

CAREER SHOCK: A STUDY OF LATE BABY  
BOOMERS PURSUING CAREER CHANGE  
THROUGH FORMAL LEARNING

BY

Chris A. Woodard

Bachelor of Science  
Oklahoma Wesleyan University  
Bartlesville, Oklahoma  
1995

Master of Science  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
2001

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Thesis Approved:

Gary J. Conti  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Thesis Advisor

Robert Nolan  
\_\_\_\_\_

Lynna Ausburn  
\_\_\_\_\_

Koiuder Mokhtari  
\_\_\_\_\_

A. Gordon Emslie  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of the Graduate College

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction

People have in common a tie that will not be broken. This tie links together people of different ages, race, gender, economic status, and political affiliation. This tie does not necessarily link young to old, woman to man, or even Democrat to Republican, but all share the same driving force; the force is change. The key to a successful life may very well be accepting or adapting to change. Some may even purposefully initiate change in the pursuit of happiness. Denying change or fighting to stave it off can literally lead to physical and emotional problems. Even if one is willing to accept change and the rate at which technological advances and global communications are increasing, merely keeping up with change has become a full-time endeavor. It is easy to become overwhelmed.

In 1970 Alvin Toffler penned a book titled Future Shock in which he wrote about what happens to people who become overwhelmed by change. The book is about the ways people either adapt or fail to adapt to the future (p. 1). Although this book was written about the future; the future is now. In 2004, the effects of change on society that Toffler wrote about in 1970 have either happened or are on the cusp of

coming to fruition. His prophetic writings underscore the crisis many people find themselves facing today. Future shock happens when humans simply cannot tolerate an accelerated rate of change (Toffler, 1970, p. 326). Future shock is distress both physical and psychological; "it is the human response to overstimulation" (p. 326).

Because of the current technological advances, the rate of change has increased so much that people cannot keep up (Toffler, 1970, p. 22). Change is likely to continue accelerating to the limits of human and institutional capabilities (p. 35). The accelerated rate of change Toffler writes about does not always happen from outside forces. Sometimes future shock happens from deep within a person who hears an inner voice calling to become more, to do something more meaningful, or to choose a career that is in line with their true personality. To service the incredible rate of change, or future shock, humans will have to adapt more than ever before. To do this, people must understand the impact such change will have on our lives (Toffler, 1970, p. 35).

### The Baby Boom

Nine months after the end of World War II, the United States experienced the beginning of a population explosion that would last through 1964. During this period, over 76 million babies were born. Labeled the Baby Boom by

demographers in the early 1950s, this statistical anomaly remains unparalleled to this day. This phenomenon is one of the most talked about and written about subjects over the past half century. The reason for all this attention is warranted when one considers that the Baby Boom has had an enormous impact on virtually everything in its path (Jones, 1980, pp. 1-7), and there is no reason to believe that the impact is about to end. In fact, in 2004, the oldest Baby Boomer will reach the age of 58 while the youngest will turn 40. Over the next decade, as this enormous group continues to age, they will once again greatly influence the American workforce.

Baby Boomers born later have different experiences than the first wave of Baby Boomers (Strauss & Howe, 1996, p. 203; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 3). As the first wave of Baby Boomers are quickly approaching retirement age, the later Baby Boomers are still raising families and establishing themselves in careers. Because of the discernible differences between older Baby Boomers and younger Baby Boomers, a distinction can be drawn between the first wave of Baby Boomers and the later Baby Boomers. The Early Baby Boomer will represent individuals born in the traditional Baby Boom years beginning after World War II in 1946 and ending after the Korean War in 1954. The Late Baby

Boomer are the Baby Boomers born from approximately 1955 until the official end of the Baby Boom in 1964.

### Adult Development

The basis of adult development lies within the individual. Although the essence of the individual has been called by many names, the term "individuation" is widely accepted by both psychologists and sociologists in capturing the manner by which humans come to realize themselves as a living, breathing entity that has emotions and cognitive ability. Individuation is thought of as a developmental process where a person becomes more uniquely individual (Levinson, 1978, p. 33) by both conscious and unconscious striving to find a sense of individual identity (Erikson, 1959/1980, p. 109).

Many developmental theories exist that attempt to explain how a person advances through a normal life. People are influenced by both internal and external forces that contribute to a series of tasks that are completed as an individual ages. These tasks arise from physiological changes such as aging and other forces such as society, culture, and personal aspiration (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 5). Many developmental theories propose that the tasks an individual completes are carried out in phase specific cycles. For example, Erik Erikson describes eight cycles

from death to birth and argues that a person completes each cycle by going through an "identity crisis" (Erikson, 1959/1980, p. 128).

In the late 1970s, a time in which late Baby Boomers were likely preparing for their first career, an important study emerged which expanded on the life stage theory. After studying 40 adult men from varying careers and ages, Daniel Levinson (1978) agreed with previous phase theories, but asserted that each phase was preceded by a transitional period. During each transitional period, an individual would prepare for the upcoming phase.

One recurring theme among most adult development theories is that significant change will happen in an individual at mid-life. Middle age is an important phase in adulthood for many reasons. During mid-life individuation, adults strive to throw off the demands placed on them by society and themselves (Levinson, 1978, p. 33). Mid-life is also a chance to re-identify from that of the first half of life (Sheehy, 1976, p. 30). Erikson (1959/1980) referred to this period of growth as "generativity" where a person strives to make something more meaningful out of life (pp. 165-168).

Another point on which many adult developmental theorists agree is that the mid-life transition begins at

about the age 40 and is an impetus of change. At this stage in life, individuals re-evaluate where they have been and decide where they want to go in life (Levinson, 1978, p. 30-31). This often aligns the person with one's true self (Erikson, 1959/1980, p. 170). Typically known as the "mid-life crisis", most men and women go through either moderate or severe transitions (Levinson, 1978, p. 60; Sheehy, 1976, pp. 30-31). Mid-life transitions rarely begin with a bang or marker event. It is more likely felt as a vague, ambiguous sensation that can lead up to a crisis level (Sheehy, 1976, pp. 242-243).

While the mid-life transition leads to change that change is often manifested in a change in careers. A person's occupation has significant meaning and must be conflict free. When occupational conflict exists, a person will have to change careers or deal with the internal crisis (Erikson, 1958/1980, p. 133). However, not all career change is driven by crisis. Many individuals will change careers near mid-life after they have achieved success in their first career and want to move to the next level. Others will change careers to pursue their dream career or one that was abandoned when first starting a career in exchange for a well-paying career (Levinson, 1978, p. 220; Sheehy, 1976, p. 247).

When one considers the sheer number of adults near the mid-life transitional period, it is easy to see the potential impact on the American workforce. A historical review of how careers were developed during the formative years of Baby Boomers born from 1955 to 1964 helps in understanding how initial careers were chosen and potentially why subsequent careers are pursued.

### Career Development

Career development is much more than merely training for a job; it is preparing for the occupational course one pursues throughout a lifetime (Gyspers, 1984, pp. 620-621). Along the same lines, a career is not a job or an unrelated series of jobs, but a career can be a series of related jobs in a related field.

Career development theories are grounded in human development theories and career development is considered a developmental process. The concept of career development is made up of the constructs of differentiation and integration. Differentiation is distinguishing from, or separating, a part from the whole. Integration is developing the one which is separated and accepted (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 36). The three career development theories widely accepted are structural, developmental, and social. A structural developmental theory describes the personality



characteristics of a person's psychological makeup such as interests and abilities that evolve over a lifetime. The developmental perspective focuses on behavioral change over time such as going from one life stage to another. The social theory considers the interaction between the individual and environmental events, then how a person relates to them (Jespen, 1984, pp. 138-139; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 4).

