' Descriptive Themes

Results were presented in the same thematic order as they appeared in the Literature Review. Researcher considered reversing the order and presenting results of described turning points before presenting results of described factors. However, upon reflection, researcher understood results of factor explorations should remain first because they provided the context – the storyline – for why turning points had pivotal significance. Dramatic turning points tended to have clear significance; but without the

backstory, more obscure turning points could leave the reader with a *so what* sense for why the turning point had meaning.

Themes represented factors and turning points that influenced later life career transitions, as explored through discussions and written communications with study participants. Themes were suggested in the Interview Questionnaire used to guide participant interviews, but participants were encouraged to explore other themes that might apply to unique aspects of their transition journey. Participants described varied "spins" on themes as they described personal meanings of factors and turning points. Table 2 summarized themes representing factors and turning points described by participants.

Table 2

Themes Explored by Study Participants
Factors (socializing influences)
Age
Health
Education
Work
Economics
Family
Key People
Emotions
Older Adult Stereotypes
Turning Points (transformational catalysts)
Life Changes and Events
Sense of Calling
Epiphanies

Age factors. Results indicated that although participants' perceptions varied on ways they related socializing influences to age factors, age was a thread of commonality in career transitions for all study participants. By virtue of the study's purpose, all participants were involved because they had reached an age plateau of 55 years or beyond. Study results indicated the age plateau was viewed through many prisms as it was identified, reached, and inhabited, and views of the age plateau influenced the process between acts of identification and habitation. The age plateau could be identified by meanings attributed to its universal name – "Baby Boomer Cohort." Sharon expressed it this way:

> As an older adult I am interested in how the Boomer Cohort responds to later life career changes. I'm at the age I'm at, at the time I'm at. It is almost retirement time, but there is a part of me that says I could grow myself into another career.

The age plateau was sometimes reached by way of socializing influences - like the Women's Movement - influences that might still inform decision making in later life. Mary was an example of this socializing influence: "For most of my adult life I have been interested in women's issues. Now I am interested in older women - their evolving stories, interests, and passions." Annalisa echoed this sentiment: "As a feminist, I see a need for older women to make career transition decisions at this time in their lives. I am one of those women."

Very often, the age plateau meant inhabiting a place that was both social and personal - individuals had reached the age plateau, but they could not let age ease them into a place of retirement because economics forced career extensions. Lawrence was an example of this factor: "When I left my last employer I was in my mid-50s, scared, out of

a job – but I could not beat myself up over it. My CPA told me I could not retire yet, so I had to believe him."

Habitation on the age plateau could be quite lonely if there were few fellow-travelers seeking later life career transitions. Celeste expressed the lonely nature of career transition in the seventh decade of life: "I don't have anyone I can have a discussion with about what I am doing – not a discussion that is like the one you and I are having for this study." It also could be difficult to trust in self and others if life experiences were not valued by fellow-travelers involved in the career transition process. Val described signs she experienced that age was a factor when working with others to reach career transition goals:

> Signs were not overt. But in training classes I have taken with younger women just out of college, I have gotten the sense – an undercurrent of feelings – that they viewed my years of experience in a patronizing light. I sensed my skills attained by experience were not rated by them at the same level as their recently gained skills from education.

However, the age plateau was also a positive place when it did not adversely define the older adult, but served instead as a catalyst for celebrating challenges through continued evolution of skills. Joy claimed this positive place by stating: "Age does not define me. We are living longer today, and older adults have valuable insights and experience for the workplace that come with age." Lana emphatically expressed her positive approach: "I don't think of age, not at all!" When I pressed her further, she clarified: "People want to make age a factor, but I won't go there."

Health factors. In their Demographic Information forms, participants' self-reported their current health status based on choices of "excellent/very good," "good," or "fair." The majority reported their health as "excellent/very good," with three reporting their health as "good." No participant reported their health as "fair." Results showed self-reported health status did not directly relate to age status, although several made observations during interviews to the effect: "You know - at my age, health starts to become a concern." But "my age" ranged from 55 to 72 years for those who expressed that sentiment. Although the Interview Questionnaire used to guide study interviews suggested health might be considered a factor for later life career transitioning, not all participants described health factors in their personal narratives.

Effects of childhood illness or parents' perceptions of a child's hardiness during formative years had lifelong impacts according to the descriptions of some participants. Lana's description of this factor was an example:

> Because I had a heart problem, my parents protected me from my two older brothers. I was not babied, but I was protected, and this caused my other siblings to be indifferent to me. They still will not come visit me. They're distant, so maybe that is why I am so strong now – it made me what I am. Their distance helped form my independence.

Trauma from an accident was not difficult to define as a health issue affecting career flow. Field notes indicated Karen was in a seven car accident in 1993 that left her with closed head injuries. She recalled:

> For 16 months, I could not read or intake written information – it was pinging off the page and I had no focus for taking it in. I relied on audio-video for intake.

> After 16 months, my brain started to 'thaw' and to take in simple sentences for complete thoughts. Then I started cognitive rehab to re-engage synapses and extend associations or recall. When my HMO discontinued cognitive rehab, my therapist recommended math and reading courses as a way to reinforce and stimulate some processes. I went to community college and took math and reading classes at grade school level. It took me until 1997 to recover. I still have intake and processing issues.

Trauma from substance abuse and depression took courage for participants to explore as health issues affecting career flow. Two examples were descriptions given by Lawrence and Annalisa. Field notes indicated Lawrence had a vocational career in the hospitality and beverage distribution industry. Lawrence described what resulted from that career: "Alcohol was constantly in my face. I became a diagnosed alcoholic. But I recovered, and near the end of my career with my last employer, people would come to me with questions about alcohol recovery." Field notes indicated Annalisa's mother died when Annalisa was in her 20's. When reflecting on how that occurrence affected her health, she said: "I went into a deep depression. I felt so awful about myself. I couldn't stand me. I was so angry because my mother died. Field note observations reflected a woman who had overcome her despair about life and herself – illustrated by the description she gave of her vocational career in nursing: "I enjoyed helping people who needed me."

Vagaries of later adulthood health concerns caused the deepest ripple of angst for *what might happen next*. As an example, field notes indicated Joy suffered from arthritis

and had a hip replacement. When I asked if she saw any barriers to plans for her career transition she named two concerns:

> …my health and my husband's health – he's older than I, and in the last year he had two emergency surgeries and a colostomy. He has nearly exhausted the small retirement savings he had accumulated over the years, primarily due to medical bills.

Celeste's health concerns captured the essence of several participants' descriptions of ways health factors influenced career flow:

> Physical issues as we mature can become barriers. I strained a muscle in my leg, and I am not used to this. My challenge now is to balance physical limitations with being 100% present in what I am doing career-wise.

Whether explored or unexplored by participants, researcher had the sense there was a *knock on wood* sentiment lurking in the descriptive narratives of participants – a feeling they were not confident about their control over destiny. Researcher interpreted the sentiment to be: *Knock on wood – my health is good or very good; knock on wood – I will remain healthy and be able to carry out career transition plans.*

Education factors. Results indicated participants' stories of education experiences had a common theme: whether college education began soon after high school, occurred as family and work dictated or languished over a course of fits and starts – all participants had to return to education in later life to fulfill career transition goals. At some level, each described the knowledge and technology gap between skills attained during earlier education and skills needed for today's careers.

All participants were made aware of this study through academic course connections with Marylhurst University or Life By Design NW (Portland Community College). In volunteering for the study, each participant indicated a recent engagement in course work that was undertaken for the purpose of enhancing their later life career transition goals. Sharon was an example of flow in her educational engagements: Field notes indicated she went to Marylhurst University and completed her undergraduate degree in Communications at age 35. Sharon continued to work in the communications field and did not return to college for a graduate degree until 2009 when she was 57 years old. She declared:

> Returning to Marylhurst for my Master's was the beginning of a new stage in my life extending beyond an advanced education – it represented a time for connecting with women. I was so busy raising children and working in what is known as a male environment it left me without many female friends. Experiences at Marylhurst and post-Marylhurst encouraged me to 'find' my encore self – not only in work, but also at home with my family and friends, and most important, in my spiritual self.

Several participants had also taught courses, adding the perspective of both a teacher and a learner to their descriptive experiences. Field notes indicated Val had been a teacher and tutor for her entire career, but she lacked business skills for the non-profit tutoring company she wanted to start as part of her career transition; so she was taking business courses to assist in reaching her goals. Field notes indicated Celeste, Karen, and Daniel had all been adjunct teachers at various community colleges; and all were taking courses in their fields of transition endeavors because they needed the networking and

upgraded skills the courses provided for moving forward competitively with their career transition plans.

Some participants described low points in early education attainment, often based on responses of key people in their lives. By way of example, field notes indicated Karen's father told her he "could not afford to send me to college because he had to pay for my brothers' college education, so he would send me to secretarial school." Despite this, Karen persisted in her education goals, nearly completing law school prior to her 1993 car accident and eventually receiving a master's degree. Field notes indicated Celeste had a similar experience with her husband. When describing why college had come later in life for her, she stated: "I was married to my first husband for 28 years and he did not want me to go to college. He told me no one was going to hire me, so why did I want an education?" Celeste also prevailed during mid-life in attaining her college degree. Field notes indicated Lana had to deal with several husbands' reticence toward her educational goals, but she had achieved a BA at Marylhurst University in 2012 and was planning to get a Masters in Pastoral Ministry. She proudly acknowledged:

> I have been accepted by both Marylhurst University and University of Portland to enroll for my Masters in Pastoral Ministry. I want a counseling focus because I feel I am good at understanding people's conditions and how to deal with them. This is so important to me, and it really hurt when my husband – he's my third husband – was not supportive of my education plans. I sat him down with a glass of wine and told him I would pay for my education. I came out bluntly and asked if I had to babysit him or if I could study? I explained to him how my first two husbands had reacted to my getting a college education, and I had not expected

> this from him. He still is not supportive, but I have put the hurt from that behind me now - I have my goals and I'm going to achieve them.

Several participants described the satisfaction education brought to their flow of passion for career transition. Annalisa's education experience was an example: Field notes indicated after Annalisa graduated from high school, she went to community college and got her nursing degree – a field she worked in for her entire career until retirement in 2007.

After retirement, she enrolled at Marylhurst University in 2010, graduating in 2013. Annalise finished her education story by saying:

> I guess it was an accomplishment, but I had so much fun. I would keep going with my education, but I have debt and I feel it is too expensive to go on. I have to ask: How much further do I want to go for what I want to do in my new career? Because of my career transition plans to open an interfaith retreat house, I do see benefit in getting my Spiritual Direction Certificate from Marylhurst, and I hope to take that opportunity.

When exploring the satisfaction education could bring to career achievement, Lawrence added a word of reflective caution to his education story. Field notes indicated Lawrence started college shortly after graduating from high school and graduated with a BS in Business, with a focus in Human Resources. Lawrence explained:

> I thought I wanted to work in HR because I knew what motivated people. But I found HR was more about filling out documents than working with people, so I opted not to do that. In my business course, I took an entrepreneurial class, and it helped me determine I did not want to run a company, but I wanted be a

> champion in someone else's company. So that is what I did for the last 20 years of my career. Then when my job was eliminated by my employer in 2010, I stepped back for about six months to consider how to become engaged in a career transition. During that time I enrolled in a program at Life by Design NW and that course started me thinking about what I wanted my encore career to be. I had connections with the general manager of a biodiesel firm, and those led to my career transition. I've had a couple occasions at work recently to explore with the company general manager the decision process I went through at Life by Design NW. In conversations with him and other friends, I have come to realize they and their kids are panicking if their kids are not making $100,000 a year when they get out of college. I tell them I learned through Life by Design NW courses to look at what makes you happy, what's important, what's fulfilling for your own identity. That's as important to learn early in your career as it is in a later life career.

Work factors. As a group, participants' careers were varied, but most of them had individual vocations that remained within a narrow scope for their entire working lives. Results showed that when they described career transition plans, a consistent pattern developed: Career transition linked with lifelong vocational careers and life experiences. Results showed participant descriptions of their career transitions presented a second consistent pattern: Transitions brought both challenges and opportunities revolving around work-related factors. Field notes indicated Sharon's description of flow in her career – looking back, looking at the present, and looking forward – represented

these patterns: In a log entry, Sharon described her roller-coaster experience with work factors she faced:

> Considering a career in younger years was easier in many ways. I suppose at some level I wanted to do something I enjoyed, but I really followed the money, believing I could make the job work if the money was right. Now I'm constantly torn between 'Am I doing good?' and 'I want to be paid what I'm worth.' My encore career is frustrating me. I don't mind working to gain new knowledge, but the hardest part is creating new contacts. I know people in the high tech marketing world, but I don't know that many people in the 'aging' market, so I am daily trying to create new relationships. It is EXHAUSTING. Lately I've been thinking of finding a job rather than doing this start up. It would be so much easier. But would it? I suspect the ugly truth of age discrimination would slap me in the face. I spent 90% of my working life working for myself. When visiting my relatives in the Midwest, I realized they all worked for someone and most of them had been doing so for 20 or more years. They still have old-fashion pensions that will cover 100% of their medical needs. Geez.

Lana looked back to her mother's career experience when describing her own career:

> My mom worked nights so she could be home with us kids during the day. She had to keep house, serve dad and the rest of us – she was expected to do everything. If not, she and other women of her day were told to quit what they were doing outside the home. When I think of that, it burns me. During the 1940's my mother fought this cultural mentality and went to beauty school.

> Maybe that is why I'm doing what I'm doing now. I'm willing to fight for my career transition plans.

Annalisa looked back to her earlier career experiences when describing open doors of transition opportunity:

> I was a late bloomer – maybe that came from being part of the Women's Movement – and I did not get married until I was 39. I married a man with two children and we raised them, plus we had a daughter. I was trying to work, raise kids, go to school – one day, I said: 'that's enough,' I had something of an emotional breakdown and I was showing signs of physical stress. I was all right, but I was totally stressed out. Now at age 65, I just feel so fortunate to be able to go off and do something else – this career transition. The work factor most prominent in my life today is that doors have opened for me and I am going to keep going through them until I drop.

Work factors described for career transitions often centered on participants' challenges for meeting today's workplace expectations. By way of example, Karen stated:

> It is hard to stay focused on certification while learning a new job. Time management is a challenge. I'm seeing people in IT getting jobs I would like to have, but I'm 15 years out of that loop. I'm not being catapulted into the career place I want to be because of the gap.

Most participants were seeking transition into careers involving entrepreneurial elements of engagement. That created described work factors of security and satisfaction

for some, but high anxiety for others. Lawrence explored the side that expressed satisfaction:

> In the past, I've burned the candle at both ends for my company. In hindsight, that was not necessarily appreciated. In my encore career, I wanted to be more relaxed and in control, and I have found that. I can wear jeans and boots to work, I don't have to do a lot of paperwork, and I feel good about it at the end of the day. Making money is not as important as flexibility and a better lifestyle.

Daniel explored the side that expressed anxiety: Field notes indicated work factors for Daniel were linked at most levels with his stewardship of Earth's environment, but he resisted working for a corporation to achieve career goals:

> I want my work to foster sustainable behavior. But I need a viable business proposition to make this a reality, and people are not willing to pay for moving this forward. It is not clear how I should move forward in my career transition. I am running out of money and I need to work. So the next step may be for me to move into a corporate setting where there are resources. I dislike that thought and I have tried for so many years to make it on my own. But I may need to exchange my services for money if my career transition is to become a reality.

All participants explored why they had hope for overcoming work factor challenges, even as they seasoned that hope with realities of lived experiences. Experiences described by Joy were representative of how the flow between a life-time of challenges fit with current realities and talents:

> When I was working for the government, I was treading as fast as I could to make money. But then in 1999 I had a breakdown after several deaths in my

> family, and I quit work. Subsequently, my husband and I tried to start a business on the Oregon coast, and when that failed financially, I turned inward again. I did not go out of the house for 10 years. In 2010, after recovering from my condition, I decided to prepare myself for a later life career. I knew this career had to be something I felt passionate about – that was the main work factor for me. I went to Marylhurst University and got my degree in Psychology in 2013. Now I am making plans to get my Masters in Social Work so I can do something for myself and others. Recently I did an internship at a psychiatric hospital in Portland and I came out of there wanting to cry, I was so happy – I had never worked before where I could get paid for doing something I loved so much. Life experiences were hard, but I came through them with a lived perspective on psychiatric survival - they prepared me for this new career opportunity.

Economic factors. Results indicated most economic factors revolved around one described theme: I still have to work because I need the money for daily living. Lana described how economic factors linked with her career transition:

> Part of my career involves a volunteer role – I have volunteered for years for advocacy organizations. I need to work for a salary because I cannot afford to give my volunteer time if I am not paid for my work time.

Results showed a described variation of that theme was: I cannot transition to an encore career without a way to fund that career, which may mean working part time at something else to fund my transition dream. Descriptions by both Sharon and Joy were representative of this theme variation. Sharon described her dilemma of economic factors: "Until my new business generates enough money to be self-sustaining, I cannot let go of

my communications business. So there is a certain amount of fear factor in my career transition." Joy also described facing significant economic factors when deciding to obtain additional education at Marylhurst in 2010 and re-enter the workforce. In a log she stated her economic dilemma:

> We were in dire straits financially. I supplemented our income with federal and private financial aid loans during my entire education at Marylhurst in order to avoid bankruptcy. After thoughtful reflection, financial desperation has influenced my career transition more than I realized. I graduated in March, 2013, with a degree in Psychology. Now I am planning to get my Masters in Social Work (MSW) degree – those are solid plan. I am hoping for some scholarship assistance, but all the scholarship focus is on kids. Why is that, when more adults than ever – like me - are going back to school now for later life career training? What about me and others like me? It feels like lawmakers working on college assistance programs are out of touch.

In a later log she gave an update of her economic status affecting career transition:

> My husband lost his job two weeks ago. He is fervently looking for another – but at age 63, this could be a problem. His expertise is not in medical nursing, but rather in the diseases and disorders of the severely developmentally disabled; so he is not qualified to assume a medical nursing position. His small retirement savings is nearly exhausted from his medical bills. I am looking for part time work so we can pay bills and I can move forward with my education plans that will lead to a new career.

Overall, one participant (Celeste) was enabled to transition into her current career as a volunteer consultant because of her pension and because of her experience living frugally both as a child and as an adult. Another participant (Lawrence) was enabled to engage in his current career transition because of stock investment income he received from his former employment, and because economic family responsibilities had lightened. Another participant (Annalisa) had to deal with her husband's economic concern for increased taxes if her transition career was an economic success – a situation foreign to most in the participant pool.

Remaining participants were at varying levels of transition attainment, and most described angst for economic factors still looming in the pathway of career transition success. Karen was representative of this latter group: Field notes indicated Karen worked since high school graduation in order to support herself and her education – a condition in which she still found herself in later life. Karen described economic factors of her career transition:

> I have restructured my lifestyle to live on half the income previously earned in 2008. I lost significant amounts of my investment for retirement and I lost my home – I need to rebuild. I have student loans, and I have to work to pay those and support myself. Others my age have given up or retired. For at least another seven years, I cannot do that.

Daniel succinctly stated his economic angst for career transition: "I am proud of ideas I have developed without the aid of corporate wealth and power, but I am running out of money."

Mary was similarly succinct:

> At this juncture in my life, having just moved from Portland to the coast three months ago primarily for economic reasons, I am looking back and am unsure what my next step is going to be. Money remains a factor in my career transition plans.