The impetus of career development is to guide a child through a career maturation process known as a developmental task which has its basis in the life stages (Borow, 1984, p. 174). One such task is to help students break free from psychological limits on choice placed on them by family, society, or unfair stereotypes (Herr, 1979, p. 124). Students must also have the ability to make informed choices (p. 25). Career counselors introduce students to the world of work by creating real-life, or life-like, experiences to enhance problem-solving skills and decision-making abilities (Jespen, 1984, p. 136; Sternberg, 1990a, p. 36).

Interest in a particular career can come from many sources. Families have a tremendous influence on career choice on individuals during their formative youth. Early identification with work often comes from parents or an influential family member (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 11). However,

often the opposite is true when youth deliberately pursue a career different than their father (p. 20). Through a supportive environment the notion of "I am what I learn" is often translated into a career path (pp. 12-14), or one may choose "what they see" as translated through movies or television (Borrow, 1984, p. 172). Other explanations for career development are more intrinsic. For example, interests often become an avocation that can evolve into a career (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 12).

School counselors, teachers, and mentors play a critical role in how careers were developed. Counselors identifying problems by using both formal and informal assessments (Herr, 1979, p. 122; Jespen, 1984, p. 137; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 52). Beyond assessments, career developers also observe childhood styles of interaction with the child to guide their occupational decisions (Borrow, 1984, p. 162). They help the student determine the distinction between "knowing who I am" and "knowing about work roles" (Jespen, 1984, p. 138). Career experience can be created in many ways including role exploration and apprenticeship programs (Tiedeman, 1963, pp. 12, 76). The goal of experience building is to introduce the world of work into the child's frame of reference to give them something upon which to reflect (p. 39).

Students of the mid 1960s through the mid 1980s represent the Late Baby Boomers born from 1955 through 1964. Students during this era endured crowded schools and competed with one another for the time and attention of school counselors and mentors. In addition, college enrollment dramatically dropped compared to that of the traditional Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1954. Therefore, jobs for the later Baby Boomers were not as plentiful, and many took jobs just to make ends meet. Based on these circumstances, or the notion that dramatic socioeconomic conditions are affecting decisions, and on the fact that this group is now at mid-life and inclined to change, it is highly likely that the Baby Boomers born from 1955 to 1964 are engaged in some form of intentional change.

#### Intentional Change

There are two types of change; intentional change and unintentional change. Unintentional change refers to all changes caused by chance or external forces. Intentional change is when an individual deliberately and voluntarily chooses the change and then strives to achieve it by taking action (Tough, 1982, p. 48).

Knowing why, how, and how much responsibility people take in the change process, along with the fact that most intentional change is implemented by the individual, can be

of major importance to professional groups (Tough, 1982, p. 155). However, certain economic and geopolitical factors are forcing many adults into changes over which they have no control.

### Changing Socioeconomic Factors

During the first decade of the twenty-first century Baby Boomers will face dramatic socioeconomic conditions along with a natural proclivity to change. Due to environmental factors such as technological advances and a global economy, traditional careers that once flourished are now declining (Sullivan, 1999). In fact, as Baby Boomers move through mid-life they find themselves without models and with only themselves for reference groups (Moen, 1998).

As the Late Baby Boomers attempt to survive mid-life, they must overcome many socioeconomic barriers placed in their path. On one hand technological advances are continually increasing humanity's quality of life while on the other the same advances are eliminating jobs from the workplace while simultaneously creating new jobs not even thought of when the Late Baby Boomers were completing high school. Jobs are leaving the United States by the thousands, and unemployment is higher now than it has been in decades (Glassner, 1994, p. 16). A growing trend in corporations today is downsizing which is forcing many individuals into

new jobs and careers or the tough choice of relocation. Finally, people are living longer which brings forth another set of problems. Many individuals may find themselves living long beyond anticipated retirement age which may force people into multiple careers before retirement.

When Baby Boomers are faced with trying socioeconomic times, the possibility of mid-life transitions, and looking down the road toward the second half of an unwanted career, change is likely to happen. Career change may be unintentional because of technology eliminating a job, or intentional to find something more meaningful. Whatever the context, the one constant of change is learning (Tough, 1982, p. 10). Adult learners daily make decisions on how and what to learn to facilitate the change they desire (p. 124).

#### Adult Learning

Learning in adulthood is a process that enables adults to acquire new information and also to help them make sense of their lives (Merriam, 2001, p. 96). People can make profound changes through learning (p. 94). Learning is much more than the act of acquiring knowledge. However, it deals with the nature of the learner, the goals sought, the construct in which instruction occurs, and the techniques of both the teacher and learner. These and other components can be combined in infinite ways to describe the process of

learning (Houle, 1996, pp. 29-30).

The anchor of adult learning is andragogy, which is the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). While Knowles' intent was to explain the differences between learning in children and adults, he has asserted that andragogy has been effective in all stages of life.

Another important aspect of learning in adulthood, especially to facilitate intentional change, is self-directed learning. Self-directed learning is described as a process in which the individual takes the initiative in diagnosing needs, formulating goals, identifying resources, choosing the appropriate learning setting, and evaluating the learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975, p. 18).

In transformative learning an individual will reinterpret old experiences from a new set of expectations, thus giving new meaning and perspective to the old experience (Mezirow, 1991, p. 11). Thinking through a situation after it has happened is often called "reflection-in-action" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 233). Knowledge is not out there waiting to be discovered, rather it is created by interpreting and reinterpreting in light of new experiences, (Mezirow, 1996). A potential transformation begins with a disorienting dilemma which often turns into a personal crisis. Thus, transformation theory reiterates that

individuals make intentional movement to resolve these conflicts (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 147-168).

Learning how to learn is the notion that it is as important for adults to learn how to learn as it is to learn a particular subject matter (Brookfield, 1986, p. 64). Learning how to learn requires basic skills, general understanding, and self-knowledge. Knowing oneself as a learner is perhaps the key element to gain important insights into learning how to learn (Smith, 1982, pp. 20-22). Learning how to learn can solidify the adult learning principles of andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning in relationship to initiating change. Whatever the reason for change, it is not likely to be successful without some form of adult learning at the core of the process.

#### Problem Statement

When Late Baby Boomers developed their career the idea was that a student's career choice developed from school to a single career that would last until retirement. This notion of one career is quickly becoming outmoded because of dramatic socioeconomic factors. First, many jobs are becoming obsolete because of technology, and the lost jobs are not being replaced by humans. Second, because of a lack of replacement jobs, global unemployment is higher now than

during the Great Depression (Glassner, 1994, p. 16; Rifkin, 1995, p. xv). Third, many companies are downsizing and there is a growing trend toward using a part-time specialized workforce (Bartkowiak, 1993, p. 811; Larson & Ong, 1994, pp. 187-189; Wiens-Teurs & Hill, 2002, p. 303). Fourth, people are living longer, the traditional retirement age is increasing, and the age for Social Security benefits is creeping upward which may force many people to have multiple careers before retirement.

Stage theories do not always adequately describe working patterns of adults (Lemme, 2002, p. 312). Adults have the potential to change at any point in life by the increasingly divergent career paths and timetables that typify contemporary adulthood (Sterns, Matheson, & Schwartz, 1990). Super (1984) also suggested that the order of stages are not fixed and that individuals may actually progress through the sequence more than once, recycling through the stages at transition points (Lemme, 2002, p. 312).

This dispels the myth that there is only one "right" career and that people stay in all their lives. For reasons that originate in the individual as well as in the labor market, career stability no longer typifies the experience of established workers. (Lemme, 2002, p. 312)

Accepted models of adult development suggest that change is intrinsically motivated to satisfy stage needs. Individuals do develop in stages, but many adults will be changing



careers because of extrinsic reasons. In addition, constant upheaval will challenge present life cycle theories.