Although Val had economic concerns, she couched them in terms of valued lessons she could leave as a legacy for her children and grandchildren:

> I married my high school sweetheart and we had two children – now we have four grandchildren. Both my husband and I worked while our children were growing up. I worked because I had to work. But I saw that as being a positive role model for the way I should deport myself, for how I could show my work ethic. I helped my children understand things were not easy; you had to work for what you got. Now I am still working on my nest egg, I still need to work because my 401K tanked during the economic downturn. That makes it hard for me to transition into a career in the non-profit world. I'm feeling a little nervous about my transition, but I'm trying to make good business and economic decisions on where I may need to go next to make it all happen.

Family factors. Results showed described family factors were formative influences during participants' growing up years, and they seldom stopped with childhood. Family factors described by participants during their growing up years often resulted in a lifetime of influence on career trajectories. Participants' explorations included ways they were or were not able to break from that influence when creating families and careers of their own.

Some participants described early family factors still influencing later life career decisions at various levels of engagement. By way of example, Sharon stated:

> My parents were of German descent, so work, work, work was important – there was a strong work ethic drilled into me. My parents pushed me to do really well, and that sucks me in today. It makes me fearful of leaving the secure profitability of my communications company for transition career that may not prove financially viable.

Karen expressed a similar theme when exploring how family factors influenced her career, particularly in her struggles with self-confidence related to career success: Field notes indicated Karen grew up in a family of four younger brothers. She described the family factors that most influenced her life:

> My father was old school. He believed you sent boys to college, but you sent girls to business school so if something happened to your husband, you could support yourself and take care of your children. That treatment by my father caused me to have self-esteem issues that followed me for years as I engaged in my education and career path – the thought that hovered in my mind was: Dad would not like this. During my marriage, I perceived messages from my husband affecting my state of being: He did not want me to work, despite my success; he wanted me to stay home, and questioned whether I worked because I felt his income was insufficient. I still struggle with career transition goals, in no small part because lack of self-confidence was embedded in me since I was very young, and because ambition was thwarted by my spouse.

Daniel was still wrestling with family influences that left him stalled at a low point – that broke the flow of opportunities for career and relationship success: Field notes indicated Daniel grew up experiencing family factors that centered on his father's constant employment moves. Daniel described his growing up family experiences and how they affected his adult life experiences:

> I was a K-Mart brat. I lived in 10 different towns by the time I was 14 because K-Mart was always moving my dad to another management location. My family included one brother and two sisters - I am the oldest of four – and it could be described as a nuclear, traditional family. Dad worked at K-Mart, mom worked as a physical therapist, we had 40s and 50s value sets including lots of strictness and harsh discipline. We had few family discussions – we did not develop that aspect – but we had lots of family arguments. The *soup* we grew up in described our relationship.

Field notes indicated Daniel was married for five years when he went to Denmark to work. He described his marriage experience:

> I got married, but I did not have the tools to make marriage work. Realities of marriage were different from my perspective. Childhood taught me to move from problems rather than deal with problems – the 10 towns in 14 years syndrome – and that perspective did not work in my marriage. Today I am still fighting that perspective from childhood. I have no family of my own now, but family factors from long ago continue to influence personal and career relationships.

With the wisdom of years, negative family factors often were overcome or transformed into catalysts for productive personal growth. Joy's experience with this transformational flow was described by her:

> I was given up for adoption at birth by a mother who kept three of my siblings but not one sister and me. I was raised by an adoptive father who was seldom home and an adoptive mother who was frequently hospitalized with mental problems. I felt abandoned. Seeking for love I married young but neither that marriage nor my second marriage brought me the love and security I craved. My third marriage is a good one. My husband helped me struggle through my years of depression, our financial adversity, and our daughter's financial challenges. Those were factors that could have torn our family apart, but instead we are coming out on the other side, I am transitioning into a new career, and I have a new lease on life.

Family factors having positive potential from the start often resulted in nurturing positive values and perspectives for generations. Val's positive values created by generations of family tradition were representative of this factor, and they were influential on her perspectives for career transition: Field notes indicated both of Val's parents were of Nicaraguan descent, with her dad being born there. Her parents' families moved to San Francisco and that was where Val grew up. Val described family factors that had a lifelong influence:

> In Nicaragua the family had very rich farms, but they witnessed much poverty. This caused them to instill in me the need to give back to society if we have the means to do so. My grandfather established the first fire department in Nicaragua

> as his way of giving back. All my life I have tried to live by this family value and that value has formed my quest for career transition into the field of non-profit volunteer management.

Lawrence also described the positive family influence that affected his career trajectory:

> During all my growing up years, I was encouraged to do well - academically, athletically, and in everything I did. When it came time for college, my father encouraged me to get my degree rather than continuing to work at a construction job, and I followed his advice. I have been married to my wife for many years, and together we have raised our sons. Like the family of my growing up years, my wife and I created a family that valued encouraging each other's endeavors. I have always been successful - and family encouragement has been a significant factor in my success.

Key people factors. Participants' descriptions of key people were intertwined throughout descriptions of other factors. Significant overlaps occurred between descriptions of key people factors and other described factors. Results indicated that as participants explored how they related to age factors, ways they responded to health issues, obstacles they overcame and encouragement they valued in their education quests, challenges and opportunities they experienced in career journeys, struggles they encountered to gain economic security, and life-long impacts they both resisted and cherished from family involvement – all these other factors were influenced by relationships and interactions with key people in participants' lives. Results of key people descriptions, however, were more to the point of "why" a person was key in a participant's life.

The answer to "why?" was sometimes based on a negative feature of the key person's influence, rather than a positive feature. Ex-husbands took the brunt in many descriptions, with the following description by Mary being an example of this factor: Field notes indicated key people in Mary's life were family, but particularly her three husbands - for quite diverse reasons. Mary described the key person role each played in her career journey:

> Husband number one pushed me into the Women's Movement because his attitude toward my education and career goals was obnoxious! Eventually, I could not take it anymore and we divorced. Husband number two had been my best friend before we married, and he treated me well during our ten year marriage, but our relationship was not strong enough to survive his alcoholism. Husband number three has been my strength and encouragement – I finally got it right with him.

As Mary described, for some, their journey started with negative key person experiences but culminated in relationships leading to personal and career success. Joy was an example of this relationship influence: Field notes indicated key people in Joy's journey changed her life's trajectory forever – starting with the mother who gave her up for adoption as a baby, and the family who adopted her but left her troubled by a dysfunctional home; moving on to the two husbands who failed to provide the love for which she longed; and ending with her third husband who remained her support while traversing more hard years on a path to personal and professional redemption. She described the place she now inhabited within herself as a result of redemption: "I'm doing well. I feel peaceful."

For Sharon, her journey's flow sprang from a condition her mother – an ultimate key person – did not understand, but others along her journey understood better, with Sharon eventually coming to a place of self-understanding that freed her during mid-life to engage with flow in her career passions: Field notes indicated Sharon had a hard time in school because she was dyslexic. Sharon described the condition and key people who influenced how she dealt with the condition:

> Back then, nobody knew how to deal with dyslexia, including my mom. She was a key person in my life because she tried to force me out of my dyslexic-caused shyness and introversion by encouraging my involvement in activities like student council. But her underlying belief about my condition was: something was wrong with me and I needed to correct it. To make matters worse, I had an older sister who was adorable and smart, and it seemed like my sister could excel in school when I could not. But there was one key person who planted seeds of hope that I could succeed – that person was a high school teacher who took me aside and told me I was much more capable than I thought, and that I should have more confidence in myself. Those words helped carry me through early adulthood, but it was not until I was older and attending Marylhurst University for my 1987 communications degree that I understood there was nothing 'wrong' with me. I needed – I still need - more time than many people to regenerate, but that is the way I am and it is not 'wrong' to be that way.

Some, like Annalisa and Celeste, described key persons as providing transformational interventions that changed their trajectory toward career transition. Annalisa described her intervener:

> I have a new key person who has emerged as an enabler for my career transition. In planning for that transition, I had a pretty good idea of where I wanted to go, but I didn't know how I was going to get there. Developing a working relationship with Rabbi S gave me that springboard, that open door that got me where I am today. Exploring with him the constructs of interfaith spirituality and turning those insights into development of an interfaith retreat center is exciting and purposeful.

Celeste also described her intervener:

> There was a man – an educator and expert on survival personalities - who recognized my resiliency in personal and professional circumstances. At several significant junctures in my career path, he became a key person, helping me understand my strengths and guiding me to further education and career opportunities. His role still influences the way I engage in my career today.

Emotion factors. Participants described emotion factors, but often the depth of those factors was conveyed by *talking in exclamation points* or dropping their voice and their eyes during pieces of their stories or reflecting on past events with voice inflections that conveyed an emotion or mixed emotions.

Results showed emotion factors had long arms, resembling results found in family and key person factors. Some participants described arms that nourished stable states, other participants described arms that inflicted painful states of instability throughout life. Key people and family were central players in described emotion factors involving careers, marriages, and later life transitions. An example of mastering negative emotion factors caused by a key person was described by Lana:

> Getting my master's so I can go into pastoral ministry is so important to me, but my husband is not supportive. That hurt at first, but I have put the hurt behind me. Just like mom went to beauty school in her 40's when other women were staying home, I'm going to remain strong and succeed – I have my goals.

An example of emotion factors caused by positive influences of key people was embedded in Lawrence's response to my question: "Were there key people who helped you be successful?" Without describing why the question caused emotion, he replied softly – with tears filling his eyes: "Yes, there were people. People always helped me."

Field notes indicated some participants tended to use descriptive phrases when describing emotion factors involving their sense of being. An example was Sharon's description of her domestic sense of well-being when raising young children. She used a terse phrase: "My husband was not emotionally supportive." When describing her sense of being while working 60 hours a week to grow her communication business, she exploded with two descriptive phrases: "I was miserable! My quality of life sucked!" Sharon's descriptive sense of being while making the planned transition from her communications career to a gerontology management career was: "I have to deal with a certain amount of fear factor, but I also feel tremendous passion for what I am doing." Relating this to the previous discussion of Mead's *I* and *Me,* where *I* reflected the true self and *M*e was the social self, results pointed to a stilled voice of Sharon's social self – *Me* – so she could recognize her authentic self – her *I* - in pursuing her passion.

Results indicated great candor in participants' reflections - descriptions that lay bare their states of being for exploration and understanding by both the tellers and the listener. A poignant example of this was Annalisa's raw description in a log she

submitted for this study. Fields notes indicated Annalisa's emotion factors revolved around excitement mixed with concern for the career transition she planned to undertake. Annalisa described that mixture of emotion factors by relating a recent dream in one of her logs:

> I dreamed I walked into a room with my husband and there was a camera set up to take our picture. I said that no way was I getting my picture taken as I had no make-up on, my exposing my real self and I was terrified of people knowing that self.

Annalisa continued describing her explorations:

> Later that morning, as I was preparing breakfast, I was thinking of my dream and I had a moment of panic. I wonder if we all have moments, dreams, etcetera when we panic at the thought of someone looking at our exposed self – raw, naked, and bereft of any barriers or defenses; our thoughts, both good and, most especially, bad – out there for others to see and for ourselves to examine?

Study results showed participants explored *flow* – a fit between levels of demand and skills – as a significant part of their described emotion factor. It was significant because that flow was driven by participants' passions for attaining later life career transition. For some the passion was something bigger than themselves, and it occurred at a time in later life when the authentic *I* was freer to act than might have been the case during pressures of younger years. An example of flow relating to passion for career transition was described by Joy:

> In 2010 I sufficiently recovered from depression to consider working again, and one of the pivotal events in my new life was to enroll at Marylhurst University to

> get the degree I needed for career transition. After all the grief I had endured, I knew my transition career had to be something I felt passionate about. Getting my Psychology degree in 2013 allowed me to apply for a master's program. I have been accepted by one university and waitlisted by a second university. When I get my Masters in Social Work degree, I can fully transition into a social work career. Knowing I am following my passion makes me so happy. I'm fulfilled. I can't see myself doing anything else for the rest of my life.

The struggle one could go through to attain the fit between demand and skills was exemplified in Karen's story. Field notes indicated Karen's emotion factors came to the fore when explaining diagrams from her master's capstone project, and describing the frustration she felt at finding project material was already outdated. Karen said with passion:

> I just cry when I think I can't do this – the designs I worked so hard developing in my project. I'm trying to get my skills updated, land a position for relevant exposure and teamwork, and gain ongoing improvement so I might be able to apply aspects of my Master's project to evolving workplace requirements. I can't tell you what a privilege it is to share my material with you in this study!

Study results indicated participants also explored coming to terms with situations that created *low places* in participants' lived experiences. This construct had significance because unless participants had accepted the realities of difficult situations and moved on in their lives, they could be barred at some level in their career transition attainment. Results showed most participants carried baggage, some for decades, from low places in life; but some had come to terms with their plight more than others. Mary's described

experience of overcoming deep tragedies was an example of coming to terms with low places in her life:

> My high school sweetheart's death in an accident and then, many years later, the death of my oldest son in an accident, plus a nasty divorce – all these tragedies built up in me over the years and nearly broke me emotionally. But life allowed me to recover emotionally, to experience a rebirth of sorts, a regained sense of personal self-worth.

Daniel's story was an example of experienced low places from which he had neither escaped nor fully come to terms with how he could escape or accept them: Field notes indicated Daniel strove mightily over his adult life to avoid Corporate America while forging his career in environmental sustainability – but doing so had created a deep valley of low places. His efforts had left him financially, professionally, and personally drained. Daniel described emotion factors influencing his current career transition:

> My barrier to going it on my own is money. But an even bigger barrier is my inability to work happily with others – to go into their tent. That keeps people from calling me. The bottom line is: I am not a good compromiser."

I asked him: "How close is that 'bottom line' to a 'line in the sand' for your career options?" Daniel replied with candor:

> The line is mitigated by how much pain I have to go through. I'm getting my stubbornness burnished by understanding compromise is an issue I have to deal with. According to my mother, I've never been a good compromiser. Unfortunately, I can endure a lot of pain.

Constructs of *flow* and *low places* were blended in Celeste's explorations. She touched on the importance of understanding flow by saying:

> I like the idea that we should not identify ourselves to others as having only one talent, since we do many things. It has been my experience counseling job seekers who believe they have one skill - they are devastated when they are no longer able to continue in that area.

And she touched on the need for coming to terms with experiences that cause low places in one's career, by continuing:

> I found this among folks who had Ph.D.'s – they were so specialized in their fields they became 'frozen' when trying to think about pursuing other opportunities. Helping job seekers move out of this frozen sense of well-being was one reason I transitioned to a volunteer role with PCC's Life by Design NW program.

Older adult stereotype factors. Results indicated older adult stereotypes created varying levels of influence on participants' career transitions. No participant denied existence of the stereotype factor, but some participants described being deeply scathed by the factor while other participants described barely a brush with the factor.

Results indicated most described stereotypes were associated with age-related issues. Some participants' descriptions of age-related stereotypes were punctuated by pithy disdain, others by subdued resignation. Described relevance or irrelevance of the factor to career transition divulged little distinction in participants' responses – both relevance and irrelevance were described with high levels of certitude in participants' perceived view of the factor.

An example of the factor's relevance was described by Joy who stated age-related stereotypes were hard to ignore – they were not just internalized voices, but they represented potential blockades to later life career success:

> There is a stereotype out there about being older that can get in the way of career plans – employers see I'm not a cute young thing just out of college. They may not see I'm more able to roll with punches. I don't have the attitude of younger workers that I'll just change companies if I don't like my work.

Another example of the factor's link to ageism and its relevance to career transition was described by Val:

> Lately, I've worked at whatever I could find in the teaching field, because that's the means for funding my career transition plans. But when potential employers see when I graduated - when I got my degree, I do not get a call back. If you look at my list of qualifications, it has to be ageism. It's astounding I have not gotten call backs – I should have. Employers are looking for the perfect fit, and they have such a pool to choose from.

An example of the factor's perceived irrelevance was described by Lana: Field notes indicated I asked if she had encountered older adult stereotypes in her career transition. Lana's reply was blunt: "Yes, but I purposely don't tell people my age. I won't be caught up in what they're trying to do."

Another example of the factor's perceived irrelevance was expressed by Annalisa - not because the factor failed to exist but because she trusted in God's guidance and saw the factor's irrelevance as an exercise of faith:

> I see the need for older women to make career transitions in their lives. In my case, I'm not letting age-related stereotypes get in the way of my plans. I'm a spiritual person, so in my career transition, I'm just being who I am. That is all God asks of me. Most stereotypes had outward origination from culture.

Sharon's description was an example of both positive and negative effects from older adult stereotypes in her professional culture:

> My age is a big factor for discontinuing my communications business because I am seen as 'older' and 'older' has a negative connotation for those working in the communications field. But age is not a problem for my new business in gerontology care management. In fact, the stereotype of age is an asset because it helps clients feel I relate to age-related problems I am trying to manage for them.

Lawrence also explored both positive and negative aspects of this factor in his workplace culture. Field notes indicated Lawrence recognized older adult stereotypes and the challenge they created for many, but he had overcome the challenge in his career transition. Lawrence described his experience with stereotype factors:

> I feel for people in my age bracket who are struggling in their careers – nothing fits for them in today's workplace mentality. In what I am doing, my age is a benefit, my experience is appreciated. At first they (my bosses) were nervous about my age because of stereotype factors – like how customers would relate to an older person, but not now.

Results showed some stereotypes factors had inward origination based on the individual's interpretation of conditions in their experienced culture. Daniel's description of his constructed reality was an example: Field notes indicated Daniel described no age-

related stereotypes bearing relevance to his career transition, but he did experience battles with an inwardly generated stereotype. Daniel described the stereotype:

> I have developed a loss of love for working for corporations – it makes me feel like a slave. That has not been helpful in finding jobs. The slave stereotype is not their description, but mine. That loss of love translates to 'indentured servitude' in my mind.

Karen's described experience with this factor had a mixture of outward and inward origination. Field notes indicated she wrestled with inward interpretations of how she was perceived in her professional culture, but her inward battles were often driven by outward influences caused by older adult stereotypes. She stated: "This training course has been a real eye-opener for me. I see the disconnect of Baby Boomers in the workforce - the amount of effort anyone over 45 has to put forth just to compete."

Turning points: Life changes and events. Results indicated turning points were often caused by changes or events in participants' lives. Results showed turning points had significance because they influenced the flow in participants' journeys toward career transitions. Sometimes turning points represented low points in participants' lived experiences, and they had to come to terms – accept, forgive, or become reconciled - with difficult situations before they could move on with life or embrace their passion for career transition. Turning points helped participants recognize who they were, what skills they possessed or could attain, and how they could become more in touch with the *I*, their true selves.

When exploring turning points in light of career transitions, most participants described a series of changes or events that comprised cumulative chronologies leading to

career transitions. Sharon's story was an example of turning points throughout life that formed a cumulative chronology:

> After struggling during childhood from dyslexia and shrinking emotionally for years from the perception something was 'wrong' with me – and it was up to me to change it – I absolutely reveled at the opportunity provided by my employer during mid-adulthood to get my college degree. A significant turning point was when my employer not only told me I was smarter than I thought, but he also backed that assessment with funds to pay for my degree. At that juncture in my life, I was pretty desperate because of changes that represented turning points in my home life - my husband and I had divorced, and he had stopped paying child support for our children. That made life hard. But with funding from my employer and with a conducive learning environment at Marylhurst University, I got my Communications degree at age 35. My education exposure allowed me to experience another turning point: I discovered through some psychology course work that nothing was 'wrong' with me – I just had a personality type that was somewhat introverted, and that was fine. At that point, I became more in touch with my true self. A second series of events began when my employer basically handed me his communications business in 1988. I grew the business for about 12 years; but during that time I had remarried, I was raising a family while working 60 hour weeks, and life sucked - so I decided to downsize in 2000. The crash of 2008 meant work was scarce, which gave me a perfect opportunity to go back to school. I returned to Marylhurst, and in 2012 I got my Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, with a focus in Gerontology. This

> series of events formed a second set of cumulative turning points in my life. But there was a single event during that period that formed a cataclysmic turning point in my career trajectory: My father was 95 when he died, and his last years during 2008 and 2009 were a sad experience – one no older person should have to endure. His manner of dying and death was a turning point that led me to get training in gerontology - I wanted to transition into a career that allowed me ways for sparing others the fate my father endured.

Although turning points were influenced by factors described by participants and discussed earlier in this study, results showed turning points were distinct from factors – they had a point or points of causation that represented described catalysts. Val's story was an example of such a catalyst: Field notes indicated Val's career in education was something she longed for from the time she was a child, but it seemed out of reach until she experienced a transformational catalyst. Val described the series of events creating her pivotal turning point:

> I wanted to be a teacher ever since my grandmother's boarder told me inspiring stories about her teaching experiences. But I grew up in the Catholic school system, and the nuns instilled in me how not to be an educator. Their methodology was horrendous, particularly their methods for teaching math. So those events provided contrast in my perspectives on teaching – the stories inspired me, but my own experiences discouraged me. When I went to college, I found my educational background provided poor skills for teaching the required new math – my math skills were awful. Then I took a class called 'Math Without Fear,' and that was my transformational turning point. I was inspired to

> complete my degree in teaching and I've never looked back. Today I am planning for a career transition focused on reaching middle class children who are falling through educational cracks – like I was. I want to provide pivotal turning points in their lives so they won't stay lost in those cracks.

Traumatic turning points were described by others as transformational catalysts. Examples were Karen's serious injuries from a car accident in 1993 that still had influence on her career transition in 2013; Mary's loss of her high school sweetheart and later her son to accidents that left her without a sense of personal and professional power until she came to terms with her grief; Annalisa's loss of her mother at age 20 with resultant years of depression that left a hole in her heart – a hole that was being somewhat filled by her plans for career transition; Joy's series of abandonments by parents and husbands that caused her to descend into an abyss of despair and depression until her evolving recovery allowed transformational plans for career transition; and Celeste's loss of work and domestic stability that led to her resilient quest for educational attainment and eventual career fulfillment.

Results showed some participants experienced turning points that blended continuums of both failure and success. An example was Lawrence's story: Field notes indicated seminal turning points for Lawrence represented two bookends to his life - he pegged origins of his successful life to events that seemed like failures when he was a child; and he credited his successful career transition to changes that seemed like failures in later adulthood. Lawrence described childhood events that were early catalysts for transformation:

> I got held back in the 6th grade because I was emotionally immature. I went to another school so I could restart 6th grade without being embarrassed about taking it over. That was an angry summer – not only did I have to think about retaking 6thgrade in the fall, but I was sent to 'bad boys' camp for the summer and some guys broke my nose. Then I went to my second 6th grade and it was a good year. It helped me open up and become a successful kid. The next summer I went back to the same camp, but I had grown seven inches and I was a totally different person – I defended myself when the bullies showed up. Life opened up for me.

Lawrence then described a later-life event that was a catalyst for career transition:

> When I was in my mid-50s, my career in sales for the brewery industry came to a traumatic halt. I was scared because I was out of a job. I was pushed out, but I also wanted out. I knew I did not want to go back into beverage sales, so being pushed out of my job was a gift. It allowed me to take six months off – I had never taken six months off before – and pursue my options for career transition. That pursuit led me to sales in the biodiesel industry, a transition that lets me live out my concerns for the environment.

Results indicated some events or changes were described as rather minor at the time they occurred, but results showed effects of cumulative events and changes were profound when outcomes caused life changing courses of action. Daniel's story was an example: Field notes indicated Daniel described multiple minor turning points - some causing profound influence, but others leading to dead end dreams. Daniel described these events and changes:

> My family's constant moving – 10 times in 14 years – to accommodate my father's management career with K-Mart were series of changes that caused significant disruption in my life. I still refer to myself as a 'K-Mart Brat' when I reflect on my growing up years. That nomadic lifestyle was accompanied by other growing up events: lots of family arguments, little family communication – all turning points. Any one of them could be classed as minor, but the cumulative effect of the events created a pattern of problems for my adulthood journey. I've traveled and worked all over the world, never finding career stability. Like the model of my youth, when I encountered personal or career problems, I moved from the problem rather than dealing with the problem. Yet, my career has not been without success: I am recognized in the field of environmental sustainability for publications I have authored, classes I have taught, designs I have developed and businesses I have advised. Those successes represented turning points with promise for long term stability; but that outcome was premised on my underlying dream to go it under my own control, not as a 'slave' to some corporate interest. Unfortunately, I have not been able to turn the promise of long term stability into the reality of long term stability. Dead end dreams have not ended the dream, but they have been turning points in their own right, ones causing me to contemplate possible re- engagement with the corporate world – if that is what it takes to fulfill Earth's role for me.

Mary described a turning point that involved engagement in a social cause due to negative situations, but that had positive outcomes that had informed her personal and professional perspective throughout life:

> I became involved in the Women's Movement during the 1960's and 1970's for several reasons – a big one was the pay structure was abominable. I was never paid what my male counterparts were paid in my industry in the 60s and 70s; that fact made me angry. Another reason for involvement was my husband's attitude toward women – me in particular – it was obnoxious. As a result, I have always been drawn synchronistically to women who are compatible and of like mind to support each other. In seeking my career transition, I am still drawn to the advice and companionship of like-minded women.

Turning points: Calling. Results indicated descriptions of calling were very personal. No two descriptions embodied exactly the same perspective, but each participant explored unique nudges leading to career transition passion. An example was Celeste's unique passion for serving mostly as a volunteer in her career transition: My passion is helping people connect – that is my calling. I have come to realize that when we have a skill, or talent, or gift –if we are passionate enough, we might be willing to share for free!

For some, the sense of calling linked closely to perspectives on their unique role in the universe. Daniel was an example: Field notes indicated Daniel desired to leverage his career in the environmental sustainability field by transitioning into a career that focused more deeply on Earth's caring capacity. When asked if he felt his work was a calling, he replied: "Yes, I view my ambitions as a calling - as a shift from just working to being really engaged." Daniel then described his experiences in the wilderness as an analogy for his career aspirations:

> In the wilderness, I go out and do incredible things like circumventing mountains. The back country provides lessons on aspects of innovation: there are other ways to do things successfully and thrive without following societal norms. 'Going off trail' is metaphor for not following the establishment, for following your own beat and drummer.

In a follow-up log submission, Daniel wrote:

> I asked the universe last night to help me discover how I can best serve humanity and myself. What endeavor would I be happy at and that I have the skills to do (or can acquire)? Aspects for discovery need to be: creativity, innovation, speaking truth to power – but in a new approach, like working for a nonprofit, non-corporate culture. I want to construct something tangible, but I'm tired of codes, standards, and making or enforcing guidelines.

Results further indicated that when calling was a described turning point it often had spiritual connotations. Descriptions by Sharon were an example: Field notes indicated Sharon's descriptions of her career transition into gerontology care management were passionate, so I asked her if she felt that career choice was a calling. Sharon's unequivocal response was:

> Absolutely, it's a calling. I think about this passion day and night! The model for personal growth is in a person's essence, no matter how old. Aging can be full of joy if you do not just focus on 'old' and 'loss of health.' If there can be a focus on God-given strengths of creativity, a person can find purpose up to the last minute of life. I have no passion for my communication business, and I've never had a passion for my husband's business that I help manage, but I'm good at

> management. My new business is my love – I have a passion for it, for helping people with aging.

Annalisa's descriptions were also an example of calling with spiritual connotations that put her in touch with her authentic self: Field notes indicated Annalisa's career transition involved development of an interfaith retreat center. In describing her engagement in that center as a calling, Annalisa spoke with fervor:

> I see myself 20 to 30 years down the road – I still want to be of service for others. I could not see myself quitting work and doing nothing. This retreat center has opened up doors for me to keep going until I drop.

Field notes indicated that Val couched the spiritual nature of her calling in the concept of destiny:

> I feel I have almost a destiny in tutoring, and that destiny has not been fulfilled yet. The journey of destiny takes you places you had not planned. But my journey has provided academic support for children, and I sense that as a calling.

Mary stated her upbringing caused her to view calling as spiritual in nature, which was why she did not apply that term to her passion for career transition: Field notes indicated Mary described herself as one who was "always drawn to gardening, writing, and literature." But when I asked Mary if any part of her transition to dual careers of writing and garden design was a calling, she replied simply: "No." Then she added: "I think my 'no' has to do with my definition of 'calling' – I always thought, often with envy for the 'knowing part,' that calling belonged to those with a specific gift, like nuns, priests, doctors, and scientists."

Results indicated some participants' descriptions of calling directly tapped into the construct of flow – their career transitions represented an intersection where they understood how talents fit with demands of calling. Their passions drove them to view their calling as an end in itself, something bigger than themselves. Joy's story was an example: Field notes indicated Joy was planning a career transition into social work after achieving a Master's in Social Work degree. She spoke so fervently of her plans, I asked: "Do you consider your future plans to be a calling?" She replied without hesitation: "Yes, absolutely, without a doubt – because of my life experiences. I can't see myself doing anything else for the rest of my life." Field notes indicated that I asked: "Do you see anything spiritual in your calling?" Again, her response was without hesitation: "I'm striving to relieve human suffering and that is spiritual."

Results showed those describing no sense of calling still described a sense of passion for their career transition choices. By way of example: Lana described her passion for pastoral counseling to be the result of her perceived gift for counseling - making it clear that: "I do not see it as calling. It is something I am trying to do." Lawrence did not describe his career transition as a calling, but rather as a field of endeavor he believed in, stating: "I liked the idea of biodiesel putting 85% less pollutants into the environment than most fuels." Karen described no aspect of her career transition as calling. Instead, she described with some passion how the fit of flow informed her quest:

> I'm trying to deal with evolving requirements of the workplace. I'm trying to take all my background and make it more agile for current thinking. The current

> thinking is very robotic – it's no creativity, computer-like thinking. I'd like to strengthen business advocacy and IT inquiry.

Turning points: Epiphanies. Similar to *calling*, turning points occasioned by *epiphany* were personal and unique to individual participants; and not all participants described an epiphany encounter. Results showed no *Road to Damascus* epiphanies – experiences where epiphanies appeared as bolts of light. Rather, results indicated epiphany was most often a process – one occurring over time through a series of events and thoughts. Lawrence's described experiences with epiphany were an example: Field notes indicated an epiphany that triggered his career transition originated about five years ago. Lawrence described the realization that grew in his mind:

> I started looking at obits in the paper about five years ago. I saw people dying who were close to my age, and it made me ask myself: Why am I doing this - my work and the life it causes me to lead? What does it mean to my life? If I'm not enjoying my day-to-day existence, what's the point?

Joy's story of epiphany also represented a process, one that included coming to terms with low points in her journey: Field notes indicated Joy described years of her life that were filled with depression and despair. But she also described her recovery and her anticipated re-entry into the work world. Epiphany helped Joy embrace her authentic self, and it was wrapped in a saying of scholar Joseph Campbell that was included in one of her logs: "It is by going down into the abyss that we recover the treasures of life. Where you stumble, there lies your treasure" (Campbell, n.d., n.p.).

Results showed most participants with an epiphany experience tended not to use the word *epiphany.* But they did use terms such as *awareness*, or *awakening*, or

realization when describing epiphany-triggers for career transition. An example of this was the growing realization Sharon encountered in response to her father's experience with dying. Sharon described her father's journey toward death:

> My father's last years were a sad experience – one no older person should have to endure. What he went through was agonizing and degrading. As a result of that experience, I realized I could get training in gerontology that could be used to spare others the fate my father had to endure.

Sharon then continued with additional insights into the growing sense of epiphany.

> My grandkids look at me as a hero of sorts, a model for the fact that learning never ends. Aspiring to dream should be a piece of your day, every day! Yet even in the dream, there is *epiphany*, insights into bigger barriers. I love life more now than at any stage, but I want to work, support my husband, and have time with my grandchildren. I'm trying to do it all. I'm wanting and loving all of it.

Results showed other participants experienced epiphany through physical challenges, perspectives on change, and influences of key people. An example of epiphany resulting from physical challenge was Mary's experience with cancer that caused her to realize God's grace was needed for living each day – an awareness that still resonated in her quest for career transition. An example of epiphany resulting from perspectives on change was Lana's growing awareness that professional changes could be opportunities for success rather than barriers for success. Lana described this growing awareness when considering a transition from corporate employment to working for her own business – "It might actually give me more flexibility and independence than

working for someone else. I could be more in control." Daniel also was an example of epiphany resulting from perspectives on change, as well as from a growing sense of *I*:

> I am becoming aware that if I am going to live a life of greater purpose and destiny, I need to overcome some obstacles: finding a way to work in the world that garners respect, having a belief in myself that I can do so, and gaining confidence in being able to run with the world, not against it.

Annalisa's experience in planning her interfaith coastal retreat center was an example of epiphany resulting from influences of a key person:

> In 2011, I took a World Religion class at Marylhurst and I was required to interview someone who was not of my own faith – Catholic. I had just learned that my dad's mother was Jewish, so I decided to interview a rabbi in Eugene. After that interview, he came to the coast once, but I did not see him again for a while. In February, 2012, I decided to visit a Shabbat service Rabbi S. held in his home. While I was there, I talked to him about my desire to open a retreat center. He said he had the same interest, and he had a barrage of thoughts for making it an interfaith retreat center. We even picked a place where we could have the center. It was like an *epiphany* for us – the world of possibilities opened up.

However, epiphanies that were not shared by other significant key people, namely spouses, could create domestic conflict. Annalisa continued with her story of how domestic conflict caused a low point in her career transition plans, and how she dealt with it:

> Possibilities excited me, but I was also terribly afraid. When I came home and told my husband, he did not like the plans; he felt threatened because my plans

> didn't fit into his plans for retirement. It was also his nature to be protective of me and he did not want anything to happen to me or hurt me. But I thought: 'I'm 65 and I can do this.' I explained to my husband this was a gift that had come along on a platter, and I was not going to give it up; if my plans with Rabbi S. did not work out, I could go to Plan B and go on my own with the retreat center. So my husband represented a little barrier at first, but I had a goal and I was not going to let anyone be a barrier to my plans.

Selected Participants' Life Story Narratives

In previous sections of this chapter, stories of all ten participants' lived experiences were explored, and results were organized based on themes that emerged across participants from interview data (Armstrong, 1994; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). In this section, three selected participants' life stories were explored in more depth for the purpose of gaining greater insights into factors and turning points influencing later life career transitions. The three participants were selected by researcher because their examples and quotations bore greater thematic illustrations than those presented in general interview themes. Although many portions of Joy's, Lawrence's, and Mary's stories became familiar in earlier sections of this chapter, further described nuances and details deepened insights of earlier sections.

Joy's profile. In Demographic Information submitted to researcher before the interview process began, Joy described herself and her interest in this study with the following words:

> I am an ex-federal law enforcement officer who quit my job in 2000 due to the death of my father and brother in 1999. I have been diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and PTSD since 1987. I have been Chair of the Marylhurst Psychology Association since 2011. I hope to attend Portland State University (PSU) Fall, 2013, to pursue a Masters in Social Work (MSW) degree.

Results indicated Joy's words described the bookends of her last 14 years. Through interview explorations and post-interview logs, she reflected on her life story leading to this explicit self-description and details of her 14 years between the bookends.

> I was born in 1955 in a small town between Oregon's Willamette Valley and the Cascade Mountains. At birth, I had a seizure disorder and I was given up for adoption. I don't know if that is why my mother chose to give me up for adoption – I was later told it was because of family financial difficulties. I always knew I was adopted because my adoptive parents told me I was. Before my adoptive father died, he urged me to contact my birth family, so I hired a 'mole' to get my birth information. I know I was one of five children, with one other sister also being given up for adoption. My birth family still lives in the same area where I was born, and I have met all of my siblings. I was told my birth father died of lung cancer and my birth mother was alive but had colon cancer. When I inquired about meeting my birth mother, she did not want anything to do with me, and that created huge abandonment issues. My other adopted sister and I cannot go back to the community of our birth – folks there were told we died. We're 'secrets.'

> My adoptive family included one brother who was also adopted. My adoptive father was a traveling salesman, so he was gone a lot. My adoptive mother was bi-polar and suicidal. She was hospitalized many times before she committed suicide when I was 33 years old. She added to my feeling of abandonment because she was unavailable as a maternal attachment figure, due to her chronic mental illness. I've come to the conclusion that had a healthy infant-mother attachment been formed, my subsequent abandonment experiences could have been assimilated in a more healthy way.

Results indicated Joy's foregoing childhood reflections were descriptive of early family and key people factors. Events fostered by key people were significant childhood turning points, resulting in emotion factors that affected Joy for life.

> After graduating from high school in the east area of Portland, I went to Cottey College in Missouri on a PEO scholarship. But I left college after three months because I was in love with a guy in Seattle. This threw me out of balance – I was looking for somebody to love me. We married in 1973 and In 1975 I started taking community college courses in Psychology. But my head wasn't on right to stay in college. I was not in a good marriage, and I had psychological problems. My husband and I had a son in 1978 who was developmentally disabled. That's another component of my life that continues to be a challenge – my son is now 34 and has a 'wife' who is bi-polar.
>
> My first marriage ended in divorce. I remarried and had a daughter in 1982 who is intellectually gifted - she graduated from university magna cum laud. My daughter is gay and had a child with her partner; that is absolutely working

> out fine. But my second marriage did not work out fine, so we divorced. During both my first and second marriages, I was in and out of community colleges, but I was the breadwinner for the family, so I could not stay enrolled long enough to get a degree.
>
> In 1994, I married my third husband, a psychiatric registered nurse. He was supportive of my getting a degree, but because of my psychiatric disorders, any further education had to be put on hold. My husband remained my ballast during years of personal, professional, and psychiatric struggles. Finally, in 2010, I reached a level of emotional stability that allowed me to return to college, enrolling at Marylhurst University and graduating in 2013 with a degree in Psychology.

Results indicated foregoing descriptions of key people, in the form of her three husbands, influenced factors of Joy's education. Her ongoing emotion factor continued to influence both her relationship with key people and her ability to complete her university education.

> We need to go back 25 years to understand events leading to my diagnosed psychiatric state. In 1987, I was offered a job with the US Government as an ATF inspector. The job came with a big pay increase, something I needed to support my family. I was a charter member of the National Labor Management Partnership Council and was chapter President from 1994 to 2000. Responsibilities of my work and leadership roles in affiliated labor organizations were fulfilling, but I felt so bound by my career that I did not have room for my own needs. Most notably, when my adoptive mom died in 1988, I could not allow myself the time to grieve. I was treading as fast as I could to make money.