The concept of adult learning is relatively new in the schema of existing theories. Therefore, much more knowledge can still be learned to advance the collective knowledge of adult learning. Although andragogy has contributed to the understanding of adults as learners, it has done little to expand the understanding of the learning process (Pratt, 1993, p. 21). Also, little is known about how people engage and manage their self-directed learning, how the issues of power and control interact with self-directed learning in formal settings, what real-life self-directed learning looks like in practice, and how situations interact with the personal side of self-directed learners (Merriam, 2001, pp. 10-11). Changing times and new careers are likely for many Late Baby Boomers, and whatever change they face adult learning is sure to be the stimulus. However, exactly how, or if, adult learning will adapt to meet these changing times is yet to be seen. Moreover, it is not known how this huge group of Late Baby Boomers are learning for career change.

#### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of Baby Boomers born from 1955 to 1964 who have

gone through or are going through a career change. One goal was to discover why individuals are changing careers and if the reasons for change are internally or externally driven. Internal change is psychological or spiritual that stems from within the self (Tough, 1982, p. 34). Conversely, external change which is change over which an individual has no control, such as the loss of a job (pp. 20-21). Another goal was to determine how the Late Baby Boomers went about making those changes. A third goal was to ascertain the characteristics of successful transformations to new careers. Finally, it was to ascertain if individuals engaged in changing careers are doing anything differently now than when they originally prepared for their career.

#### Research Questions

The following research questions were used to accomplish these research goals:

1. How did Baby Boomers born from 1955 to 1964 initially prepare themselves for a career?
2. Why are Baby Boomers born from 1955 to 1964 changing careers?
3. How are these Baby Boomers making those changes?
4. What are Baby Boomers doing differently now than they did the first time around to prepare for second careers?

#### Definitions

Adult Learning Organization--Defined by the author as a formal, organized, for-profit organization with the sole purpose of teaching adults.

Andragogy--Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1980. P. 43).

Baby Boom--The population explosion that began in 1946 after the end of World War II and lasted until 1964 (Jones, 1980, pp. 11-18).

Career Development--Career development represents the total sum of an individual's psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors encountered in a normal life (Gyspers, 1984, p. 620-621).

Career Path--A conscious career choice one pursues.

Consolation Career Path--A career path in which a person pursues a career that is not their first choice.

Differentiation--"Differentiation is distinguishing by a specific difference; of separating an aspect from its larger considerations; of distinguishing a part from the whole" (Erickson, 1959/1980, p. 36).

Early Baby Boomer--Defined by the author as the traditional Baby Boom beginning after World War II in 1946 and ending after the Korean War in 1954.

Financial Motivators for Career Change--Defined by the author as being motivated to change careers by the hope of more money either immediately or in the future.

Generation X--Sometimes called "Xers"; also referred to as the 13ers, slackers, baby busters and the clueless generation; those born between 1961 and 1981. Known for their I don't care attitude (Wagschal, 1997).

Individuation--"Individuation is a developmental process through which a person becomes more uniquely individual" (Levinson, 1978, p. 33).

Late Baby Boomer--Defined by the author as the Baby Boomers born from approximately 1955 until the official end of the Baby Boom in 1964.

Learning How to Learn--"Learning how to learn involves possessing, or acquiring, the knowledge and skill to learn effectively in whatever learning situation one encounters. If you possess the necessary knowledge and

skill, you've learned how to learn; and when you help yourself or others acquire that kind of knowledge or skill, the concept is still at work" (Smith, 1982, p. 19).

Life Cycle--The life cycle is a series of "developmental tasks which must be mastered if he is to be a successful human being" (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 5).

Middle Age--Middle-age is juxtaposed between "young adulthood" and "old age" (Erikson, 1959/1980, p. 129).

New Discovery Career Path--Is a career path in which a person discovers a path for the first time.

Old Dreams Career Path--Is a career path in which a person pursues a career they would have chosen in the first place.

Self--The personality, or the self, emerges from the interaction of organic and environmental forces. As the "Self" evolves, it becomes a force of its own through the development of the individual (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 5).

Self-Directed Learning--Self-directed learning is, "a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes" (Knowles, 1975, p. 18).

Socioeconomic Motivators to Career Change--Defined by the author as events that cause change in which the individual has little to no control such as lay-offs and corporate downsizing.

Transformative Learning--In transformative learning, "we reinterpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations, thus giving a new meaning and perspective to the old experience" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 11).

### Significance of the Study

Although this study only encompasses the specific Baby

Boomer cohort group born between 1955 and 1964, it represents nearly 40 percent of the workforce that is now at the mid-life stage of development (Behrens & Altman, 2000). Additionally, the number of workers entering the workforce will grow by 12 percent from 2002 to 2012, and the fastest growing segment of workers will be seniors age 55 and older (Sahadi, 2004). The number of workers 55 and over is expected to increase to 49.3 percent (2004). The numbers of working Baby Boomers is of extreme importance to this study.

This research has the potential to contribute to the knowledge base of adult development, career development, and adult learning. First, middle-aged adults will be asked why they are changing careers, and these findings will be filtered through stage development theories, to see how the findings compare to the existing theories or to see if they are changing for other reasons not previously known. Second, knowing if middle-aged Baby Boomers felt their preparation for a first career was beneficial and what changes they made in preparing for a second career, can have positive implications for the current career development profession.

In addition to answering specific research questions and contributing to the knowledge base described previously, information learned from this study can also benefit many other areas. One such area that can benefit from this newly

discovered information are learning organizations. Colleges, universities, community colleges, technical and trade schools, and private learning organizations are likely to see an explosion in enrollment as the Late Baby Boomers learn new skills to launch a second career. Knowing why adults are changing and how they are preparing can help these learning organizations market programs and develop curriculum to meet their client's needs.

The findings from this study may help younger Baby Boomers better understand themselves. Most middle-aged adults will be affected by change either internally or externally. Additionally, adults can come to know that socioeconomic factors are also affecting them in many ways. Knowing what these change factors are, understanding them more clearly, and knowing how other Baby Boomers are learning and preparing for a second career can help adults better cope with the future.

Conversely, by not doing this study society will not have as good an idea on the issues facing the younger Baby Boomer. Learning organizations will see a vast population of middle-aged adults looking to change careers but not have a good idea of what they are all about or how to reach them. Younger Baby Boomers may wonder if they are alone in facing difficult changing times.

### Limitations of the Study

Certain design elements of this study did create limitations. The fact that all of the participants are from the Tulsa, Oklahoma metropolitan area can limit the results presented in the following chapters along with any potential theory proposed because it may not appear generalizable.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### The Baby Boom

Once upon a time, children would go to school, and by the magic of a wonderful mentor, they would discover their life's calling. These children might go on to college, study hard to graduate, and find a job suitable to their education. If college were not an option, they might have learned a suitable trade. Workers in this era were loyal, hard-working individuals, and why not? This work ethic was rewarded by job security, steady pay increases, promotions, vacations, and a nice gold watch at retirement. Once retired, individuals would live out their remaining days within the sweet life of leisure. This image may have been true for many people prior to World War II, but it hardly rings true for the sons and daughters of this generation known as the Baby Boom.

#### Groups of Baby Boomers

The Baby Boom generation is separated into two groups. First, there is the early traditional group born beginning in 1946 right after the World War II and ending in 1954



after the Korean War. Second, there is the later group of Boomers born from 1955 up until the official end of the Baby Boom in 1964. The reason for this split is because the issues facing each group are substantially different (Strauss & Howe, 1996, p. 301). For example, the older early group is quickly advancing upon retirement age while the later younger group still has many years left in the workforce.