> Then in 1999, my adoptive brother died of a heroin overdose, and later that year my adoptive father died. That pretty much wiped out my whole family. At that point, I pretty much lost it. Rather than taking a leave of absence, I just quit my job. I could not continue to carry the load of both work responsibility and grief.
>
> But out of the ashes of my grief came the possibility of hope. From my father's estate, I received a sizeable inheritance. Wishing to fill my hole of grief, my husband and I decided to build a house on the Oregon coast and start a business there. We essentially went through all the inheritance money with the new business – it was a financial disaster. We returned to the valley and for 10 years – from 2000 to 2010 - I did not go out of the house. I was in a fog of grief.

Results indicated Joy's foregoing descriptions of events surrounding family deaths were turning points leading to an abyss of despair. Work factors influenced the turning points – first from a sense of responsibility and leadership that would not allow her to grieve and then total withdrawal from those roles when grief overcame her.

> After we moved back to the valley from the coast, we decided to add a master bedroom suite and photography studio to our home. My husband owned a photography business he started in 1994. I guess you would call it a side business, because his full time employment was as a registered nurse. This business was a supplement to our income; and, of course, we became dependent on the income to support us. We hired a company to build the remodel. We believed the building contractor was in good standing at the time, so when he asked for half down of $50,000 on remodel materials, we took out a $100,000 second mortgage for the project. However, his business folded before he started our project. There were

charges of fraud on the part of the builder, with several other homeowners and the bank being duped into signing papers. We filed a civil suit and received a default judgment, but since he had no assets and was in jail – he was eventually convicted of racketeering – we lost our $50,000. After that, the housing market tanked and we were upside down on our property. With the added expense of paying back the second mortgage, we began to experience financial hardship.

Around 2008, the economic recession severely impacted our photography business income, and we saw our revenue shrink from an average of $20,000 a year to about $5,000. We had expected increased revenues from the new photography studio would supplement the second mortgage payment, but we never got the new studio because of our contractor's actions. We could no longer attend trade shows, which cost about $3,000 each, and we had to reduce our advertising expenses, compounding our business losses.

During all this, my daughter was fired from her job as a program manager at a non-profit because she was pregnant. Although she tried desperately to find another job, she and her partner, a hair stylist, risked becoming homeless. We began supporting them as well. However, things turned around for them – she filed a civil action resulting in a financial settlement, and she obtained a good paying job that enabled her to support her family.

In 2010 when I went back to college at Marylhurst University to complete my college education, we were in dire financial straits. I supplemented our income with federal and private financial aid loans during my entire education at

> Marylhurst in order to avoid bankruptcy. I will be paying these loans back, probably until I die. After thoughtful reflection, financial desperation has influenced my career transition more than I realized.

Results indicated Joy's foregoing description of economic factors influenced a significant turning point in her life - her decision to obtain additional education and re-enter the work force.

> By 2010 when I started classes at Marylhurst, positive events had brought me to a level of recovery that made me want to go on with my life. Medication and counseling lifted my despair. Hip replacement surgery relieved deterioration from arthritis. But after all I had been through, I determined if I was going to complete my education and go back to work, the work had to be something I was passionate about. It had to be something I could physically do for many years, considering my health limitations. My career transition needed to be something that was good both for myself and others.
>
> I had decided when I entered Marylhurst that I wanted to transition into social work, and I knew that meant getting my Masters in Social Work (MSW). With that in mind, I got my degree at Marylhurst in Psychology. Near the end of my undergraduate degree coursework, I did an internship at a psychiatric hospital and I came out of there wanting to cry, I was so happy. I had never worked before where I could get paid and love it so much. It was cathartic and liberating. I'm doing well. I feel peaceful. I'm a different person. The only thing left to work on is to get my MSW degree. Because I am waitlisted at Portland State University, I have opted to attend USC's MSW online program, which involves

local practitioners. I will immerse in a Gerontology concentration. It will be 14 months of concentrated coursework.

Doing well in my master's is more important than working at a minimum wage job while studying, but because my husband was just laid off from his nursing position, I likely will have to take some part time work. I am looking for a part time job at a qualified mental health associate (QMHA), but these positions require at least one year paid experience in the field. My 'life world' - the life experiences that comprise 'who I am' – certainly qualify me for work in the mental health profession; but, alas, employers are blind to see that.

I'm still apprehensive about getting a job in my new career, but I feel my MSW with Gerontology concentration will give me more advantage, and I will have life younger social workers will not have. I have developed a propensity for doing really well – a gift that came out of early issues. It wasn't until everything was really right that I could receive the gift. A lot of recognizing the gift has to do with self-esteem and self-worth – getting acknowledgement from inside myself or from others.

Money is still an issue in achieving my goals, and I am hoping for scholarships. Those were not available when getting my degree at Marylhurst because they did not offer merit based scholarships, even though I earned a 3.9926 GPA and a 4.0 GPA in my degree program. But while there are issues, I see no real barriers. My plans are solid. I'm more mindful now of later life. Why is it we are more successful in academic efforts in later life?

Results indicated Joy's foregoing exploration of redemption from the abyss and passion for career transition was descriptive of multiple influencing factors. Health, economics, work, and state of being all led to the pivotal turning point event - completing her education so she could achieve cherished career goals.

> Without a doubt, I consider my career transition into social work a calling. It arose out of my life experiences, and I cannot see myself doing anything else for the rest of my life. My calling has a spiritual aspect because I'm striving to relieve human suffering – the highest Buddhist calling. Spiritual – not religious – is the right word. Everyone has a sense of spirituality – whatever it is that makes you wholly yourself. Spirituality is the fundamental set of rules you live your life by. In heeding this calling, I will be self-activated – I can do this. I will be following the Buddhist tenant of pursuing the right livelihood.

Results indicated Joy had a commitment to her calling because it allowed her to make a contribution to society that drew on the flow of her lived experiences, her talents, and her passions. When picking her pseudonym I told her she could select any name that started with "J" since her real name started with that letter. But I told her I had thought of the name "Joy," because that was what she exuded when telling her redemption story. She paused a moment when hearing this explanation, then exclaimed: "I love that name!" After her story was written and sent to her for review, she submitted a log poignantly stating: "Thank you so much for capturing 'Joy' in such a sensitive, positive way. I am honored." Her name seemed analogous to the freedom she had found in her authentic self.

Lawrence's profile. Demographic Information submitted by Lawrence before the interview process began, indicated why he had an interest in this study: "I found Life by Design very helpful, and I was aware I was the only male who completed the class." Results indicated those two statements were descriptive of both Lawrence's story and this study's participant-demographics. Through interview explorations and post-interview logs, Lawrence reflected on his life story, describing it in a chronological flow of words.

> I was born in 1958 and grew up in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Dad was a lawyer who worked for the State of Oregon's Attorney General, Public Utilities Commission, and Judiciary Departments eventually moving on to corporate law and anti- trust litigation. Mom was a dietician and homemaker. They gave my three older sisters and me the classic Methodist upbringing: going to church Sunday and Wednesday, getting my Eagle Scouts badge. There was lots of female energy in my family – and it's still there by adding my wife and her sisters to the mix.
>
> My parents always encouraged me, but when I was in the sixth grade, they exercised tough love with that encouragement. At that point in my life, I was emotionally immature and it was decided by my parents and teachers that I should repeat the sixth grade – I was 'red-shirted' because I was not emotionally ready for junior high school with all its social stresses and expectations. They also sent me to a summer camp for the purpose of toughening me up a bit – I considered it a 'bad boys' camp.' Some bullies at the camp broke my nose. That was an angry summer for me. When I started my second try at sixth grade, my parents wisely sent me to a different school to ease my sense of stigma, and I excelled. The

second sixth grade helped me open up. I became a successful kid. By summer, I had grown seven inches and I was a totally different person. I went back to the same camp and when the bullies showed up, I defended myself. Life opened up!

In high school I got cut during my sophomore year from the basketball team. But rather than sulking about it, I decided to start taking dance and ballet – activities that helped me become a standout football player. My football coaches loved having a player who was also a tall dancer and singer. That fed my ego. I enjoyed the taste of success, including being part of a team that won two state football championships.

In the summers I worked construction. After graduating from high school I was off to Oregon State University to join a fraternity and play some intramural football -where again we were undefeated, carrying on the winning tradition from high school. While at OSU, I pledged for a fraternity and was pledge class president. The focus of the house was sports, partying, and alcohol – our class introduced weed to the mix. Most of us did not make grades the first term, but all of us straightened up enough to make grades the second term. I saw my fraternity brothers succeed going through initiation; however, I had a lot of questions. As I was going through initiation in the spring, I questioned my college career choice and the energy I was investing in dance. I wanted to be successful in everything. On Wednesday of initiation, I had a dance rehearsal and I was really hassled by the frat. At rehearsal, I made the decision to drop out of the frat. Was I a quitter? Was I standing up against hazing? I think it was the first time I truly bucked the system on my own with no input from my folks. Everyone in the frat

> understood I was not only saying no to the fraternity, but also to OSU. I would not be coming back in the fall, and I would not be pursuing a dream for dancing. I was allowed to stay in the fraternity house for the rest of the year even though I had not completed initiation. I had a certain mix of pride for leaving. It was the right thing for me to do. I had proven I was not a quitter plenty of times, and this was just a choice for something different from my parents' path. This was a contribution to my mild rebellion from high school – I was striking out on a more eclectic path for the future.
>
> I returned to my parents' house in Seattle and got involved in a serious summer ballet program. This resulted in my going to Kansas City to dance professionally. After six months of that, I headed home. Although I was a dancer for the Kansas City Ballet and the Northwest Theatre Ballet, I did not love dancing enough to starve and I was not good enough for New York City.

Results of Lawrence's foregoing story indicated strong childhood and young adulthood influences from factors of family, key people, education, and emotions. Work factors were still in the dream stage, but they were evolving. The turning point was leaving OSU - with all the described meanings in Lawrence's life that were wrapped up in that event.

> After leaving OSU and Kansas City I came back to Portland to dance with some local group and to again work in construction. I had taken a job in construction with the same company and crew of men that I had worked with before. My dad convinced me that a college education was necessary for lifetime career success. Through his encouragement and that of the older men I was working construction with -"You do not want to be 50 and sitting on steel" – I enrolled at Portland

State University and completed my BS degree. My degree focus was Human Resources because I felt I knew what motivated people. But two things happened at PSU that changed my career course: I discovered HR was more about filling out documents than working with employees' motivations, so I determined HR was not the career I had anticipated; and I took a Business Entrepreneurial class that did resonate with my career interests. I was 20 years old when I took that entrepreneurial class, and I had something of an 'aha' moment during a class self-assessment assignment: I did not want to run my own business, but I could be a champion for someone else. Career success could be accomplished by working for someone else's company, by being a big fish in their small pond.

When I graduated from PSU, I began my career in the hospitality industry. For five years I worked for a company that owned a café, nightclubs, and bars in downtown Portland. For three years, I was a manager for them – a big fish in a small pond. But about 3:00am one night, I was in a Bob's Big Boy where a man in his 50s was manager of the restaurant. Looking at him, I saw 'aha': That's my future, and I don't want that. There was no path of transition to a good job. As a r result of that insight, I changed my employment to a position in sales with a beverage distributing company. My new employer wanted me, not because I knew fine wines, but because I had a relationship with the downtown bar scene. I became very successful in sales and worked my way up through company ranks – my career was just what my entrepreneurial class self-assessment envisioned, I was a champion for my employer's company.

> Although I worked 20 years for the brewery, my job was eliminated through company reorganization in 2010. A previous reorganization in 1996 had included employees buying out corporate shareholders by means of an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). So I was out of work, but I was – and still am - part of the employee group that became 60% owners of the company. Many years before, I had been offered stock in the company, but I could not afford to buy it then. Now I was an owner, an unemployed owner.

Results indicated Lawrence's foregoing descriptions reflected education, work, and economic factors were influential in his career trajectory. Although he told his story without use of words representing emotion factors, his description of 2010's lay-off events were spoken with an intensity that evoked emotion connotations to his meanings. Lawrence's descriptions conveyed that departure from his longtime employer was a significant turning point at his stage in life. "Aha" moments served as evolving epiphanies for his turning point trajectory.

> I was in my mid-50s and I was scared. I was out of a job. I was pushed out, but I also wanted out. Alcohol had been constantly in my face throughout my career, and I was a diagnosed alcoholic; so I knew I did not want to go back into beverage sales for the distillery industry. Being pushed out of my job was a gift because it allowed me to take six months off to pursue my career transition options. In early 2011, as part of that pursuit, I took a Life by Design NW course at Portland Community College – I was the only male to finish the course, but life experiences had taught me that finishing tasks was integral to achieving success. And not unlike all those many years before in my Business Entrepreneurial class,

> another self-assessment assignment helped me formulate career plans. The assignment asked that I imagine the best job for me. This exercise of imagination led me to think of my interest in biodiesel fuels. Several years before, I had been offered a sales job by a biodiesel fuel company, but I could not afford what would have been a pay cut. I had sons approaching college age with expensive years ahead. However now, with benefits from my ESOP investment, employment in my best imagined job had less risk and more opportunities. Besides, I knew I could not simply retire. My accountant told me that even with my ESOP and 401K investments, I had to keep working for a while, and I believed him. So, I contacted the biodiesel fuel company's owner, and he was interested in using my sales skills to acquire a key component of their biodiesel fuel - used cooking oil from restaurant sources. Hiring negotiations resulted in the added benefit of my getting of my getting paid based on every gallon I brought into the company – with perhaps the most important benefit being I could wear jeans and boots to work, I did not have to do a lot of paperwork, and I could feel good about what I was doing at the end of the day. I burned the candle at both ends for my past employer, and in hindsight, it was not necessarily appreciated. With my new job, I wanted to be more relaxed, more in control of my schedule.

Results indicated Lawrence's foregoing descriptions expressed influences of work and economic factors on his turning point of career transition. The factor of emotion was expressed by Lawrence in his descriptions of satisfaction for his transitioned state of being – and in his expressed transition from the *Me* of his social self to the *I* of his authentic self.

In June, 2011, I started work for the biodiesel fuel company. At first, my employer was nervous that my age might be a negative factor for sales success, but they soon realized age was not an issue. However, I do feel sorry for people in our age bracket who are struggling in their careers because nothing fits. My career transition was a good fit for both the company and me. Because of my age, I am able to give younger sales staff advice, but I do not have management responsibility. I am comfortable in my schedule and it benefits my company. I have the ability to travel in my expanding territory, whereas younger employees cannot travel like that. My wife also travels in her work, so by coordinating our schedules, we can take trips together.

In the next 10 years I plan on increasing volumes of used cooking oil acquired for the company, even though the geographic area I cover will get whittled back to what makes sense at the time. The expanse of the current geographic area is not sustainable for the long term. My company wants me to go into sales management, but I am more interested in covering key accounts and moving to fuel sales on the retail side. I have found career transition can be an evolving process – one in which I can create my own career reality. When I graduated from college, I saw bar management as my career reality, but that was a dead end; then I got into route sales, but that was not a good career; then I got into brewery sales, and that became my career reality for many years. I'm still looking for career opportunities, but I see them now through the lens of experience.

> About five years ago, I started looking at obits in the newspaper, and I saw people close to my age who were dying. Those obits are a continuing reminder to ask myself: Why am I doing this – my work and the life it causes me to lead? What does it mean to my life? If I'm not enjoying my day-to-day existence, what's the point? I'm not driven for management status now. I just want to make a bit of money, help the environment, and help the company become employee owned. In the next three years, I hope to have an ESOP in place for company employees, which means that within 10 years, I will be able to retire.

Results indicated Lawrence's description of experienced career transition was influenced by factors of age, work, and economics. His turning point continued to be the evolving event of career transition. Field note observations reflected Lawrence exuded humbleness in his demeanor that spoke of personal and professional battles fought and won – a demeanor that more typically radiated self-confidence, unless one listened for the voice of a meeker spirit, the authentic voice of *I* - that lay just below the surface of bravado. Both self-confidence and humbleness were evidenced in his stride toward career transition success - as Lawrence said: "I have always been successful."

Mary's profile. Application information submitted before the interview process began described Mary's interest in the study: "I have long been interested in older women, their evolving stories, interests, and passions." Results indicated Mary expressed a compelling story, one filled with distinct memories of events and factors that influenced her interests and passions. Through interview explorations and post-interview logs, she reflected on her life story.

I grew up in the rural San Joaquin Valley of California, right in the middle of a vineyard. In the 40s and 50s we didn't have TV or close neighbors, so I learned to read very early. My 'friends' were characters in books. I was always interested in reading, writing, and gardening - my mother encouraged these paths of interest. She created a small garden plot for me when I was six or seven. When I was a little older, I kept a diary. All girls kept diaries then. Looking back, those were idyllic times.

My parents were strong Episcopalians and very conservative. I rebelled against that from a fairly young age. For instance, when I was eight or nine, I remember reading about Eleanor Roosevelt – I was drawn to her life of service. I told my mother: 'I want to be like Eleanor Roosevelt.' Mother's reply was: 'Yes, she's accomplished a lot, but why doesn't she do something about her teeth?' My mother completely missed the point, the basis of my desire to be like Eleanor Roosevelt.

Mother was in to arts, gardening, and literature. My father was rigid but entrepreneurial. He also was an alcoholic, and he eventually lost his business as a distributor of farm machinery and coal oil . My parents didn't understand each other – they danced around each other. They were married and divorced twice, and even though my father was married for a third time to someone else, my parents never got over each other. I think those growing up experiences may be why my brother went into psychology.

Results indicated Mary's foregoing descriptions of family life revolved around key people who influenced her life, most notably her parents. Although they provided her

with cherished childhood memories, they also stirred a rebellion that followed her into adulthood. Mary's described example of this disconnect was her Eleanor Roosevelt story. It was replete with poignancy as she explored her mother's lack of understanding for meanings of Mary's expressed desires. Even during childhood, Mary tried to break from the *Me* created by social influence to the *I* of her authentic self.

> After graduating from high school, I went directly to community college. In 1959, during my sophomore year, I married my first husband. I did what was expected of many wives in that day, I dropped out of college and worked so my husband could go to college. For six years I worked in the travel industry – that plus reading was my education of the world. Then between babies, a girl and two boys, I worked off and on as needed for the same growing travel agency. When my husband made a career change, we determined it was a good time for me to return to more extensive employment in my travel industry work. I was hired as the operations manager for a small but growing tour company. My career was successful and I was in management without a degree – that was the way it was then.
>
> Early in our marriage, I became involved in the Women's Movement, and I stayed involved during the 60s and 70s. Rebellions I experienced as a child against conservative philosophies in my home, rose to the fore in my young adulthood. I became part of the Women's Movement because I felt the pay structure to which I had been exposed in the workplace was abominable –that fact made me angry, and I determined my husband's attitude toward women's issues – mine, in particular – was obnoxious. I'm not the kind of woman who ever walked

> along quietly, but it was hard on my daughter to grow up with an outspoken woman for her mother at that time. However, throughout life, I have continued to value my feminist connections. Since childhood, one of my best friends was a person just two months younger than I, and we have been there for each other – raising children, marrying and divorcing husbands, and each losing a son. My few good women friends have been important to me throughout my life. These women have been trustworthy, known me well, been excellent sounding boards, and been key to my never being completely alone.
>
> In the late 1970's, I went back to the local community college and focused on courses in literature and writing; however, my husband had a career change and we moved before I could get a degree. Education was important to me, but my husband was not supportive of my education goals or my writing interests. That was an issue that helped drive me to the Women's Movement, and eventually to a divorce from my husband.