Generations are identified by their common, shared experiences. They go through the same historical problems, have many of the same influences, and most share similar cultural events (Jones, 1980, p. 66; Strauss & Howe, 1991, pp. 301-305; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 64). The Baby Boom generation is no exception. Actually, the boom generation has the distinction of being the largest population explosion in history as 76,441,000 babies were born in the United States between 1946 and 1964 (Jones, 1980, pp. 1-2). This group, "at every age takes on a different character and presents us with a different set of problems" and continually dominates our lives (p. 1).

An example of this dominance is seen in the way the Baby Boom generation has affected the schools. As the Boomers aged from elementary to high school, school populations at every level swelled beyond capacity. Before

World War II, only 38% of all young people graduated from high school, and only one-third of those went on to college. On the other hand, 75% of the Baby Boomers graduated from high school which led to bulging increases in college enrollment. College admission actually doubled from 1963 to 1973 (Jones, 1980, p. 82).

This college explosion led to problems for both the early and the late Boomers. Since the majority of people who were job seekers had a college education, many of the first group of Boomers found themselves over-educated and working at jobs for which they were over qualified. Others took jobs for which they were not trained or did not want, and this left them feeling bitter (Jones, 1980, p. 155). The younger siblings of this first group also impacted college enrollment. Because of the erosion of incentives that having a degree once held, younger Boomers began to back away from higher education altogether. Enrollment of high school seniors in higher education dropped from 62% to 33% from 1973 to 1980 (p. 157). As a result, earning potentials were dropped by high unemployment, low wages, and slow promotions. This decreased job market followed this group for some time (Glassner, 1994, p. 17; Jones, 1980, p. 162).

At this time, Boomers at all ages might find it difficult to climb up the professional ladder due to

overcrowding by other Boomers (Jones, 1980, p. 281). As older Boomers begin to retire, however, younger ones may seek to realign their careers (Jones, 1980, p. 205). The old paradigm that a person spends a lifetime climbing the ladder with one company is now a thing of the past. The mid-career switch could become a way of life (Glassner, 1994, p. 16; Jones, 1980, p. 282). "The strength of The Baby Boom is its ability to adapt....Transformed by technology and social upheavals, the Boom generation has absorbed the lessons of the post-industrial world and showed its willingness to adapt to it" (Jones, 1980, p. 333).

#### Portrait of a Boomer

Baby Boom children enjoyed a nurturing, child-focused household and community influenced by Dr. Spock who persuaded mothers to adopt a permissive parenting style (Strauss & Howe, 1991, pp. 307-308). Mothers of Boomers were den mothers, book report writers, and cleaners of their children's rooms. To kids, no problem was unfixable. Middle-class children were oblivious to crime, disease, and poverty, and their inner world became the focus of youth. As Baby Boom children began to progress through the school system in the 1970s, sex and politics made their way through both high school and junior high campuses. The curriculum stressed learning skills over subject matter and social

relevance over timeless facts. The first Boomer cohorts came to sexual age with the Beatles' "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" while the later Boomer cohorts with Bruce Springsteen's "Dancing in the Dark." First-wavers asserted a creative role in an idealized future and last-wavers attempted a more defiant withdrawal from the world. Both groups looked within themselves to solve life's problems.

As Baby Boomers started to assert themselves as young adults, they began swarming to angry rallies. "Coffeehouse poets gave way to bullhorn radicals" (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 309). Free speech became the mantra by 1967, and the youth rebellion became an emotionally intense and culturally influential rebellion in America. The next few years brought a series of angry rallies in schools and inner cities. Clinched fists became the icon of rebellion, and the enemy was corporate liberals. Although only 10 to 15 % of the youth were bona fide hippies or screaming radicals, they managed to prevail in the youth culture. Thanks to a strong economy built by the generation that just two decades earlier won World War II, the radical Baby Boomers had no fear of reprisal and found themselves able to demand and receive the attention of the established authority.

With a bustling economy, the youth frenzy culminated around the Vietnam War, which was a perfect opportunity to

rebel against the establishment (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 310-311). The Boomers, having been raised to question, argue, and ultimately disobey orders that did not fall in line with their standards, vehemently opposed the war. As much as the Boomers hated the war, they hated the draft even more. The draft symbolized the ultimate authority of being ordered what to do by the government. However, the draft's class bias was even a bigger division between the Boomers who did go to war and those who did not. Casualties of the Vietnam War peaked in 1969, and so began a bloody Boomer rebellion in the United States highlighted by bombings, shootings, and a surge of street crimes. It was unwanted violence that finally ended the surge of bloody violence triggered by the killing of six students at Kent State and Jackson State in 1970. As the war began to wind down and the draft began letting up, Boomers began mellowing. However, as the economy began to sour in 1973, the mood turned pessimistic. The last wave of Boomers came of age amid a dark generational drizzle of sex, drugs, unemployment, and a bad taste of youth in the mouth of America. The first wave of Boomers were now out of college and with good paying jobs gained during a strong economy, then began a consumption binge that would last many years.

Boomers in their 20s remained detached from the established norms and searched for something more meaningful in life (Strauss & Howe, 1991, pp. 311-312; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 68). They insisted on meaningful careers, and America's postwar productivity surge came to an end. Boomers preferred small, personalized businesses ran from converted homes in neighborhoods, and the economy was slowly changing to match the Boomer personality.

"Boomers measure themselves subjectively, by the spiritual strength they see within" (Strauss & Howe, 1996, p. 304; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 64). As the first wave of Boomers reached 30, they turned to a higher power. Many Boomers dabbled in New Age religions and a search to discover the inner peace from within their own heads. Religion boomed in America for the first time in decades as the desire for self was replaced by a desire for a new sense of responsibility and self-denial. First wave Boomers were more likely to turn to Eastern religious philosophies while the Late Baby Boomer was more likely to turn to traditional fundamental Christianity. Now, Boomers see themselves as morally wise (Strauss & Howe, 1991, pp. 311-312).

In their 40s, the generation that trusted no one over 30 now trusts no one under 30 (Strauss & Howe, 1991, pp.

313-315). They began to be politically correct in civil manners. Boomers at 40 also began to speak out against the things they once supported such as smoking, drinking, obscene music, and sexual promiscuity. Boomers, however, split in the pro-choice or pro-life debate and now embrace the government as an entity to bring about social responsibility, even if it means corporal punishment. Boomers who voted for Reagan a few years earlier are now pushing for more public authority such as more taxes, prisons, zoning, and schools as long as America was moving toward a "lofty social standard that Boomers themselves have sanctified" (p. 315).

Late Baby Boomers were pre-adolescent during Woodstock, young teenagers during Watergate, and burgeoning adults during the energy crisis and hostage situation in Iran (Strauss & Howe, 1991, pp. 316-317). They graduated from high school with a grim mood compared to their older siblings. Late Baby Boomers were fearful of a national catastrophe and suffered from low test scores and from high rates of crime, suicide, and substance abuse. They felt that the government and the country was out of control. Boomers today stand in the midst of a multifaceted reworking of American society.

Cohort group membership is involuntary and permanent; it applies to a finite number of identifiable individuals whose cohort group can only shrink in size over time (Strauss & Howe, 1996, p. 301). Baby Boomers born between 1955 and 1964 are distinctively different from those born between 1946 and 1954 (p. 301). They are also different than the Generation X that followed. While early Boomers are quickly facing retirement, later Boomers contemplate their future. Each generation will most likely have its own defining components. Late Baby Boomers have fared worse than the first wave of Boomers in educational aptitude and financial security (Strauss & Howe, 1996, p. 304; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 4).

### Changing Global Factors

#### Longevity and Health

Today, there are a variety of socioeconomic factors affecting Boomers at both ends of the spectrum. One major statistic individuals must consider when planning for retirement is life expectancy. According to National Vital Statistics Report (March 2002), the life expectancy of an individual born in 1946 is 66.7 years compared to 70.2 years for a person born in 1964. This compares to the life expectancy of a person born in 1999 at 76.7 years. Indeed, nearly 30 years have been added to one's life expectancy



since the turn of the 20th Century. This was more than was added from the Stone Age to 1900 (Bronte, 1997). Many experts believe that because of overall better living conditions such as sanitation, shelter, clothing, standard of living, and increased medical care, life expectancies can go up even further for people alive today (Bronte, 1997; Canaff, 1997; Stein, 2000). Many experts predict that people alive today can benefit from dramatic increases in life expectancy because of advances in the quality of healthcare (Moen, 1998) and technological advances (Canton, 1999).

In the near future, some predict that early in the 21st Century scientists are likely to unlock the secrets of DNA. With this technology, the science of DNA engineering can help to heal the sick and prolong life. Once this happens, it is entirely possible that life expectancies will easily top 100 years or more (Canton, 1999, pp. 156-157). The possibility of vital, productive 200-year-old individuals is not that far of a stretch given the rate at which biotechnology is advancing (p. 163). Currently, however, very few people understand the implications such innovations will have on society (p. 159).

While the goal of many Americans is to retire and to retire early if at all possible, it may soon be harder with each passing year to achieve that milestone in the life

cycle. The possibility of retirement at the traditional age of 65 is in jeopardy for many Americans (Krain, 1995; Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998). Experts predict that the age for full Social Security benefits will increase to 67 for people born after 1959 (Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998) while others report that the traditional retirement age of 65 is a thing of the past and people should plan on staying in the workforce longer (Beatty & Burroughs, 1999; Fullerton, 1999). Also, some analysts believe retirement age will be raised to 68 years more quickly than presently legislated and that early retirement ages will be raised from 62 to 65 (Quinn & Kozy, 1996).

Why is there all of this talk about expanding life expectancies and retirement? Under normal circumstances these are good things, and most people will enjoy both to the fullest. There are, however, even more factors to think about when it comes to aging and retirement.

First, current trends in corporations are strong indicators of change for the American workforce. Many companies are downsizing or "rightsizing" which generally causes losses of previously secure jobs (Sonnenberg, 1997). Individuals working today cannot expect to work for a company for 40 years or more and then retire with the symbolic gold watch. Many of the early Baby Boomers and

older workers with higher salaries are being offered early retirement packages as incentive to leave (Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998). Once the Early Boomers begin to retire, the number of workers paying for Social Security will plateau while the number of retirees continues to soar (Krugman, 2003, p. 198). In 2000 there were 3.4 workers for each retiree; by 2030 there will only be 2 (p. 198). The result of this type of early retirement is that it is draining pension funds. At this rate, many people will run out of money before they die (Krain, 1995). To make matters worse, corporations are failing to deliver promised retirement incomes due to financial woes (Krain, 1995) and, in some cases, scandal. Early retirement may not be a possibility for many workers (Krain, 1995). In addition, traditional retirement comes with certain risks not seen in recent history such as living beyond retirement income which can lead to poverty (Bartkowiak, 1993).

Second, the fate of Social Security is in question. In addition to the increasing number of predictions that suggest that Social Security is going broke, there are other tangible problems with which to deal (Krugman, 2003, p. 189). With Social Security benefit ages creeping upward and the growing number of early retirees, people should expect to stay in the workforce longer or re-enter the workforce

(Beatty & Burroughs, 1999). Social Security will not adequately provide for those relying on it as their only source of income unless they plan on working long past traditional retirement ages or risk poverty in late life (Beatty & Burroughs, 1999; Fullerton, 1999; Krain, 1995; Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998).

A closely related problem with earned retirement income is that some older Boomers are better off financially than the younger Boomers. Older Boomers experienced more earning opportunities because of a healthier economy in their young adulthood (Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998). This is an important sign for the later Boomers to carefully watch as they make retirement decisions today.

The situation related to Social Security and human longevity are of major concerns for policy makers. As late as February 2004, the Federal Reserve Board Chairman, Alan Greenspan, recently warned of the rising deficit just years before the Baby Boomers are set to retire (Gongloff, 2004). The February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004 CNN/MONEY article recently reported:

He [Greenspan] proposed some solutions that would reduce future Social Security benefits to retirees, including raising the ages at which retirement benefits are paid and changing the inflation measure used to index the payments.

Greenspan does go on to recommend that action be taken quickly so people will have time to adjust to the changes.

Additionally, the number of workers entering the workforce is expected to grow by 12% between 2002 and 2012, and of these the fastest growing segment of workers will be seniors age 55 and over (Sahadi, 2004). During this time the number of workers 55 and over will grow to 49.3% (2004), and this may have tremendous ramifications for the economy at many levels.

### Global Forces

Besides retirement, many other factors are at play that affect workers today. For one, global unemployment is higher now than during the Great Depression (Glassner, 1994, p. 16; Rifkin, 1995, p. xv). It keeps going up because technology is replacing jobs. Robotics and artificial intelligence are replacing humans every day and completing the tasks more safely and efficiently (Canton, 1999, pp. 17, 80, 93). However, robotics that replace human careers will also create new career paths not available today (Canton, 1999, p. 93). Many job categories have either shrunk or disappeared all together. At this rate, "employment is likely to be the single most pressing social issue of the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Rifkin, 1995, p. xv). Due to environmental factors such as technological advances and a global economy, traditional careers that once flourished are now declining (Sonnenberg, 1997; Sullivan, 1999).

The career paths of previous generations are now irrelevant as templates for contemporary workers. In 1969, technologies such as cell phones, personal computers, and the Internet did not exist when the Late Baby Boomers were preparing for a first career (Canton, 1999, p. 6). These technologies have not only changed the face of work and society, it affects how people are educated and entertained (p. 6).

Also, huge cutbacks in the service industries have resulted in corporate restructuring and in fewer jobs. In the past, when technologies have replaced workers in a given job, new jobs have cropped up to take their place. Today, this is not always the case. In fact, all three traditional sectors of the economy, agrarian, information, and service, are experiencing job replacement because of technology, and this is causing unemployment (Rifkin, 1995, p. xvi).

Baby Boomers are particularly susceptible to corporate downsizing (Glassner, 1994, p. 13). They will also find it difficult to find new work (pp. 34-35). In the mid-1990s, several hundred-thousand Boomer managers and professionals found themselves without work. No other generation had experienced the same amount of job loss since the Great Depression (p. 16). Due to the current economy, the career for Baby Boomers is expected to be like a roller coaster

ride because corporate reorganizations, bankruptcies, and recessions are making their career outlook unstable (p. 32).

College graduates are increasingly being forced to take jobs they do not necessarily want. In fact, 15% of all college graduates in 1990 reported taking jobs that do not require college degrees; this figure rose to more than 35% in 1995 (Glassner, 1994, p. 60; Rifkin, 1995, p. 172).

The notion of being a productive citizen is imprinted on the nation's character. Without employment, self-esteem plummets. For many, employment is much more than a measure of income. Productive employment is an essential measure of self-worth (Glassner, 1994, p. 53; Rifkin, 1995, p. 195). Late Baby Boomers see themselves living productively for 40 more years and worry that much of that time will be spent in jobs they dislike or that during that time they will be displaced by a disloyal corporation (Glassner, 1994, p. 30). Boomers are feeling less and less obligated toward a profession; therefore, they are willing to bail out of a career easily. This mind set is brought about by the disloyalty they feel from witnessing their companies easily and frequently laying off worker after worker (Glassner, 1994, pp. 53-54).