Results indicated Mary's foregoing descriptions of young adulthood continued to revolve around family factors – most notably those relating to her first husband and children, while work and education became part of the mix. These factors influenced her involvement in the Women's Movement, a significant turning point in Mary's life story. Involvement represented a strong longing for her authentic *I*, even though her *Me* was influenced by powerful social currents.

> When I remarried for the second time, it was to a man whom I had known since childhood, and he had always been a good friend. After my children were out of high school, he encouraged me to transition into real estate. But tragedy struck

when my youngest son was killed in an accident in 1988, so instead of working, I decided to just drop out for a while. This tragedy brought back a flood of memories – 30 years earlier there had been another tragic death. In 1958 when I was in my first year of college, my high school sweetheart and I were in an accident. He was killed; I survived with bruises. Therapy was not considered. One took an anxiety pill for the funeral and moved on with life.

Thirty years later, I was in an onslaught of grief for my son's death. My mother came to stay several weeks with me for reinforcement. We were sitting peacefully talking one day when I told her how much I appreciated her loving support in my present sorrow, and also her strength and support when my sweetheart was killed many years earlier. My recollection was that I was shocked and in a fog for a very long time after my sweetheart's death, but I did not have much memory from that period of my life. My mother looked at me in surprise and told me that I had been a tower of strength. She said she did virtually nothing but be there for me. She told me that I called on my fella's family immediately; I arranged for our minister to speak with them as they didn't have any religious affiliation, but wanted direction. Mother said that prior to my sweetheart's funeral, I spent the better part of a day with our Episcopal minister talking, railing, and expressing enormous anger over one so young being killed – and how did I 'happen' to survive? I had no recollection of these circumstances, and for them to surface after my son died was pivotal to beginning the road back to my owner power and self-worth. I had been through a nasty divorce from my first husband; I had left my successful 20 year career in the travel industry; and I had

> little interest or feeling of accomplishment in my subsequent front desk position at a hotel, followed by work as outside sales manager for a local coffee shop. As I spoke with my mother and the memories surfaced, I began my journey back to wholeness. Over time, I came to understand this conversation with my mother was an enormous gift.
>
> During the traumatic period surrounding my son's death, my second husband was mostly supportive of me. But he was an alcoholic, and our marriage could not survive his alcoholism. After ten years of marriage, we divorced.

Results indicated Mary's two tragic turning points – the death of her sweetheart in 1958 and the death of her son in 1988 – had life-changing impacts, influenced by factors of family, work, and emotion. Mary described key people in her story as her mother, her sweetheart, and her youngest son. Mary's story also described a third sad event influenced by a key person – the alcoholism of her second husband, leading to their failed relationship and divorce.

> My place of respite from life's heartaches was Hawaii, where I lived for three years. I considered re-engagement in my college education, but I had met the man who was to become my third husband, and I chose not to attend college while we were forming a relationship. In 2000, we married – I finally got it right with this marriage – and we moved to Oregon. My husband supported my education goals, so I was able to start classes at Marylhurst University in 2000. I did not have to work during my college years, which was a tremendous advantage for concentrating on studies. In 2004 I received my BA degree, and my senior paper, "Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal," was published in a

special issue of the Claremont Graduate University. I hoped this might signal the start of my writing career. But then the economy caused strains on our family finances, so I went into real estate and never got back to writing.

Although money has been an issue with regard to my various career positions – I needed to work – I took positions or left according to how much authority and fun (!) the position was for me. When I went into management positions, I chose whether or not the position was a good move for me; I weighed whether or not I would continue to enjoy the company's raison d'etre in a position of more authority, or whether I would be happier and actually find more independence and fun (!!) staying where I was. At this juncture in my life, having just moved from Portland to the Oregon Coast earlier this year – primarily for economic reasons – I am looking back and am unsure what my next step is going to be. It was an enormous gift to have the time and money to go back to school in 2000 to pursue my interest in literature and writing. I've always been interested in people's stories and thought I might do something with this interest, but thus far, I haven't found my impetus. I knew creative writing would not be profitable, but at the time I graduated, my husband and I did not need money. Today, economics is an issue.

I have a very good friend in Portland who is in her mid to late 50s. She, too, is reinventing herself; she's about to start up a new business in videography. We are simpatico in our interest in pursuing social media toward launching our individual interests. Mine, at this point, is getting my husband's writing published. I am researching the publishing world today, which is absolutely

going in the direction of e-book publishing. There is much to learn and many interesting stories of both successful and not-so-successful people out there. In learning my way around in this new world, I hope not only to get my husband's work published, but to find a way back to my own writing. I'm also interested in garden design and have taken Master Gardner classes to prepare me for work in that field. If all works out, my career transition will be a dual venture of creative writing and garden design. However, there are potential barriers to my transition plans. I am healthy, but there are things – like my increasingly problematic allergies – that slow me down. Slowing down is part of aging, but I do not want to give that thought too much credit because that slows me down even more. I've accepted my current reality: It is OK not to go 90 miles per hour.

I find myself slowly, slowly concentrating on possibilities for my career transition. This study has helped me in that concentration process. I've been reminded of what I've done. I've looked at lifestyles involved with my career and my career transition. I've tried to marry those factors with my passion for what I want to do, and that has given me confidence. My career transition plans reflect my lifelong interests in gardening, reading, and writing. I do not see following those interests as a calling – at least, not with spiritual connotations I've always associated with calling. But it does mean I'm being true to passions that have inspired me during my entire circle of life.

Results indicated Mary foregoing descriptions were those of a woman looking back to where she had been and forward to possibilities for the future. Familiar factors of family, education, work, and economics had influenced her described turning point – getting a

BA degree in 2004. Those factors had combined with influences of age and health as she sought flow in her still evolving turning point – career transition.

Results Summary

Results indicated: (1) Study participants described factors explored in this study as ones having influence on turning points leading to career transition; (2) Some factors were described as occurring early in life, with repeated patterns throughout life – most notably education, family, and key people; (2) Other factors were described with more prominence during periods of later adulthood – most notably age, health, and older adult stereotypes; (3) Factors of work and economics were described most frequently during explorations of young adulthood and mid adulthood, but they continued to strongly influence turning points of career transitions; (4) The factor of emotion occurred at varying stages of life, often in combination with other factors or a described turning point; and the meanings of *I and Me*, *flow*, and *low points* had influence on emotion factors; (5) Factors and turning points were uniquely described by each participant with some factors bearing more influence in one participant's lived experience than in another participant's lived experience; yet there was a pattern of uniformity across all participants in the inclusion, at some level, of all factors in their descriptions; (6) Turning points revolved more around changes and events than around calling, although all participants described passion or belief in their career transition goals; (7) Epiphany, awakening, or dawning awareness were described by some – not all - participants as turning points for their career transition trajectories; (8) Discovery of flow and calling, and understanding of life's frailness and low points, allowed potentially paralyzing fears or lack of confidence

to be eased so participants could be more in touch with their true self in later life; and (9) All factors and turning points were described as having significance for participants' understanding of pressures coming to bear on career transition success - both from the perspective of their role in the transition process and from the perspective of others who influenced their role in the transition process.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The discussion that follows represented reflections on how study results linked to literature, and analysis of how those connections responded to the purpose, problem, and research questions of this dissertation study. Discussion format was based on themes of that analysis. Findings answered the research questions, advanced understanding of factors and turning points influencing later life career transitions, and posited significance of that understanding to the practice of business management.

The study's purpose was to explore factors connected to participants' career transitions and to identify turning points leading to considerations for career transitions in later life. The problem lay with recognizing how described turning points in participants' lived experiences changed career trajectory, and how described factors in participants' lived experiences influenced those turning points.

Impact of One's Past on Current Factors of Career Transition: Analysis and Conclusions

Research question: How does ones' past impact discernment of current factors related to career transition? Putting that question into context, the *past* for this study's participants was all the lived experiences in their lifespan up to the present time. The current era for all participants was identified as *later life* for purposes of this study. Most participants were working toward career transition goals; two had already transitioned to

later life careers. Dreher (2006) referred to career transitions during later life as a time when older adults "leave their old roles and relationships to journey into terra incognia, the region of later life for which our culture provides no maps and precious little in terms of models for positive aging" (p. 107).

Consistent with Dreher's (2006), study participants described journeying into *terra incognia* – a place where career patterns were less familiar, where futures were shrouded by a haze from the unknown. Participant's described later life pathways being obscured – not from their lack of inner will but from influences of external factors: technology advances passing them by, personal financial strains limiting career transition options, spouses resisting participants' career transition goals, and workplaces undervaluing older adults' roles.

Analysis conveyed that travel on such an imprecise route created questions about next steps in the journey, as well as self-identity for the journey. Biggs (1999) indicated the sense of identity adults held in later life often was based on what they achieved in the past and on what they hoped to accomplish in the future. Analysis of study results indicated participants drew heavily on their backgrounds to describe evolving self-identities. Earlier identities were connected to descriptions of past experiences, with past experiences informing – but not necessarily defining - identities they carried into career transitions. The following were several examples of this analysis:

As a child, Sharon suffered from dyslexia that no one understood how to treat and dyslexic-caused shyness shadowed her through life. Although she self-identified early on with her mother's assessment of the dyslexia - something was *wrong* with her that she needed to correct - wise words from a high school teacher and a better grasp of her

condition while gaining her college degree helped her understand there was nothing *wrong* with her. This allowed her to embrace the *I* – her true self – as described by (Mead, 1934), and to move forward into vocational career success. It encouraged her in later life to plan for a career transition into gerontology care management. She did not let that early assessment define her later identity; and in so doing, she did not let "life get in the way" (Alboher, 2013, p.244) of career goals. What currently was getting in her way, however, was concern over next steps for career transition goal achievement. She described being torn in her transition process between "doing good" and "being paid what I'm worth." Analysis showed this was consistent with Ruffenach (2012) who posited career transitions embraced in later life tended to involve work that was personally fulfilling and contributed to the greater good, but that also recognized needs for generating necessary income.

Lana was raised in the Midwest during an era when women were expected to surrender their career ambitions to their husbands' visions of wives' domestic roles. Lana was incensed by that value model – the *Me* of social influence that did not represent one's authentic self, as described by Mead (1934). Her mother's fortitude in seeking a career when other women acquiesced to social norms was described by Lana as a catalyst for her own identity-independence in life. Her passion for education and career allowed her to sense personal and professional growth described by Csikszentmihalyi, (2003) and Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde (1993), despite her experiences of spousal resistance. In doing so, she experienced flow described by Csikszentmihalyi (2003) - she matched her skills to difficult challenges of transition. Her career trajectory into transition was indicative of her later life identity. Analysis indicated Lana's career trajectory bore

strong semblance to career paths described by Court et al. (2007) in their discussion of today's older adult roles. Consistent with Court et al. (2007), Lana's transition plan was to seize opportunities afforded by time and ability as she sought later life career growth and revitalization. Revitalized later life was central to Lana's current self-identity.

Lawrence's memories of early failures and how those were transformed into early successes remained at the core of Lawrence's described self-identity during life. In exploring his journey, his background of evolving transformations – of evolving *Me's* (Crossley, 2000) - was always close to the surface of his descriptions: experiencing humiliations of emotional immaturity during his first sixth grade year, followed by savoring successes of personality maturity during his second sixth grade year; getting his nose broken by bullies at summer camp after the first failed sixth grade, followed by growing seven inches and diminishing the bullies' influence after his successful second sixth grade year; getting dropped from the high school basketball team, followed by dual successes in both ballet and high school football; leaving his college fraternity and abandoning dreams of a career in dance, followed by business courses giving insights for lifelong career success. Analysis showed Lawrence's transformational paths to self-identified success were consistent with Heidegger (1927). He stated self-identity could be described as: "a synthesis of one's past, one's future possibilities, and being ahead of oneself in making a present" (Heidegger, 1927, p. 350).

For Mary, rebellion formed the background, in many aspects, for her self-identity – from early family life when she rebelled against conservative views of parents, to adult involvement in the Women's Movement when she rebelled against workplace inequities and male attitudes toward women's issues. Her basic support system grew out of

nurturing relationships with women, and her self-identity remained closely linked to those relationships. In planning for later life career transition, she held true to the *I* (Mead, 1934) of that self-identity, even while recognizing the continued hold of social influences on her *Me* (Mead, 1934) by seeking the companionship of similarly attuned women to encourage her next career steps. Analysis indicated Mary's described value for these links to self-identity were consistent with older adult values of "social connectedness" described by Bradley and Longino (2001, p. 20) and Wolfe (2005).

Val described family values during childhood that drew on old country roots, and these were influencing factors in her self-identity. Both of Val's parents were of Nicaraguan descent, with their heritage including influences of both poverty and wealth. Going back to her grandfather's establishment of the first fire department in Nicaragua as his way of giving back to society, Val's background was firmly centered on practicing this value. The concept of giving back played heavily in Val's later life career plans to transition into the field of non-profit volunteer management. Analysis showed Val's dedication for giving back through means of career transition was consistent with findings of Court et al. (2007): Many older adults viewed later life as a time for altruistically contributing to society, and they did it with renewed vigor of body, mind, and soul. They had a freedom to act outside the *generalized other* (Mead, 1934), resulting in powerful, selfless, and authentic contributions to society.

Analysis concluded one's past did impact discernment of factors influencing career transition. For some participants, their backgrounds defined their self-identity and their career trajectories; for other participants, their self-identities and career trajectories were lived in open defiance to their backgrounds. But for the entire spectrum of

participants' lived experiences, the past influenced later life career transition factors at some level. Consistent with Arthur (2008), analysis concluded past accumulations of career information and knowledge often formed influential backgrounds for career trajectories, especially when those backgrounds were combined with later life passions for career transition attainment. When backgrounds provided skills that fit with current passions for career transitions, flow was experienced by participants (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

Later Life Discernment of Meaningful Factors for Career Transition

Research questions: How does one discern in later life the factors that are meaningful to career transitioning? What are those factors? Why are they meaningful?

Prior to this study, research of literature indicated individual points of view on factors influencing transition would range from more psychological factors to more social forces as participants constituted realities of their world through their stories (Denzin, 2001; Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 1993). Based on factors found in literature, the factor-range included: age, health, education, work, economics, family influences, key people, emotions, and older adult stereotypes. Analysis concluded factors meaningful to career transition were captured by those found in literature. Analysis of stated factors and why they were meaningful were explained in the discussion that follows.

Age factors: Analysis and conclusions. "Age does not define me," was the outright statement of several participants; and researcher interpreted it to be the sentiment of all participants. This was consistent with findings by Bradley and Longino (2001) who similarly indicated chronological age did not define the way many older adults

thought about themselves. Analysis further indicated that although the process of aging was acknowledged by all participants, none of them identified with the concept of being *old* - that was an identifier from which this study's participants wanted to distance themselves (Biggs, 1999). In the light of career transitions, and consistent with Biggs (1999), analysis concluded that distancing from *old* had meaning because participants wanted to focus on what they could still accomplish in later life, not on the factor of age occasioned by their stage in life. Focusing on continued opportunities for accomplishment allowed participants to choose meaningful career transitions, an option they found preferable to being "bored and restless" in later life (Dychtwald et al., 2004, p. 18). Analysis concluded that for a majority of participants, this focus was influenced by finding flow in their career trajectories (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003), and by finding their *I* – their authentic selves – that was freer to act because their *Me* – their social selves – had been somewhat stilled (Mead, 1934).

Health factors: Analysis and conclusions. Analysis indicated not all participants saw health as a factor influencing their career transition. However, most were personally affected by health factors – with some health issues occurring early in life and creating lifelong impacts; and several were influenced by the additional burden of a key person's failed health. Alboher (2013) found failing health in oneself or key others could create negative situations for fulfillment of life's plans.

Consistent with Joffe et al. (2008), several expressed concern for finding work that matched up with energy and physical boundaries. Analysis showed career transition quests of Karen, Mary, and Joy were explicit examples of this concern. Alboher (2013) posited engagement in later life careers might aid a person's mental well-being because

they could feel fulfilled while sensing they had less to prove – less at risk – than in earlier stages of their career trajectories. Analysis indicated this position was described by Sharon and Lawrence, in particular.

When considering participants' career transition goals, analysis concluded health factors were meaningful reality checks on how likely goals might be achieved (Alboher, 2013). Analysis further concluded that when health factors influenced later life status, successful career transitions were dependent on work that was a good fit to lived factors of health (Yost, 2004).

Education factors: Analysis and conclusions. Consistent with Allen (2002) all participants in this study described experience with education factors because of their need to gain degrees, certifications, and upgraded skills for career transition achievement. For some, there were sociability aspects to their education factors as well, in that they depended on networking connections received from class-related involvement for leads to clients and career transition opportunities (Manheimer, 2005). This was exemplified by Sharon's statement that she had a contact network associated with her vocational career field, but she did not know that many people in her career transition field – "so I am daily trying to create new relationships." Celeste also mentioned that her volunteer work in career guidance workshops had provided "networking contacts" for potential work engagements.

Analysis showed most participants had a mixture of family obligations and work schedules to consider when engagement in education was undertaken, causing this study's participants to select Marylhurst University and Life by Design NW (PCC) partially because of convenience. In addition to the value of academics offered by

Marylhurst and Portland Community College, their locations were near to participants' homes, and class schedules were conducive to maintaining other roles in participants' lives. This study finding was consistent with a survey of older students conducted by Portland Community College (2007) that found time constraints were a leading consideration for older adults' education achievements (Lakin et al., 2011; Portland Community College, 2007).

Several participants described class settings where younger students' attitudes were a learning hindrance - younger students seemed to place more value on their technology expertise and education achievements in a given field than on participants' years of experience in that field. As an example, Val described her recent experience with younger classmates and stated she found their attitudes toward her experience to be "patronizing." Analysis indicated this was consistent with Knowles et al., (2005) who suggested older adults might find it difficult to be involved in learning situations where younger individuals seemed to be imposing their wills on the training process.

Analysis concluded education factors were meaningful to participants' career transitions because gaining necessary degrees, training, and skills often were central pieces of transition viability. That meant barriers to education achievement needed to be understood and overcome and opportunities for education achievement needed to be recognized and accessed if career transition dreams were to become career transition realities.

Work factors: Analysis and conclusions. Consistent with a study by Stork (2008), analysis indicated most participants described expectations for career transition that included greater control over work schedules. An example of participants'

expectations was expressed in the following statement by Lawrence: "In the past, I've burned the candle at both ends for my company. In hindsight, that was not necessarily appreciated. In my encore career, I want to be more relaxed and in control."

A work factor posited by Calo (2008) was that older workers were not necessarily less motivated in later life than in younger periods of their careers, but they were differently motivated. Analysis indicated most participants were motivated by a high level of interest in their career transition field, more so than by the money they could earn in that field. This motivation difference was aptly summed up by Sharon's description: in her younger years, her career followed the money; but in later life, her career transition followed her passion.

Court et al. (2007) referred to "shattered expectations" (p. 7) due to economic losses as a workforce factor, because it created financial need as a cause for seeking continued employment beyond the normal age of retirement. Consistent with Court et al. (2007), analysis showed most participants were seeking career transition during later life because they needed the income - in addition to their passion for transition selections. This work factor aspect was an overlap with economic factors, but because it was described so frequently by participants, it bore inclusion under work factors. Daniel's statement poignantly framed this work factor aspect: "I am running out of money and I need to work."

Moseley and Dessinger (2008) found work-related stress could be a work factor for older workers, particularly if there was a perception in the workplace that older workers were unwilling or unable to perform or were more burned out than younger workers. Analysis indicated some participants experienced this work factor, with

Karen's description giving voice to lived experiences: "I'm seeing people in IT getting jobs I would like to have, but I'm 15 years out of that loop. I'm not being catapulted into the career place I want to be because of the gap."