These changes in the arrangements between employer and employee are likely to have profound psychological effects

(Sonnenberg, 1997). Masking emotional occurrences in the workplace with terms such as downsizing or rightsizing are clearly having an emotional impact. The literature on workplace employment describes the emotional effects with terms such as depression, unresolved rage, illness, impotence, and family problems (Sher, 1997).

Turbulent times will likely define the Late Boomers and lead many of them to dramatic changes in life and career. Many times these decisions to change are forced upon the individual with little choice.

#### Part-Time Workers

Part-time employment can be both voluntary and involuntary and can include temporary employment, at home employment, and subcontractor employment (Larson & Ong, 1994, pp. 191-194; Wiens-Teurs & Hill, 2002, pp. 303-305). However, many part-time workers prefer full-time employment and the accompanying benefits.

A trend for many businesses in the United States is the use of part-time workers in lieu of full-time employees (Bartkowiak, 1993, p. 811; Larson & Ong, 1994, pp. 187-189; Wiens-Teurs & Hill, 2002, p. 303). The primary reason for this trend is because of the potential to increase company profits by having a contingency workforce (Bartkowiak, 1993, p. 811; Larson & Ong, 1994, pp. 187-189; Wiens-Teurs & Hill,



2002, p. 303). Companies are benefitting from increased profits because part-time workers are not earning as much money as full-time employees and because the company does not pay for benefits such as medical insurance, retirement plans, sick pay, and paid vacations (Bartkowiak, 1993, p. 811; Larson & Ong, 1994, p. 194; Wiens-Teurs & Hill, 2002, p. 304).

Part-time employees have the quality of their lives affected in many ways. Decreased wages by working fewer hours are making it harder for part-time employees to provide for themselves (Bartkowiak, 1993, p. 812). In fact, in recent years the level of poverty among part-time workers has increased (Wiens-Teurs & Hill, 2002, p. 310). Many part-time workers are not eligible for retirement benefits or savings plans, and this leaves them susceptible to poverty in old age (Bartkowiak, 1993, pp. 812-813; Beatty & Burroughs, 1999; Fullerton, 1999; Krain, 1995; Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998).

Career choices and the quality of life are also affected by part-time employment. Part-time employees and their children are less likely to attend college which makes a career that requires a college education inaccessible (Bartkowiak, 1993, p. 813). These individuals, and society

as a whole, will suffer because they are not able to reach their full potential (Bartkowiak, 1993, p. 813).

### Technology

The power shift in technology is changing the social and industrial landscape. This shift will re-align economic and social boundaries, and traditional systems will soon be unrecognizable (Canton, 1999, p. 3). "The convergence of leading-edge technology will be the single most powerful driver of change for the next 100 years" (p. 8). Tools have always been the decisive markers for stages of human evolution and commerce. To date, the tools of the future are only budding entities that will define the future (p. 8).

Many factors may influence late Baby Boomers to make changes in careers. However, other theories exist that claim adults are inclined to change at certain pre-described periods triggered by psychological or age factors. These theories have existed for some time, and their roots predate the Baby Boom phenomenon. To better understand Baby Boomers born between 1955 and 1964, a review of adult development and adult development theories is warranted.

### Adult Development

#### The Individual

The struggle for identity has gone on for quite some time. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Rene Descartes wrote, "Cogito,

ergo, sum" ("I think, therefore I am"). Many philosophers accepted this argument as proof of man's existence. Three centuries later, after the end of World War I, the poet e.e. cummings wrote of the "Is" to describe the essence of the individual. Carl Jung theorized that a patient can achieve a state of individuation or wholeness of self through spontaneous, natural processes within the psyche (Jung, 1973, p. 107). Maslow called it self-actualization (Sheehy, 1976, p. 34).

To help define identity and the life cycles of man, Daniel J. Levinson (1978) quoted Jung to describe the essence of humanness: "As Jung conceived the term, individuation is a developmental process through which a person becomes more uniquely individual" (p. 33). The personality, or the self, emerges from the interaction of organic and environmental forces. As the "self" evolves, it becomes a force of its own through the development of the individual (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 5). The term "identity" is a conscious sense of individual identity, of unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character, and of maintaining an inner solidarity with a group's ideals and identity (Erikson, 1959/1980, p. 109).

#### Developmental Theories

The life cycle is a series of "developmental tasks which must be mastered if ...[a person] is to be a successful human being" (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 5). People are influenced by internal and external forces that contribute to these developmental tasks. Some tasks arise from physical changes that occur such as aging or illness; other forces come from the cultural pressures from society; still other forces are personal values and aspirations from within the individual that make up one's personality (p. 5).

A similar notion of the human life cycle was espoused by Erik Erikson. Erickson proposed that people move through the life cycle into various stages through "gradual unfolding of the personality through phase-specific psychosocial crisis" (Erikson, 1959/1980, p. 128). Here, humans find their psychosocial health by successful completion in each stage of development immediately preceding and following an "identity crisis" (p. 128). Erickson described eight specific life cycles from birth to death. However, Erickson did point out that all development was not a series of crisis, rather that psychosocial development is proceeded by critical steps. Crisis is not necessarily a catastrophe, but a decision point of increased threat or opportunity (Sheehy, 1976, p. 13).

Gail Sheehy (1976) found the term crisis confusing. To her the term implied "personal failure, weakness, an inability to bear up against stressful outside events. I've replaced that confusing label with a less loaded word for the critical transitions between stages, and called them passages" (p. 16). As people pass from one stage to another, they go through periods of vulnerability only to end that passage with a longer, more stable period of equilibrium. These periods may take several years or more. These developmental stages are defined by changes from within and are not initiated by a singular event one might encounter (p. 20). Sheehy also describes people going through life in stages and describes each person engaging in "steps of development in his or her own characteristic step-style" (p. 25).

Another look at the life cycle, which perhaps was the most in-depth, was presented by Daniel J. Levinson (1978). In his book which is based on 40 male subjects, Levinson builds on Erikson's theory and developed four specific eras through which humans evolve throughout a life cycle. He proposes that each of the four overlapping sequences last approximately 25 years. The eras are: childhood and adolescence (0-22), early adulthood (17-45), middle adulthood (40-65), and late adulthood (after 59). The

overlapping of eras is due to how individuals evolve and develop differently (p. 19). "The nature of each era is reflected in the evolution of a man's careers in work, family and other settings, his involvement in solitary and social enterprises, and his broader life plans and goals" (p. 30).

Under normal circumstances, adults develop successfully and move from one phase, or stage, to another once the current stage is complete. For the most part, adults behave in "phase specific" manners (Erickson, 1959/1980, p. 130). In contrast, Levinson (1978) points out that adults go through transitional periods before moving from one phase to another (p. 23). Often, adults will struggle through this transition by doubting life decisions and searching for answers to questions about how they have come to be in their current state in life. Times of crisis, however, are predictable, normal, and healthy behavior that may lead to positive change or reconciliation (Levinson, 1978, p. 199; Sheehy, 1976, p. 21). Erickson (1959/1980) refers to the state of doubting and searching as a state of crisis in which people wage "holy wars" against themselves and others who seem to question or threaten their ideological ideas (p. 170). The individual will not move into the next phase until the crisis is solved.

## The Middle-Aged Individual

The age at which individuals pass through the phases of a natural, normal life as described by developmental theories vary slightly. Havinghurst (1948/1972), for example, identifies middle age between the ages of 30 to 60 (p. 95) while Levinson (1978) places it at around 40 to 65 (p. 19). Erikson's (1948/1972) cycles are not age specific. He juxtaposes "adulthood" in the middle of maturity between "young adulthood" and "old age" (p. 129). Sheehy (1976) describes this period as the "Decline Decade" between the ages of 35 and 45 (p. 30).