Dychtwald et al. (2004) found positive work factors included the fact that many older workers wanted to "learn, grow, try new things, and be productive indefinitely" (p. 54). Analysis showed this concept was expressed repeatedly by participants, with Annalisa describing it succinctly in her statement: "I just feel so fortunate to be able to do this career transition. The work factor most prominent in my life today is that doors have opened and I am going to keep going through them until I drop." Analysis indicated that participants' passion to walk through doors of career transition opportunity when they were not sure what was on the other side or how they were going to get there, represented the experience of flow – even without positive affirmation Csikszentmihalyi (1999).

Analysis concluded work factors were meaningful to career transitions because they were at the core of transition activity. Consistent with Dychtwald et al. (2004), work factors that allowed participants to overcome challenges and meet workplace expectations, created win-win situations for both participants and those with whom participants engaged in career transition.

Economic factors: Analysis and conclusions. Consistent with findings of Court et al. (2007) regarding the Baby Boomer cohort, study participants represented a generation that had lived through years of relative prosperity, but were now coping with life circumstances that posed financial challenges. Analysis confirmed that economic factors caused by the recent economic downturn and inadequate retirement investments

meant most of them had to work if they were to maintain their lifestyles – or even downsized lifestyles.

Examples of participants' economic conditions were contained in their statements: Sharon stated she had to hang onto her longtime consulting business because she "could not afford to phase out those clients until her new business turned a profit." Lana stated her career transition had a volunteer component, and "I need to work for a salary because I cannot afford to give my volunteer time if I am not paid for my work time." Karen stated she had student loans to pay as part of the preparation process for career transition, and "I have to work to pay those and support myself." Lawrence stated his accountant told him he still needed to work, and "I believed him." Mary stated she and her husband recently relocated, "primarily for economic reasons," and "money remains a factor in my career transition plans." Annalisa stated economic factors "still played a big part" in her career transition plans. Joy stated: "After thoughtful reflection, financial desperation has influenced my career transition more than I realized." Val stated she was "working on her nest egg," but she still needed to work because her 401K "tanked during the economic downturn."

Analysis concluded economic factors were meaningful - their impacts weighed heavily on participants' often fragile plans for career transition. Consistent with Kadet's (2012) findings, these (mostly) Baby Boomer participants were facing economic factors that could cause retirements to stretch decades long before they could fully retire. Described economic factors made successful career transition achievement vitally significant to the financial well-being of participants because most lacked substantial financial flexibility in later life.

Family factors: Analysis and conclusions. Analysis indicated family factors often were linked to other factors, particularly work factors. This analysis was consistent with Valcour et al. (2007) who stated that unless the intersection of work and family was satisfactorily bridged, this juncture could create stress, fear, and anxiety for workers and detract from their potential career contributions. This finding by Valcour et al. (2007) was consistent with earlier findings of Peracchi and Welch (1994) indicating balanced integration of an individual's work-related role with their family-related role was important for successful work-life balance. Analysis of participants' descriptions found assessments of Peracchi and Welch (1994) and Valcour et al. (2007) to be particularly true when an older worker was transitioning from one career to another and was simultaneously facing tensions of re-careering with family issues. Analysis further found family factor influences were traced over a span of years, often to childhood.

Examples of analyses findings were expressed in the following descriptions by participants: Lana stated none of her three husbands had been supportive of her education goals, which were necessary to achieve career goals; but she had worked with her current husband to create a level of understanding that would allow her to stick to her transition goals. Karen stated her father's old school beliefs included the concept higher education was basically for males. This still caused her to struggle with a lack of self-confidence for maximizing education opportunities with career transition opportunities. Lawrence stated his family always encouraged his endeavors, and that positive experience was a significant factor in his career success. Mary stated her first two husbands were not encouraging in her education and career goals, but her third husband was, and "that is an important family factor for me." Annalisa stated that when she was younger, she had to

balance energy reserves for working, raising children, and maintaining a home. Now family factors revolved around considering her spouse and their time together, allowing plenty of time for spontaneous travel, and planning her transition career around those family considerations. Joy stated she and her husband had been supportive of each other through years of personal, financial, and family challenges – factors that could have torn their family apart; and they were continuing to pull together as she transitioned into her new career. Daniel stated difficulties in achieving career transition success were influenced by family factors experienced in childhood: "Childhood taught me to move from problems rather than deal with problems. I have no family of my own now, but family factors from long ago continue to influence relationships and career realities."

Analysis concluded family factors were meaningful to participants' career transitions because they tended to deal with relationships that created bridges of enablement or hindrance for career transition achievement. Creation of those bridges was integral to participants' satisfaction and fulfillment in later life role achievement (Greenhaus & Foley, 2007). Often, successfully crossing those bridges meant coming to terms with voices and influences of the *generalized other* (Mead, 1934) – family members whose cultural norms and expectations had impacted participants' responses to life's situations, sometimes for years.

Key people factors: Analysis and conclusions. Pope (2012) posited that when relational connections were generally positive, they could become central to the process of healthy aging. Conversely, Lewis (2013) found that when negative relational connections held individuals back from finding their passion or moving ahead professionally, they could become "invisible strings of important people" holding

influence over career trajectories of one's life. Consistent with findings of Pope (2012) and Lewis (2013), analysis found participants had experienced levels of influence by other persons who built or broke their self-belief, thereby affecting career trajectory goals. Bubblews (2012) indicated that level of influence described a *key person* factor in the lived experiences of those being influenced.

Heidegger (1927) and Sarte (1948) recognized the importance of key people when positing one's awareness of self-identity was rooted in relatedness with others. Consistent with Heidegger (1927) and Sarte (1948) analysis further showed participants' described self-identities were intertwined with key people relationships, and these factors were influential on participants' later life career transition plans.

Several examples of analyses findings were expressed in the following participant descriptions:

Sharon's study explorations pegged both her mother and a high school teacher as key people during her growing up years when she struggled with dyslexia – her mother, because of the parental assessment that something was "wrong" with Sharon that she should correct, and her high school teacher, because he saw Sharon's capabilities rather than her dyslexia and encouraged her to have more self-confidence. One was an unintended negative influence, the other a very intentional positive influence. Analysis showed both had lifelong impacts on Sharon's career trajectory, but she was not able to fully embrace her authentic self-identity – her *I* (Mead, 1934) - until well into adulthood when college courses helped her understand nothing was "wrong" with her. Further analysis indicated how deeply these key people factors influenced belief in herself –

voices of the *generalized other* (Mead, 1934) were the first factors she described in her career transition story.

Mary's study explorations identified her three husbands as key people in her career trajectory. Analysis indicated their influence was diverse: Mary's first husband's attitude toward women's issues – and hers in particular for education and career - pushed her into the Women's Movement; her second husband had been a good friend since childhood and was supportive throughout the ordeal of her youngest son's death, but their marriage could not survive his addiction to alcohol; her third and current husband provided an encouraging role, particularly for her education and career transition achievements. Further analysis showed one negative, one mixed positive-negative, and one positive spousal relationship – all with key person influences on her self-identity as it related life issues and career trajectory.

Annalisa's study explorations identified her dad as both a negative and positive influence on her career trajectory. Analysis indicated that when Annalisa was in early adulthood and experiencing numbing grief over her mother's death, her dad exhibited negative key person influence by showing little understanding for her inability to pull out of grief-caused depression. But at his life's end, her dad became an enabler – a positive key person influence - by leaving her an inheritance that paid for much of her recent college degree in preparation for career transition. Further analysis indicated one key person served a dual role of negative and positive influences: In early adulthood, her dad was an influential factor for Annalisa's self-identity being linked to her grief; in later life, her dad was an influential factor for Annalisa's self- identity being linked to her new career.

Celeste's study explorations described two husbands who disappointed her and cheated on her – negative influences on her self-esteem. But analysis indicated those key person influences could not hold down her resiliency to soar above adversity, and in doing so, she turned discouraging situations into career advancement opportunities. A third key person was a mentor-educator who recognized her resiliency and helped her focus on that survivor-trait for moving into career transition. Further analysis showed Celeste claimed resiliency as her authentic self-identity, allowing her to understand strengths that would carry her through career challenges of later life.

Analysis concluded key person factors were meaningful to participants' career transitions because those persons – often representing the *generalized other* (Mead, 1934) - influenced participants' lived journeys into later life. Further analysis concluded participants' relatedness with key persons often was linked to participants' self-identities. Participants could be impacted by both positive and negative factors in their search for *I* (Mead, 1934), their authentic self-identity – a condition that could be particularly fragile during later life career quests into unknown territories of engagement. This analysis was consistent with McDonald (2008) who posited that finding the freedom of authentic self-identity was something like pulling away a mask that was hiding genuine identities.

Emotion factors: Analysis and conclusions. Consistent with Bagozzi et al. (1999), analysis indicated participants' emotion factors often bore relevance to their sense of well-being, with factors involving both positive and negative emotions. Analysis further showed that consistent with Oatley and Johnson-Laird (1987), emotion factors tended to occur at "significant junctures of a plan" (p. 35) when participants were evaluating the likelihood of success or failure in their plans for career transition.

Consistent with Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1988, 1990, 1999, and 2003) analysis of emotion factors included sensations of flow. Analysis showed participants' emotions were energized by their sense of passion for achieving career transition goals when achievement could result in personal growth. Analysis of emotion factors also included the concept of coming to terms with situations that caused low points in participants' journeys toward career transition. When participants experienced a fit between skills and challenges for goal attainment, flow could occur Csikszentmihalyi (1999); but when low points of depression, anxiety, grief, or significant losses were experienced, the sensation of flow could be disrupted with senses of doubt and disablement for transition goal achievement (University of Michigan, n.d.). Unless participants came to terms with causes of their flow disruptions, low points could cast shadows on goal achievements for long periods of time (Penzel, n.d.). Consistent with Penzel (n.d.), analysis showed coming to terms with losses that created life's low points often could be found by looking for joy and purpose in the present, and living each day productively while coming to terms with feelings about the past.

Consistent with Mead (1934), analysis showed that for most participants, later life was a time when their authentic self – their *I* – was freed to act outside the social influences of *generalized others*, resulting in authentic ways of celebrating their worth in later life. It was found that throughout their lives, participants' described perceptions had been guided by their superficial social selves, often resulting in a variety of potential *Me's* (Crossley, 2000). In later life, there was greater freedom to silence the cacophony of voices that had presented noisy barriers for hearing the authentic voice of *I* – the private self (Mead, 1934). Analysis concluded this could be caused by coming to terms

with culture and community's role in their lives – the influence of *generalized others* (Mead, 1934); and it could be from finally finding flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1988, 1990, 1999, and 2003) in their passionate quest for career transition success.

Several examples of analysis findings were expressed in the following participant lived experiences:

Sharon's career transition was at a crossroads: she wanted to become fully immersed in the sensation of flow for her gerontology care management business, but she could not afford to give up her communications career until her new career was making a profit. She described her sense of well-being during transition as including a "certain amount of fear factor" but also a "tremendous passion" for what she planned to do. She was trying to come to terms with causes for her fears so she could experience the sensation of flow in achieving her passion for transition.

Lana recently completed her bachelor degree and was at the career juncture of obtaining a master's degree so she could transition into pastoral ministry. But her sense of well-being in pursuing these achievements had been clouded by shadows of resistance. Lana experienced the negative emotion factor of hurt when her husband exhibited a lack of understanding for education goals. This negative emotion factor was a low point in Lana's transition journey. But her will to remain strong and succeed in her goals, despite adversity, reinstated her positive sense of well-being to a level that she could put the hurt behind her and regain her sensation of flow.

Joy's most negative emotion factors involved her described descent into an abyss of mental incapacity: Her sense of well-being was overwhelmed by her feeling of maternal abandonment, creating a low point that she endured for years. However, she

also described her positive ascent to mental health and the juncture she reached during that restoration, which allowed her to achieve college education in preparation for career transition. Restoration allowed her to reach the intersection of flow where she finally understood that her talents were equal to career transition demands. This filled her with a passion that totally consumed her being and allowed her to celebrate her newly found authentic self. She described the transformation in her sense of well-being: Despair was replaced with emotions of fulfillment, passion, and peace.

Analysis concluded positive emotions usually aided participants' decisions to achieve transition goals; negative emotions usually created low places of doubts about transition plans and achievement. Analysis further concluded participants' sense of well-being tended to rest on their ability for coming to terms with emotion factors, and those factors were influenced by participants' appraisal of events creating the factors (Bagozzi et al., 1999). It was important for participants to come to terms with situations that caused low places in their career journeys (Penzel, n.d.) because their sense of flow Csikszentmihalyi (1999) was energized by their ability to celebrate their passions for career transitions. It was also important for participants to come to terms with the influential phenomena of *generalized others* (Mead, 1934) so they could embrace their authentic *I* (Mead, 1934) - who they really were, the skills they could still employ in the workplace, and the worth they could contribute to society.

Older adult stereotype factors: Analysis and conclusions. Consistent with Morgan et al. (2011), analysis indicated participants experienced stereotype factors through ways others interacted with them, simply because they were older adults. This was a process of discrimination referred to by Butler (1969) as ageism. Analysis further

indicated stereotypical messages came in the form of both verbal and non-verbal cues (Morgan et al., 2011), and they became an influencing factor for participants' career transition plans when participants internalized messages in a way that impacted their transition plans (Kuypers & Bengtson, 1973). Consistent with Bradley and Longino (2001), Katz (1999), Kotler and Keller (2009), and Morris (1998), further analysis showed marketing messages that created stereotypes of aging adults with imperfect bodies versus young adults with perfect bodies, were negative influential factors in participants' career transition achievements.

Several examples of analysis findings were expressed in the following participant lived experiences:

Experiences of both positive and negative influences from stereotype factors were described by Sharon: She felt a nudge to leave her current career because she was viewed as "old," and that had a negative connotation in her industry. But she felt older adult stereotypes gave her acceptance in her new career, because someone "old" was viewed as a person who would understand gerontology client's needs.

Annalisa acknowledged stereotype factors existed in her work world, but she refused to internalize the messages. She felt she was just who she was, and that was all God was asking of her as she planned for career transition achievement.

Training courses necessary for upgrading Karen's career skills were opportunities for her to experience a described disconnection between employers and those in the Baby Boomer cohort. It was her sense employers saw older adults as less technologically adept than younger adults in the workforce, making older adults expend much more effort just to compete.

Joy perceived stereotypes about being older could get in the way of her career transition plans. She suspected employers might note she was "not a cute young thing just out of college," but fail to see she was "more able to roll with the punches" than younger workers.

Val felt she was not getting calls back from potential employers because of ageism. It was her belief they looked at when she got her college degree rather than looking at her list of qualifications.

Analysis concluded older adult stereotypes were meaningful because when stereotypes spilled over into the workplace, both perceptions and realities of older adult stereotypes were influencing factors in participants' abilities to achieve career transitions success. Consistent with Lord and Farrington (2006), stereotypes often carried with them the notion older adults might not be able to learn new technology or training - not because the notion was valid, but because ageism was still pervasive in some segments of our society. Stereotypical ageism created blockages that were real for older workers because they obscured the authentic *I* of the worker in favor of societies' superficial *other* (Mead, 1934). Breaking the mold of these stereotypes had importance for the world of business: Consistent with Dychtwald et al. (2004), it could create win-win situations for both employers and older employees. If employers could see beyond the older adult stereotypes, they could recognize leaders-on-demand with mentoring skills for an inexperienced workforce (Dychtwald et al., 2004). Even if a re-careering worker needed to refresh or upgrade some of their skills in order to make a career transition, the investment was a good one for both the worker and the organization as long as the older worker remained "productive and healthy" (Dychtwald et al., 2004, p. 57).

Turning Points Creating Interest, Need, or Desire for Later Life Career Transition

Research questions: What are the single or cumulative turning points that create one's interest, need, or desire for a later life career transition (examples could include: life changes, key events, passion or calling)? Why are they turning points? What role did epiphany play, and what are the different types of epiphany?

Consistent with Denzin (1988), analysis of participants' descriptions indicated turning points tended to be catalysts that started a process or occurred within a process; they could be short in duration or they could extend over a period of time; and they often were transformational (Hodkinson et al., 1996). Consistent with Smith et al. (2006) analysis of participants' descriptions further indicated turning points could contain an aspect of calling, although participants more frequently referred to that aspect as passion. Consistent with Csikszentmihalyi (1999) and Mohan and Nivedita (2012), analysis showed when participants blended past experiences with skills equipping them for career transitions they experienced a sense of flow that was energized by passions bigger than themselves. They were excited about contributions to the world of business they could make in later life through their career transition attainments.

Based on the purpose of this study, analysis was limited to turning points for later life career transitions resulting from life changes and key events, passion or calling, and epiphany. Examples of turning points rising out of life changes and key events, and passion or calling were analyzed in the following discussions.

Change and events as turning points: Analysis and conclusions. Analysis showed change occurred throughout participants' lived experiences and sometimes reconfigured their deeply held beliefs about self and the world (Jarvis, 1997), change

often involved both challenges and opportunities (Gelardin & Muscat, 2010; Singh & Verma, 2003), but opportunities could prevail over barriers when participants were prepared to embrace change (Kamentz, 2012).

Analysis further indicated that events started participants' turning points (Lu & Sexton, 2010); and they often involved external factors (Hancock, 2009; Hodkinson et al., 1996; Super, 1981) that were described by participants as "life incidents" (Hancock, 2009, p. 131). Because analysis further indicated events were an integral catalyst for change, and change was a significant catalyst for career trajectory outcomes, change and events were analyzed in their combined turning point roles for purposes of this discussion.

Examples of analysis findings were expressed in the following participants' lived experiences:

Sharon's turning points were described by a chronological mixture of events and changes occurring over her life span - starting with events surrounding dyslexic experiences of childhood, moving into life changes of young adulthood resulting from those experiences and family experiences, journeying through career successes of adulthood upon understanding nothing was "wrong" with her, and culminating in career trajectory changes as a result of events connected to her father's death and dying. Analysis indicated Sharon's descriptions represented a chain of inextricably linked life events and life changes; they were meaningful turning points because they reconfigured beliefs about self and formed trajectory paths toward career transition. Reconfiguration meant coming to terms with low points (University of Michigan, n.d.) evolving from her difficult situations and losses; but doing so gave her clarity for career goals throughout life and helped her view career transition through the lens of passion.

Being born with a heart defect was a low point that created Lana's initial turning point – her parents were protective of her and that resulted in changes to childhood family living that otherwise would not have occurred, changes resented by her siblings. Sibling indifference over time was described as a cumulative turning point that generated a spirit of independence within Lana, a spirit carrying into adulthood when husbands failed to understand her career goals. Analysis indicated Lana's independence was a catalyst for career trajectory; this was meaningful because it caused a pattern of turning points leading to education and plans for career transition.

Among the numerous turning points in Karen's life, a car accident in 1992 was the seminal low point that forever changed her life, including her career trajectory into later life. Instead of becoming a lawyer as she had planned when the accident occurred, she was unable to finish law school due to injury complications. Over the next two decades, Karen experienced a series of career changes in the business management field, culminating in plans for career transition into IT analysis. Career transition plans resulted from attainment of a Master's in Industrial Distribution (Supply Chain Management), a turning point Karen anticipated would lead to her new career. But Karen's career plans were impacted by the event of technology changes that occurred subsequent to attainment of her master's degree, forcing additional skill upgrades to make her competitive as an IT analyst. Analysis indicated a significant life incident – Karen's 1992 car accident, was the seminal turning point in her lived experiences. This was meaningful because it represented an external catalyst for most events and changes subsequently ensuing in her life and career. Further analysis showed she shaped the outcomes of that seminal turning point by her willingness to embrace change and turn barriers into opportunities, thereby

becoming reconciled to life's events and creating flow for her career journey into later life.