Middle age is an important phase in adulthood. "Jung was the first to recognize that individuation occurs, and is surely needed, at mid-life and beyond" (Levinson, 1978, p. 33). During mid-life, individuals strive to reduce the demands placed on them by society and even by themselves. Individuation awakens self-renewal and creativity as one moves through mid-life (p. 33). "The developmental tasks of the middle years arise from changes within the organism, from environmental pressures, and above all from demands or obligations laid upon the individual by his own values and aspirations" (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 95). The middle-age period is both danger and opportunity. It is a chance to re-

identify oneself from that of the first half of life (Sheehy, 1976, p. 30).

In mid-life the individual evolves from "self-absorption" or "stagnation" to "generativity". Generativity is the period of continued growth the person seeks to guide new generations or younger associates to maturity (Erikson, 1959/1980, pp. 165-168). The opposite of generativity is stagnation. Stagnation leads to frustration and crisis. However, according to Levinson (1978) "both generativity and stagnation are vital to man's development" (p. 30). A person must feel the pangs of stagnation to know or to sense the need of generativity (Levinson, 1978, p. 30; Sheehy, 1976, p. 21).

Also critical to achieve generativity is the need to become more productive and creative and to correct social injustices. Erickson warned that adults who skip the enrichment of generativity will ultimately lapse into prolonged stagnation (Sheehy, 1976, p. 280).

#### The Transition to Mid-Life: The Impetus of Change

"The mid-life transition is both an ending and a beginning" (Levinson, 1986, p.7). As people move through one life phase to another, they inevitably experience some level of change. According to Levinson (1978), the reason for all this change is that the fabric of life changes around 40,



which is the start of middle adulthood (Levinson, 1978, pp. 30-31; Levinson, 1997, p. 371). When a man arrives at this point it is a culminating event that was preceded by his youthful striving and adult aspirations. This event usually plays an important role in initiating what Levinson calls the mid-life transition. When he reaches this point, the man often re-evaluates where he has been and decides where he wants to go in life (Levinson, 1978, pp. 30-31). This is similar to what Erickson describes when middle-aged adults realize that their life is incomplete or incompatible with their true self (Erickson, 1959/1980, p. 170). This is where the conception of change is likely to take place.

Sheehy (1976) asserts that women enter into the mid-life transition earlier than men. Women often stop to take stock of their lives at age 35 (p. 31). Levinson (1997) believes that women enter into the mid-life transition at the same age as men at age 40 (p. 371).

The transitional period, which normally lasts about 5 years, ends one stage and makes the way for a new one (Levinson, 1978, p. 49). Individuals at this phase typically make many crucial life choices; there are choices that will mark the beginning of the new period. These choices lead adults to a new life structure and mark the beginning of a new phase known as middle age (p. 52). Most men go through

either moderate or severe crisis during the mid-life transition (Levinson, 1978, p. 60; Sheehy, 1976, pp. 30-31).

The mid-life transition does not start with a bang or marker event (Sheehy, 1976, pp. 242-243). It is more of a sense or vague feeling. This ambiguous sensation is the beginning of middle age that can end up in crisis. Not everyone suffers through severe crisis nor does everyone who goes through it come out with dramatically changed personalities. However, those who do pause to re-examine or think about how things are compared to how they could be are likely to find their true self and thrive.

#### Changing Careers at Mid-Life

A person's occupation has significant meaning within the self and important consequences for the self. People have a need to understand the meaning of work (Levinson, 1978, p. 45). In order to take one's place in society, an individual must acquire a conflict-free occupation (Erickson, 1959/1980, P. 118). When occupational conflict exists, a person must change careers or continue to deal with the internal crisis (p. 133).

For many adults, the result of the transformation that happens through the mid-life transition manifests itself through drastic career changes (Levinson, 1978, p. 194; Sheehy, 1976, p. 31). Many individuals change their jobs

during middle-age, and sometimes start at the beginning of a new career (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 99).

The career task for many people is not so much that of reaching and maintaining their peak of prestige or income as it is the task of developing a flexible work role that is interesting and productive and financially satisfactory. (p. 100)

Additionally, men in their 40s move away from advancing for personal gain to developing a more tender and ethical self (Sheehy, 1976, p. 31). Mid-life transitional men seek to change occupations when they feel that the present one does not meet their "dreams" (Levinson, 1978, p. 220).

Not all career change is driven by crisis, however. Not only do individuals in mid-life look to change careers when there is an imbalance within the self, many change to move to the next level. Their success in their "first" occupation has enabled them to pursue old passions. These are lively people compared to their counterparts who stay with the old achieved dream. They are likely to find themselves later in life squeezing it for life blood (Sheehy, 1976, p. 247).

If a person does not change careers as a result of personal crisis, there is a risk of going through "Psychological Retirement" which means a person shuts down all effective behavior and does only the bare minimum to get by. Psychological retirement is psychologically damaging to the person (Levinson, 1997, p. 375). The person who is

physically there, but not psychologically there is a known as a "sleepwalker" (Bridges, 1992, p. 129-130).

#### Women and the Mid-Life Transition

Much of the early work on developmental theories focused on men which is not surprising considering that the fundamental research was conducted primarily in the 1940s and 1950s. In the early 1980s, however, Daniel Levinson (1997) conducted another study involving 45 women. He was careful to point out that men and women go through the same sequence of periods in the adult life structure development at the same ages (p. 413). Additionally, the women in Levinson's study were the first generation in American history who took a non-traditional path in regard to women's roles as homemaker (p. 409). However, as old stereotypes are broken and women take their rightful place in society, the lives of women and men are becoming increasingly similar (p. 414).

Based on his study of women and the life cycle, Levinson (1997) concluded that the mid-life transition differed slightly for women who took on traditional roles from non-traditional roles (p. 415). However, career women and homemakers have similar mid-life transitions. Most women, just like their male counterparts, go through some level of developmental crisis. Also like men, women often

look to change careers and look for significant meaning in their endeavors (p. 372). In fact, in mid-life transition women take the first step toward career change for the same reasons as men (p. 374). About 50% of the women in Levinson's study found aspects of their jobs bad enough to initiate change (p. 375). Many people initiating career change do not know exactly where they are headed (p. 376).

Many women differ from men because they try to be traditional and non-traditional simultaneously; this is a condition termed "Neo-traditional". This role is thrust upon women because of unfair traditions and stereotypes. Another difference is that women were stronger than men in asking what they want during the mid-life transition. Women also reported wanting "more passionate engagement and equality in love and work" (Levinson, 1997, p. 408).

Contrasted with turbulent socioeconomic conditions, many adults consider dramatic change at different points in their lives; this is especially so at mid-life. Often, this change leads to changes in careers. In this case, change is internally driven by a conscious choice made within the individual with a specific life-altering goal in mind. This goal is not necessarily money or fame, rather it is an intrinsic need to satisfy the self (Glassner, 1994, p. 13). Based on the sheer number of Baby Boomers, there is the

potential for tremendous numbers of individuals engaged in career change due to these factors.