Origins for Lawrence's successful life began with described childhood failures - low points that were turned into catalysts for transformational success. Through chronological narrative, Lawrence described career changes over time including a culminating low point that appeared to be career failure – being pushed out of a job he held for 20 years. But that also ended up as a career success because it allowed him to transition into an industry more attuned to his environmental concerns, and it met his desires for lifestyle flexibility. Analysis showed Lawrence's life and career trajectories were reconfigured by lived events; these were meaningful because they shaped his sense of authentic self and his views of failure and success for the world in which he matriculated.

Multiple events were turning points in Mary's lived experiences: engagement in the Women's Movement occasioned by family and workforce factors, her high school sweetheart's death followed by her son's tragic death, pivotal conversations with her mother that restored her sense of self and power, and domestic happiness after prior marriage failures. Analysis indicated each turning point in Mary's chronology became an influence on subsequent events; turnings points were meaningful because some threw up barriers that had to be overcome before Mary could move on to embrace change and opportunity – including the opportunity of career change that was in transitional stage.

Cumulative turning points informed Annalisa's beliefs about self that were both positive and negative in nature: Early events caused her to believe she was "kind of dumb;" subsequent events caused her to understand she was "bright." Annalisa chose to

embrace the latter throughout adulthood, but not without fighting a period of depression during early adulthood occasioned by the event of her mother's death. Analysis showed Annalisa worked at reconfiguring her views of authentic self and the world throughout adulthood; these turning points of change were meaningful because without coming to terms with low places in her life, she likely would have been stuck in the self-belief of "dumb" and in a world viewed through lens of "depression." Neither would have allowed her career trajectory toward transition.

Joy's seminal turning points were profound: abandonment at birth by her natural mother; abandonment during growing up years by her adoptive mother's chronic mental illness; losses of family from deaths by suicide and heroin overdose; losses of marital happiness caused by two husbands described as "losers;" losses of economic security from business and financial reversals; and redemptive recovery through mental rehabilitation, third marriage happiness, and career transition achievement. Analysis indicated Joy reconfigured her event-created world by embracing changes she could make to redeem her world. Negative turning points were significant because they dashed beliefs her world could co-exist with hope and happiness. Positive turning points were significant because they lifted her out of a dark abyss and supported beliefs her world could be filled with meaningful purpose. When Joy found fulfilling purpose, she became one with the authentic *I* - the self who was not defined by her paralyzing past.

Turning points for Celeste revolved around husband-related and career-related events, all of which caused significant change in her lived experiences. Initially, events created barriers, but she showed resiliency by coming to terms with her difficult situations and making necessary change to turn each negative event into a series of

positive opportunities. Analysis showed Celeste's turning points often occurred in a relatively short period of time, but cumulative effects of her responses tended to have long lasting effects on her career trajectory. Turning point that resulted from Celeste's resiliency for change were meaningful because precipitating events - mostly negative in nature – failed to define her world, but instead were used as catalysts for survivorship in her changed world .

Daniel described turning points during childhood as occurring within a "soup" of family arguments that never got resolved because the family was constantly on the move and never learned the art of communication. Mention of his childhood "soup" held relevance in Daniel's described turning points during adulthood – his lived experience was to move from problems causing failed relationships and career goals, rather than coming to terms with what was causing the problems and how they could be resolved. Analysis indicated turning points had significance in Daniel's life and career because when they showed up, he fled; when turning points begged for confrontation and compromise, he turned inward to a place of seclusion and non-conformity. Analysis further showed Daniel had encountered a new turning point: a reconfiguration of beliefs about self and the world. When thinking about self in the past, he had been confounded by a variety of potential Me's, and they had obstructed a clear vision for his authentic self. So, this turning point of change was meaningful because it could be a path to life and career stability rather than a street of dead end dreams.

Val's early turning points were conflicted: A key person instilled in her young mind the desire to be a teacher – a strong turning point of encouragement for her hopes of a teaching career; but her poor education in the parochial school system left her

unprepared to teach – a strong turning point of deterrence that nearly destroyed her belief she could teach; followed by an eye-opening college class in math, her area of greatest weakness – a strong turning point of enablement for achieving her teaching career. Current turning points were also conflicted: Work related changes and upgrades in business skills had occurred – turning points of further enablement for achieving career transition; but potential employers had not been responsive to engagement of her skills - a turning point of discouragement for realizing career transition goals. Analysis indicated Val's turning points had cumulative effects over an extended period of time; these turning points were meaningful because they formed peaks and valleys in her career trajectory that was still evolving.

Analysis concluded few of participants' described turning points resulted from happenstance (Hancock, 2009; Miller, 1983) or serendipitous chance (Williams et al., 1998). More often, turning points came from change or events that intersected with the flow of lived experiences Csikszentmihalyi (1999); and some seemed devastating but had potential for opportunity (Singh & Verma, 2003). Consistent with Kamentz (2012), analysis further concluded turning points were meaningful when participants assessed acting on them in light of what they had to gain versus what they had to lose. But being pragmatic about that assessment could be affected or limited by participants' cultural and social factors (Hancock, 2009) and by the influence of generalized others on participants' sense of authentic self (Mead, 1934). Consistent with Hodkinson et al. (1996); Schafer et al. (2012), analysis further concluded participants could be both assisted and hindered by routine – periods during their careers when nothing dramatic happened, a time when they were more informed by prior experiences than by attention to career options. This

analysis held particular meaning in later life when routine might be more comfortable than energetically responding to turning points. Consistent with Hodkinson et al. (1996) and Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), analysis concluded recognizing turning points – including ones arising out of routine - could serve as evolutionary guides for participants' career transition pathways.

Calling as a turning point: Analysis and conclusions. Consistent with Smith et al. (2006), analysis indicated participants built vocational careers based on necessary skills for their careers, but those who experienced calling were drawn to career transitions with a greater sense of purpose – a purpose that contributed to something of significant importance in their world of lived experiences. This purpose often was expressed as a flow of passion that was greater than themselves (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Mohan and Nivedita, 2012), something that gave them a sense of control for what they could still contribute, a power that silenced negative voices about one's worth to society in later life (Mead, 1934). Consistent with Sumner (2003) further analysis indicated some participants' descriptions of calling followed historic depictions of passion, giftedness, or direction for career transition that had been placed in their hearts and minds by a spiritual awareness But other participants departed from historic depictions in that they made no spiritual connections to their passion for transition; or if they did, spiritual aspects did not refer to God. Consistent with Palmer (2000), analysis showed most participants described resonation with the concept they were claiming their authentic selfhood when they embarked on their career transition journey – even if they did not recognize their transition as calling.

Analysis showed calling was not described as a turning point by all participants, and some who did describe this turning point referred to their passion rather than their calling, or used the terms interchangeably. Examples of analysis findings were described in the following participants' expressions concerning career transitions:

When asked if her career transition was a calling, Sharon declared: "Absolutely, it's a calling. I think about this passion day and night!"

In describing her transition as a calling, Annalisa stated: "I see myself 20 to 30 years down the road – I still want to be of service for others."

When speaking fervently of her transition plans, Joy was asked if she considered her transition to be a calling. Joy responded: Yes, absolutely, without a doubt – because of my life experiences." When asked if she saw anything spiritual in her calling she replied: "I'm striving to relieve human suffering and that is spiritual."

In describing her volunteer work during career transition, Celeste stated: "My passion is helping people connect – that is my calling. I have come to realize that when we have a skill, or talent, or gift – if we are passionate enough, we might be willing to share for free!"

When expressing his career focus on Earth's caring capacity, Daniel said: "I view my ambitions as a calling – a shift from just working to being really engaged."

While reflecting on her career in education, Val described her perceptions: "I feel I have almost a destiny in tutoring, and that destiny has not been fulfilled yet. My journey has provided academic support for children, and I sense that as a calling."

Although declaring her career transition into pastoral ministry was not a calling, Lana stated: "I feel I have a gift for counseling."

When describing interests in writing and garden design for her career transition, Mary was asked if her interest was a calling, Mary replied: "No." But she explained the word calling had spiritual connotations for her that applied only to people like priests or nuns, so she felt it was not appropriate for describing her transition interests.

With or without a God-centered component, analysis concluded there was a universal nature to participants' expressed perceptions of calling – a nature that resonated with passion for using their gifts and skills to perform service in the workplace. This analysis was consistent with Trueblood (1967) who indicated a chief form of service could be found in the normal vocations of life. Consistent with Sellers et al. (2005) analysis further concluded participants' sense of calling evolved from the belief they were choosing career transitions for a reason, and their choices held authenticity and integrity for who they were as individuals in later life.

Role of epiphany: Analysis and conclusions. Analysis indicated some participants described insights into their career transitions as developing from the turning point of "epiphany" - or "awakening" (Denzin, 1988, p. 15; Riessman, 1993, p. 12). Analysis further showed participants' experiences with epiphany provided illumination for their career transition paths, giving them awareness of something new or meaningful (McDonald, 2008). Consistent with Denzin (1989), analysis found participants expressed four types of epiphanies: Major epiphanies that touched every level of their lives, minor epiphanies that were small but served as symbols lighting the way for larger issues, cumulative epiphanies that engendered reactions to experiences occurring over time, and retrospective epiphanies that had significance after they were relived and assigned meaning.

Not all participants described illumination from epiphany as a turning point; but some did, although they tended to describe the illumination as an awakening, awareness, or realization.

Analysis findings were described in their following expressions:

Sharon described a major epiphany resulting from her father's death and dying experience – she *realized* she could get training in gerontology that could be used to spare others from her father's fate.

As a result of cumulative experiences occurring over time, Lana described a *growing awareness* that working for herself instead of a corporation could be a career transition opportunity.

Lawrence described minor epiphanies resulting from a practice he started about five years ago – reading obituaries in the paper of folks near his age who had died. Each reading was a minor illumination on greater questions affecting his life: What did his work mean to his life, what needed to change in his lifestyle, and how could career transition accomplish those changes?

Mary described her experience surviving cancer as a major epiphany – one causing her *awakening* for life as a miracle, a miracle that takes grace to live. Her epiphany was also *retrospective* - she looked back to the low point she had encountered and used epiphany to reconcile each day's continued need for seeking grace.

Annalisa described a major epiphany experienced by her and Rabbi S. as they planned their coastal interfaith retreat center. She described a barrage of thoughts that flooded their planning process, saying: "It was like an *epiphany* for us – the world of possibilities opened up." An important part of epiphany was retrospectively coming to

terms with her past, and then recognizing the role of others in attaining purposes presented by future possibilities.

After years of struggling with depression, Joy had experienced recovery and was reveling in her career transition plans. She expressed a retrospective epiphany - one that reflected on where she had been and what that meant for her future - by citing scholar Joseph Campbell: "It is by going down into the abyss that we discover the treasures of life. Where you stumble, there lies your treasure" (Campbell, n.d.).

Daniel described cumulative epiphanies that were comprised of both major and minor epiphanies along his career journey. Many were also retrospective epiphanies as he sought meanings for current experiences by reflecting on what could be learned from the past. Perhaps only in retrospect could Daniel know whether a recent epiphany was minor or major, but he described a recent *awakening* that occurred after praying to the universe for inspiration: The awakening related to directions he should take for career transition.

Consistent with Denzin (1989), analysis concluded all four types of epiphanies experienced by participants left a mark on their lived career transition experiences. Consistent with McDonald (2008), analysis further concluded that marks on lives and plans caused by illuminating turning points were not synonymous with goal achievements – but getting a sense of direction from the illumination could influence goal achievement. The role others played in lives of participants was influential: Others' could brighten needed illumination on the wake caused by turning points, or they could cast shadows that dimmed illumination and muddled participants' sense of direction (Johnson, 2012). Consistent with Mead (1934), coming to terms with light or shadows caused by

responses of others in participants' wider communities or cultures, was critical to participants' attaining understanding of their authentic selves. That understanding was the brightest aspect of illumination participants could attain for grasping the meanings of epiphany.

Deeper Aspects of Calling in Later Life Career Transition Strategies: Analysis and Conclusions

Research question: Why do some aspects of calling reach the depths of one's soul, causing rededication to a more meaningful existence (an example could include: realization of value niches that have profound implications for development of later life strategies)?

During this study's research of literature and exploration of participants' descriptions, deeper aspects of calling were considered within turning point concepts for calling. For purposes of analysis, deeper aspects of calling were considered in this separate research question to allow analysis that delved beyond turning point concepts.

Consistent with Lips-Wiersma (2002), analysis indicated deeper aspects of calling centered on participants' authenticity for "developing and becoming self" and for "expressing self" (p. 514). Analysis found all participants' explored the sense and development of authentic self (Mead, 1934), relative to alignment with career transition achievement; but not all viewed that alignment as calling. Further analysis found participants who did sense calling in their later life alignments of career and authentic self, did express a deeply passionate aspect for their calling – an aspect researcher interpreted as spiritual in nature. Researcher's interpretative analysis concluded those participants

were guided in their calling by purposes of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999) that brought healing where there had been loss and despair, that went beyond self to serve a greater good, and that looked to spiritual resources on earth, in heaven, and in the universe to direct their steps toward calling fulfillment. Examples of this analysis were:

Sharon expressed authentic self in her calling to gerontology care management by saying: "My new business is my love – I have a passion for it;' and she expressed development of her business through authentic self by saying: "I believe that passion will make my new business successful."

Annalisa expressed self in her calling to open an interfaith retreat center by saying: "This retreat center has opened up doors for me to keep going until I drop." She described development of authentic self as: "Jumping feet first off the highest spring board….[It] releases that yearning for freedom to explore all the nuances of living life with ones spirituality fully exposed."

Joy's development of authentic self was dependent on personal transformation from debilitating mental depression to fulfilling mental peace. Her transformation culminated in career transition calling. She described her transformation by describing a recent work internship that was necessary preparation for her transition: "I came out of there wanting to cry, I was so happy – I had never worked before where I could get paid for doing something I loved so much."

Consistent with Lips-Wersma (2002) and Smith et al. (2006), analysis further found that *alignment* between being true to oneself and transitioning to a career that brought deeper meaning to one's life allowed participants to respond to a calling that went beyond the purpose of self. Examples of this analysis are:

Daniel expressed career-self alignment that was responsive to calling beyond purposes of self, by stating: "I asked the universe last night to help me discover how I can best serve humanity and myself." Self was still a concern, but it was aligned with serving humanity.

Val expressed career-self alignment by describing it as a "journey that takes you places you had not planned." In her case, she felt called to start a new tutoring enterprise that could reach kids who were "falling through the cracks."

Consistent with Wolfe (2005) analysis found the main developmental objective for participants' later life career transitions was to reach a purer form of life's essence – one that deepened life's satisfactions. Responding to calling was integral to attaining this essence satisfaction because response represented acknowledgement of value niches that informed participants' later life strategies (Vesperi, 2001). Further analysis showed some participants denied a sense of calling, but they described value niches that drew them to their career transitions – and therefore, to purer forms of life's essence. Examples of these analyses were:

Sharon described later life joy as a value niche that deepened her dedicated response to calling in gerontology care management: "Aging can be full of joy if you do not just focus on *old* and *loss of health.* If there can be a focus on God-given strengths of creativity, a person can find purpose up to the last minute of life."

Lana described a value niche that deepened her purpose for going into pastoral ministry, even though she did not view her transition as a calling: "As I've gotten older, religion has become more important to me."

Karen described no aspect of her career transition as calling, but she had a value niche that fed her transition passion - having skill requirements needed for her employment was a value for which she had strived, and was still striving: "I'm trying to take all my background and make it more agile to current thinking."

Lawrence described his career transition as a field of endeavor, rather than a calling. But the value niche that drew him to the field of biodiesel fuel was his concern for the environment, and he proved it by taking a pay cut to work in the field: "I liked the idea of biodiesel putting 85% less pollutants into the environment than most fuels."

Mary described an interest in literature and gardening as value niches because they were instilled in her by her mother when Mary was young. Writing and garden design were her chosen endeavors for career transition, although she did not view the endeavors as a calling. She was clear they had not been described as calling because her tradition held calling was experienced by individuals in spiritual fields of endeavor. But acting on her interests did mean she was being true to passions that inspired her over a lifetime.

Annalisa described passion for sharing interfaith spirituality with other seekers as the value niche that drew her to open an interfaith retreat center. She said this study helped her explore that value niche through the lens of calling, and "made it abundantly clear why I am on the path that I am on."

Joy described relieving human suffering as the value niche that drew her to a later life calling of social work: "I can't see myself doing anything else for the rest of my life."

Celeste described her value niche as a belief that skills, talents, or gifts should be shared. That drew her to a calling of "helping people connect," which she provided on a volunteer basis for adults needing assistance in their job search connections.

Daniel described his value niche as fervor for environmental sustainability. That drew him to his calling: "constructing something tangible" that "focused deeply on Earth's caring capacity."

Val described her value niche as a passion for providing learning opportunities to those who were experiencing education challenges. She described this not only as her deep calling, but also as her "destiny."

Analysis concluded deeper aspects of calling embraced purposes that created a flow of passion for serving the greater good; they responded to participants' development and expression of authentic self (Mead, 1934); and they were plumbed at deeper levels when alignment was reached between concepts of self and goals for career transition. Analysis further concluded value niches informed self and career alignments, with value niches accelerating in meaning during participants' later life when timing was right for experiencing flow through personal growth and revitalization (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde 1993).

Enduring Changes Resulting from Experienced Factors and Turning Points in Later Life: Analysis and Conclusions

Research question: What enduring changes in one's beliefs about self and society occurred as a result of factors and turning points experienced in later life (examples could

include: *epiphany* or *awakening*, causing creation of a more insightful person for ways to re-emerge with stronger, more meaningful career contributions)?

Analysis found participants' enduring changes about self and society often occurred because of their changed focus on impacts of factors and turning points. That analysis was consistent with Alboher (2013) who indicated later life often allowed the focus of older adults to change from ego-fueled concepts of self while ladders of career success were climbed, to meaning-filled concepts of service while impacts of balance between career and family were treasured. Analysis further indicated successful change of participants' focus was not described in quantitative terms, but rather was consistent with Brody (2012): Transition to a career that held treasured meaning was successful when participants' career engagements balanced with family needs, and that balance resulted in *no regrets*.

Analysis found factors and turning points viewed through the lens of changed focus allowed participants to be pragmatic about career transitions. That analysis was consistent with Kamentz (2012) who indicated factors and turning points still held significance in later life, but risks became more acceptable than in earlier years when proving themselves held prominence. Consistent with Mead (1934), analysis found that in later life the *I* of participants' authentic self was freer to act in powerful and selfless ways because the *Me* of their social self could be stilled. Often stillness was achieved when participants came to terms with the influence of *generalized others* (Mead, 1934), an influence that might be more pervasive in younger years. Analysis further found participants' desire to create an enduring legacy was impetus for transformation of factors and turning points into opportunities for career transition achievement. One's enduring

legacy was described by poet T.S. Eliot as "the life of significant soil" (Eliot, 1963, p. 233).

> An example of these analyses was represented by Sharon's descriptive epiphany: My grandkids look at me as a hero of sorts, a model for the fact that learning never ends. Aspiring to dream should be a piece of your day, every day! Yet even in the dream, there is *epiphany*, insights into bigger barriers. I love life more now than at any stage, but I want to work, support my husband, and have time with my grandchildren. I'm trying to do it all. I'm wanting and loving all of it. When I was younger, I wanted it all because of society's pressures, but now when I am older I have moved beyond that, and my passion is: *loving it all*.

Analysis concluded enduring changes in participants' beliefs about self and society occurred as a result of factors and turning points experienced in later life; and changes had enduring qualities because authentic self (Mead, 1934) was celebrated for what participants could still contribute to society. Consistent with Peracchi and Welch (1994) analysis further concluded factors and turning points in later life tended to weigh more heavily on participants' described perceptions of enduring success if they resulted in a life balance between career and family. Finding flow in that balance could be found by looking for one's passion – what made you excited, what turned you on (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

Conclusions

Narrative design allowed researcher to explore factors and turning points with each participant and make her findings, based on lived experiences described in participants' own voices. Lived experiences were often repeated as varying application of participants' descriptive factors and turning points were researched, discussed, and analyzed throughout the chapters.

Researcher concluded participants' descriptions of factors and turning points could be captured by the metaphor of doors and hinges. Turning points were doors that opened and closed throughout participants' lived journeys to career transitions. Sometimes participants described career transitions unfolding as they walked through open doors of opportunity; other times participants described the need to push on the door to access opportunity, with some doors remaining barred to opportunity. Factors were hinges upon which turning point-doors swung. Hinges influenced whether doors of opportunity opened with ease, opened with a push, or remained unopened. Well balanced hinges - hinges holding strongly at all contact points on the door rather than hanging wildly unattached at points – could make the difference in whether a door of opportunity was accessible or blocked. Participants described later life as a vulnerable time to walk through career transition doors, with the delicate balance of hinge-factors holding significant influence on access. But all participants had their eyes set on achievements lying beyond the doors, making opportunity access a goal worth the journey. Participants had lived life long enough to know when something was meaningful and they were seeking ways to make the greatest contribution to society through their career transitions.

Most participants had experienced later life as a time when the *I* of their authentic selves could walk through doors of career transition opportunity, proclaiming proudly:

> This is my time! Later life is fulfilling because I have claimed a passion for work, worth, and wisdom that reflects who I am and what I can continue contributing to society. If door hinges require the oil of effort and risk-taking to make doors swing open more widely, that oil will be applied. The fact that I am in later life is not a controlling factor for my flow of passion to succeed in my career transition goals. My legacy is still being written as I step through this door of transition and celebrate the career that lies ahead!

Limitation of Conclusions

Conclusions were based on descriptions of participants who were selected by "purposeful sampling," meaning findings were representative of only ten individuals, and could not be generalized to the extended population. (Creswell, 2007, p. 76). However, the concept of transferability could apply, although generalizability would not apply. "Transferability is applied by the *readers* of the research….It invites readers of the research to make connections between elements of a study and their own experience" (Colorado State University, 2013, p.2). Therefore, findings could have social connotations beyond the sample population if individuals in that extended population connected through transferability with the study's purpose.

This interview process did not allow for tracking changes in participants' stories over a timeframe extending beyond the period of this study. That limitation was

mitigated by retrospectively exploring participants' descriptions of past experiences extending over a time frame of their entire lives up to the point of the study. Although the process limited conclusions based on actual outcomes from career transition factors and turning points, it allowed conclusions based on factors and turning points that led participants to their current transition considerations.

Researcher bias could have been a limitation on study conclusions. Because researcher had personal involvement in her own later life career transition, researcher guarded against limitations on interpretation of participants' meanings that might be caused by her own personal biases (Creswell, 2009; Iacono et al., 2009). As a guard against bias, researcher relied on skills learned during the course of her career for listening to the position of clients, discerning the meaning of their positions, and representing those positions in her professional role. Those skills informed conclusions reached by researcher on influences of factors and turning points described in this study.

Significance of the Study

Jones & Kottler (2006) posited significance was usually stated in one of three categories: statistical significance, theoretical significance, or practical significance. Because this study used the qualitative method, there was no statistical significance. The study used theories of narrative, social constructivism, and interpretivism as the lens through which participants' experiences were viewed. It was up to the reader to determine if there were aspects of practical significance or transferability in the study,

based on its implications for both individuals and society. All references to *this study* meant the study conducted for "*Later Life Career Transitions."*

Individuals or societal groups who would likely resonate with implications of this study were those who experienced factors similar to those described by participants in the study. Although there were quantitative studies that measured retirement-related issues and framed those issues in the form of statistics, there was far less qualitative research currently available on questions posed by this study. However it was worth noting four qualitative studies found in literature having some aspects of relevance to this study. The following discussion made distinctions between the focus and methods of those studies as compared to the focus and methods explored in this study, with these comparative distinctions adding credence to the unique significance of *this study*.

Hart (2008) conducted a mixed methods "Encore Career" (p. 1) survey involving thousands of telephone and online interviews for the quantitative portion of the study. For the qualitative portion of the study, Hart met with four focus groups of 10 to 12 participants. Hart's (2008) study did have relevance to this study because it dealt with encore careers which had similarity to later life careers, but methodology used by Hart did not allow for in-depth mining of individually described experiences that formed the basis of rich significance in *this study*.

Lips-Wiersma (2002) conducted a qualitative psycho-biographical study exploring possible influences of spirituality on career behavior, asking whether and how spirituality influenced career choice and transition. The study was undertaken over three years with 16 individuals (equally divided between men and women) between the ages of 40 and 50 years. Participant samples included two Maori, one Samoan, three British, one

American, and nine New Zealand Caucasians. The sample was purposefully chosen in order to include the indigenous population of New Zealand, the large contingent of Polynesian immigrants, and the more recent immigrants as well as those born in New Zealand. The process involved individual and group interviews, written communication, and phone communication for attaining participants' career histories and exploring the interface of spiritual and/or religious beliefs with participants' career stories. Although the interview process had some similarities to *this study,* and spiritual meanings perhaps had relevance to turning points for some participants in *this study*, the ethnocentric focus of the Lips-Wiersma sampling had no relevance to the focus of *this study. This study* included no ethnocentric boundaries, thereby allowing interpretation of meanings without the overlay of ethnicity.

Sellers et al. (2005) conducted a qualitative study using phenomenological design to interview 11 women who self-selected to be participants in the study, based on e-mail solicitations sent to the faculty of a small Christian college. The criteria were: they were mothers, they were either working in a field of their choice or attending school full-time for that purpose, and they identified with the dual calling of motherhood and career. The meaning of calling was very similar to the meaning described in *this study*, but the purpose of the Sellers et al. (2005) study had no relevance to factors in later life. Thus the significance of *this study* was not addressed in the purpose of the Sellers et al. (2005) study.

Smith et al. (2006) conducted a qualitative study wherein 15 participants were selected for a purposive sampling and interviewed by a team of five researchers. The study revealed nonprofit arts managers employed a spiritual framework that could

include calling, service, sacrifice, and personal rewards to understand and legitimate their nonprofit careers. The Smith et al. (2006) study had relevance to *this study* in its methodology and in its interest in "calling," but the Smith et al. study focused on art careers in the non-profit sector and had little relevance to later life career transitions. Like Sellers, et al. (2005), the significance of *this study* was not addressed in the purpose of the Smith et al. (2006) study.

There were quantitative studies that measured factors incidental to retirement and labor force transitions and there were articles on quantitative aspects of re-careering and age-related social roles (Johnson et al., 2009; Maddox, 1979; Singh & Verma, 2003; Webber, 1998). All these studies and articles mentioned there were qualitative factors to be considered in later life issues, but the studies engaged in no qualitative exploration of later life career transition factors.

The significance of *this study* was: (1) Methodology, design, and purpose combined elements not similarly combined in other studies found in literature, giving heightened significance to *this study* on later life career transitions: (a) Methodology mined "how?" and "what?" and "why?' elements of factors influencing participants' experiences and turning points creating their stories; (b) Narrative design allowed exploration of emotion factors describing *flow* and *coming to terms* with *low points,* as well as concepts of *I* and *Me* within the context of *authentic self*; (c) Purpose provided deep discoveries of valuable contributions participants could make in later life to the greater good, despite circumstances that could hinder flow in career trajectories; and (2) Timing held relevance, as many in our society – including the influx of Baby Boomers

currently reaching retirement age – experienced factors and turning points explored in this study.

Whether participants' career transition occurred from opportunity, need, or both, *this study* had significance to the world of business. Consistent with Alboher (2013) primary significance involved understanding factors and turning points in lived experiences of older adults that could help businesses access or retain those individuals' valuable skills in the workplace, rather than losing their skills because of the sense they were *too old* to be of value in the workplace. Consistent with Dychtwald et al. (2004) this understanding could provide employers with skilled "leaders on demand" (p. 54) when corporate managerial tasks did not require full time engagement. The positive quality for employers was they did not need to invest heavily in training because an older worker already had leadership experience, skills, and abilities. In addition, the older worker might be able to serve in mentoring or knowledge-sharing roles as part of their work-related accomplishments Therefore, understanding of factors and turning points influencing career transitions had significance for both older adults and the world of business in which they interacted during later life.

Future Research

Follow-up research to this study could be meaningful in the following areas: (1) A similar study could be conducted in one or two years to explore the influence over time of participants described factors and turning points, how they differed over time, and whether new factors emerged in career transition achievement [Note: Because of some

participants' ages, the period between this study and a subsequent study could lose meaning if the period exceeded two years.] ; and (2) A quantitative study could be conducted in one to two years for the purpose of measuring relative influences of current and additionally emerged turning points and factors on participants' actual experience of career transition achievement.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

Application for Participation in Study

STUDY INFORMATION

- Study title: LATER LIFE CAREER TRANSITIONS.
- Study purpose: To identify the factors and turning points involved for making a career transition in later life.
- Scope of study participants: Between 10-15 voluntary participants.
- Participant qualifications: Being age 55 or older; attending college classes with a focus on re-career opportunities; having an **interest or experience** in later life career transitions.
- Participant's role: Attend an initial interview session of up to two hours in length with researcher; follow-up interviews for a period of approximately two months, with specific dates and lengths of interviews to be flexible and mutually acceptable to both parties. Participants will keep a diary during the course of the study and make entries related to the study's purpose. Diary entries will be submitted researcher at each interview session, at the end of the interview process, or at other times requested by the researcher.
- Study site: College campus where participant is attending classes or an alternative site agreed to by participant and researcher. Site to be agreed upon from interview to interview between participant and researcher.
- Study researcher: Estle Harlan, doctoral candidate in Doctor of Business Administration program at George Fox University. Contact: Phone (541-994-5843); e-mail: deharlan@adscomputers.com

STUDY APPLICATION

I meet the participant qualifications and am interested in being a participant in the above-described study.

Name:_____ Daytime phone:_____

Address:_____

E-mail address:_____

College or university where attending classes:_____

Briefly describe your interest in the purpose of this study:

_____

Thank you. Return to Estle Harlan: 1952 NE Spindrift Ct., Lincoln City, OR 97367 by (date)

Appendix 2. **Page 1**

Informed Consent Form

Information About the Study

Study title: LATER LIFE CAREER TRANSITIONS

Study problem: Later life is a vulnerable time for individuals, and a life-changing transition in the focus of their career raises both risk and opportunity. Discovering those risk and opportunity factors involves insight, which can be difficult to ascertain.

Study purpose: To explore factors and turning points that could lead to a career transition in later life.

Study benefits and risks: To better understand the factors involved for making a career transition in later life. There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.

Study participants: Selected by researcher based on qualifications stated in the Application for Participation in Study and on follow-up contacts between applicants and researcher. All participation is voluntary.

Study researcher: Estle Harlan, doctoral candidate. The study will be submitted as part of the dissertation requirements for the Doctor of Business Administration Program at George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon. RESEARCHER'S NOTE: The researcher is an individual interested in later life transitions from career to calling as she is experiencing such a transition in her life. Researcher's Contact: phone (541) 994-5843. E-mail: deharlan@adscomputers.com

Study procedures used to meet the study's purpose include:

1. Study data will be gained principally through one-on-one interviews where you will discuss with researcher your experiences in gaining insights (discernment) for factors involved in your transition journey. A questionnaire will be prepared by researcher and used to show her interest in the study's purpose, as well as to guide the interviews. All questions will be open ended and there will be no preconceived answers by researcher. The initial interview will be up to two hours in length and will begin at (time) on (date) at (site). Follow-up interviews may be scheduled over an approximate two month period, based upon the mutual agreement of you and the researcher for date, time, and site. The site for each interview will be located where you attend classes or at some other site agreed to by you and the researcher. The selection of the site will be your choice.
2. Additional study data will be gained through diary entries to be kept by you and turned over to researcher at each interview (following the initial interview), at the end of the interview process, or at such other times requested by the researcher. The entries will document and elaborate on interview discussions, record your thoughts or concerns that

evolve outside the interviews, and express emerging factors in your life relating to career transitions. Diary entries turned over to researcher will be the property of researcher.

3. Feedback from you will sought by researcher at various points in the study process so that correct interpretation will be given by the researcher to your described experiences.
4. Interviews (or phone conversations outside the interview process) will be recorded in field notes by the researcher who is skilled in making handwritten or typewritten notes as the discussions are occurring. Further communication between you and the researcher may be made by e-mail. All data will be the property of researcher.
5. You are encouraged to ask questions or inform the researcher of concerns at any time during the interview process. Please contact the researcher at any time by using the e-mail address or the telephone number indicated above.
6. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw, you will inform the researcher in writing of this decision. After receiving that written statement of your decision to withdraw from the study, all information you have provided for the study will be destroyed by the researcher.
7. Your name and identifying information will not be revealed in the written research report. All of your personal information, interview data, diary data, and any other data received through other means of communication or through other data turned over by you to the researcher in relation to this study will be kept confidential, unless you agree in writing that your identity may be revealed in a specific manner by researcher.

Agreement to Study by Participant

I have read and understand this Informed Consent Form. I agree to be a participant in the study and fulfill the responsibilities of such participation, in accordance with the information and procedures set forth in this Informed Consent Form.

_____Date:_____

(Signature)

(Informed Consent Form, n.d., retrieved 2010)

Appendix 3.

Demographic Information

Instructions: As a participant in the study titled LATER LIFE CAREER TRANSITIONS, you are requested to complete the following information and return it to the Researcher. It will be used to give contextual reference to data provided by you during the study.

Date:_____

Participant's
Name_____(Nickname:_____)

Address_____

Phone: Home(H)_____ Business(B)_____
Cell(C)_____
Preferred: (H)__ (B)__ (C)__

E-Mail
Address:_____

Sex: (M)__ (F)__ Domestic Status: (S)__ (M)__ (D)__ Widowed__ Partnership__
Number of Children____ Number of Grandchildren___

Education: College ____Yrs. Type of Degree(s):_____Graduate Degree(s):_____
College where currently attending classes:_____
Professional certifications or licenses:_____

Current
Employer:_____
(Employer will not be contacted)
Position(s) with this employer:_____
Length of current employment:_____Yrs.

Health Status: Excellent/very good____ Good____ Fair____

Other information that you consider relevant to your background (no additional information
required):_____

_____

_____

Thank you, Estle Harlan, Researcher

Phone: 541-994-5843 E-Mail: deharlan@adscomputers.com

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Questionnaire for Guiding Study Interviews

(Introduction: This study is titled: LATER LIFE CAREER TRANSITIONS. The study purpose is: To identify the factors and turning points involved for making a career transition in later life. The Researcher is: Estle Harlan, doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Business Administration program at George Fox University. The study will be submitted as part of the dissertation requirements for that doctoral degree.)

Date:_____ Site of Interview:_____

Name of Participant:_____

This questionnaire is being used to guide our interview and to show my researcher's interest in the experiences you will describe. We will each have a copy. You may keep your copy and make notes on it for your own use. It may guide your thoughts for diary entries you will make during this study.

1. General background "Ice Breaker" Tell me about your background*:*
   - Where did you grow up? Do you have any early memories of growing up?
   - What was your family like? Who were the key people in your life?

2. What is your educational background?
   - Why did you choose that educational path?
   - Who were the key individuals in your educational background?

   What college classes are you currently taking?
   - Where do you hope that your current classes will lead you and why is that direction meaningful to you?
     Possibilities might include: re-careering, transitioning to calling, personal enrichment.
   - Who are key individuals in your current educational pursuits?

3. Describe the various occupations you would consider to be your career.
   - Why did you choose that career path?
   - Who were the key people in your career path, and why were they important?

   How would you describe your current occupation?
   - Keeping in mind the career path of your various occupations, what did you find gratifying or distressing about each point of your career path, and why was that so?
   - Who are the key people in your current occupation, and why are they important?

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Thinking about occupational changes made over the span of your career, describe factors or events causing you to make changes you consider to be significant.

- Possibilities might include: health, age, stress, location, hours, salary, benefits, promotion, lay-off, quit, business closed, education requirements/opportunities, family needs, other.

4. Can you think of a key moment or *turning point* that has impacted your life?

- Possibilities might include: emotions, events, changes, a sense of calling, or epiphany for career transitions.
- How has this event changed you? Has it caused you to live in a new way/existence, have a deeper sense of purpose, or make a greater contribution to your family, key people, career, or society?

Literature has provided possible definitions for such circumstances - "later life," "career," "transition," and "calling." Can you relate to any of these terms?

- "Later life" The period of life that occurs after a person reaches the age of 55 years.
- "Career" Work related roles over your professional lifespan.
- "Transition" Passage from one's work related roles during their professional lifespan to a career that differs in some manner during later life.
- "Calling" A sense of passion for using gifts that may have been present during one's career, but that can now be coupled with opportunities that have manifested themselves in later life and that have grown into longings for vocational engagement/engagements that may have a deeper purpose than those experienced during one's career.

5. Future directions. What is next for you? Would you consider making another major change at this time?

- Possibilities might include: career change, change in activities, a new interest.

If you were to consider this change, what circumstances or conditions might influence your decision?

- Possibilities might include: age-related issues, health conditions, education status, workplace opportunities or limitations, economic situations, family circumstances, older adult stereotypes.

Have you dealt with similar factors in the past?

- When and how?
- How will you currently deal with your described factors?

6. In closing, is there anything else you would like to add or comment on? Thank you. Please provide the researcher with contact information for any other individual who might add description to the experiences discussed in this study.

Estle Harlan, Researcher. 541-994-5843 deharlan@adscomputers.com

Appendix 5.

Researcher's Standard Set of Interview Instructions

1. Each set of interview notes will have a heading with the date, place, name of researcher and name of participant.
2. The researcher will use this standard set of instructions in each interview to assure that standard procedures are used from one interview to another.
3. Participants will be told: The narrative approach is interested in hearing each participant's story and perspective; there is no right or wrong answer; it is all about them and their experiences.
4. The set of questions that opens the interview will have an ice-breaker question, followed by a series of questions that might be thematic subsections of the study.
5. During the interview process, participants will be asked to explain their thoughts in more detail and will be encouraged to elaborate on their stories. (This would include discussion of diary entries that will be kept by participants during the study.)
6. Time will be allowed between questions or expressed thoughts for the researcher to record the participant's responses and to ask follow-up questions if some meaning is not clear.
7. A final question will be to ask if the participant knows of someone else who might add additional description to the experiences discussed in the interview. Gratitude for the time spent by the participants will be given in both oral and written form to each participa**nt.**