#### Other Reasons for Career Change

Many adults in the mid-life transitional stage seek to improve their occupational lives by seeking personally satisfying, significant, and socially valuable careers (Levinson, 1986). Individuals between the ages of 40 to 45 are likely to begin the pursuit of second careers by personal development. However, motivators to change careers can vary greatly from one life cycle to another (Beatty & Burroughs, 1999). For example, adults in their 40s ranked more money higher in importance than both enjoying a career or the feeling of usefulness in a job. However, adults in their 50s and 60s reported that enjoying a job and feeling that their job was useful was more important than money. In addition to the voluntary motivators listed here, there are also numerous involuntary motivators to career change such as job displacement, technology making workplace tasks obsolete, corporate downsizing, and part-time work forces for specific tasks (Bronte, 1997; Canaff, 1997; Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, et al. 1998; Sterrett, 1999).

Adults make career changes for many reasons. Some adults make mid-life career changes to get away from the youthful pursuit of competition and achievement to spend

more time in volunteer work and leisure activities (Stewart & Ostrove, 1998). Others changed for more interesting or challenging jobs that bring about personal satisfaction (Drucker, 1999; Quinn & Kozy, 1996; Sullivan, 1999). Others change occupations that are more in line with their personality or to incorporate previous education and experience that was abandoned earlier in life (August & Quintero, 2001; Foltz & Luzzo, 1998; Sullivan, 1999). Executives reach their professional peak at about age 45 and change careers rather than face 20 to 25 more years at the same job (Drucker, 1999). Other people made career corrections that evolved through professional associations which posed a greater number of career alternatives and a greater desire to change careers (Higgins, 2001).

Other loftier reasons to change careers are also documented. For example, many individuals want to make a difference by expanding one's horizons and training those who will be future leaders. Contributions to the next generation are important second career choices for many adults. Often these types of careers are non-profit, voluntary roles. Through positive work experiences, many individuals achieve a confident power to change careers (Drucker, 1999; Stewart & Ostrove, 2000; Higgins, 2001).

Whatever the reason for changing careers, individuals who felt a great level of support were highly motivated to advance from contemplating a move to actually going through with change (August & Quintero, 2001; Higgins, 2001; Sterrett, 1999). Others simply waited until their children were out of the house before making a career change (Bronte, 1997; Drucker, 1999).

With voluntary career changes, women experience greater variety in their paths through mid-life than do men (Moen, 1998), but job changers are primarily male, professional, and managers (Sterrett, 1999). Many adults involved in mid-life career changes experienced deep fears about their abilities and marketability. These fears are being perceived as too old by the boss and co-workers, too old or uneducated to learn the new job, risking the loss of money, and not finding the fulfillment they were looking for when making the change (Behrens & Altman, 2000).

Other voluntary motivations are not positive reasons for career change. Individuals become dissatisfied with their jobs or find them distasteful (August & Quintero, 2001; Higgins, 2001). Dissatisfaction can be caused by role regrets motivating one to change (Stewart & Ostrove, 2000). More attractive alternatives or obstacles and confidence



issues to overcome are other motivations to career change (Higgins, 2001).

The Late Baby Boomers going through the mid-life transition period are becoming acutely aware of the realities facing them as they begin to look toward old age. People have a real fear that they will not have enough money to retire. This fear is legitimate. Inflation has decreased spending dollars from individuals, and many find it more difficult just to make ends meet (Drucker, 1999; Canaff, 1997; Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998; Stein, 2000; Quinn & Kozy, 1996). The uneasiness of facing retirement with inadequate funds can be a powerful motivator for career change.

### Career Development

#### Career vs. a Job

There are significant differences between merely working and having a career. Working is simply holding a job or series of unrelated jobs to meet the basic necessities of life. A career is defined as a progression or evolution of related jobs in the same general field (Higgins, 2001; Moen, 1998). A second career, or career change, is a significant change from the current career one currently holds. However, a job change is merely when one acquires a different job than the one currently held, but it is in the same or

different field. A career change can also occur when the individual perceives a change has taken place (Higgins, 2001; Sterrett, 1999).

Career development does not merely define finding and training for the job one does. There is a clear distinction between occupation, which is what one does, and career, which is the course followed throughout one's lifetime. In fact, career development represents the total sum of an individual's psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors encountered in a normal life (Gyspers, 1984, pp. 620-621). Further, career development will carry over into whatever role individuals find themselves in be it workplace, school, community, or home (pp. 620-621).

Since the focus here is on Baby Boomers born from 1955 to 1964, a historical look at how careers were developed throughout their high school years is important. High school years for this group were from approximately the mid 1960s to the early 1980s. During these years, the group was influenced by career development theories, the impetus of career development, and how careers were developed during the mid 1960s through the mid 1980s.

#### Career Development Theories

Career development theories are grounded in human development theories from practitioners such as Erickson, Rogers, and Havinghurst. Preparing for one's career is the same as preparing to move from one life cycle to another. For example, when one moves from adolescence toward early adulthood, that person ultimately moves from one subsequent life stage to the next. Since the 1950s, many career psychologists agree that career choice is a developmental process. Beyond this, however, diverging theories exist among career development theorists in what are known as structural, developmental, and social theories of career development (Jespen, 1984, p. 138).

The construct of career development is made up of the concepts of differentiation and integration (Tiedeman, 1963. p.36).

The locus of career development is in a presumably continuously differentiating ego-identity as it is formed from experience. Differentiation is distinguishing by a specific difference; of separating an aspect from its larger considerations; of distinguishing a part from the whole. (p. 36)

Erickson called this process the psychosocial crisis (p. 5).

Theories from the structural perspective attempt to describe differences among individuals in certain personality characteristics and relate them to potential differences among job demands. Personality differences, or a person's psychological make-up, refer to characteristics

such as interests and abilities that resulted from early developmental strategies that have evolved over a lifetime. Thus, theorists from this point of view emphasize the structure of personality characteristics (Jespen, 1984, p. 138-139; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 4).

In contrast, the developmental perspective focuses on "intraindividual" differences across the life span and how people "grow up into" their work. The distinction along which differences are emphasized is that of time rather than persons. The development perspective usually refers to two types of qualitative changes. First, changes in the process of choosing, entering, and progressing in work roles are evident. Second, changes in the ability to cope with the generalized worker role expectations are noticeable. In short, the developmental perspective includes distinguishable views about behavioral change over time (Jespen, 1984, pp. 138-139). Working from an Erickson point of view, Tiedeman (1963) wrote that "career development includes the development of an orientation toward work that comes from the psychosocial process of forming an ego identity" (p. 4). It includes "readiness to cope with the developmental tasks of one's life stage, to make socially required career decisions, and to cope appropriately with the tasks society confronts the developing youth and adults"

(Super & Jordaan, 1973, p. 4). Developmental tasks are basic to both human development in general and vocation development. Career guidance from the developmental point of view is helping students to master developmental tasks (Campbell, Walz, Miller, & Kriger, 1973, p. 16).

A third and alternative theory to career development is known as the social learning theory of career decision making. This refers to the interaction between the individual and environmental events. This theory assumes that changes in career behavior are a direct result of the individuals and the environmental encounters they interact with over time (Jespen, 1984, p. 139). Tiedeman (1963) also wrote of an environmental influence, but called it a part of society or society's sub-culture that helps define a person (p. 4). Life itself is a series of changing environments and roles that change as a result of finding new things about ourselves as time goes on (p. 29).

In relation to the structural, developmental, and social theories of career development, Tiedeman (1963) most closely aligns with the developmental category although there are elements of both structural and social theories in his definition. This is clearly demonstrated when he writes that:

Career development then is self-development viewed in relation with choice, entry and progress in

educational and vocational pursuits. It is an evolving conception of self-in-situation which is occurring over time in man who is capable of anticipation, experience, evaluation, and memory. (p. 46)

Career counseling has both internal elements such as individual ability and individual needs as well as external elements such as societal forces (Campbell et al. 1973, p. 32).

In the late 1970s, the evolution from Tiedeman's broader definition of career development theory to Jespen's more specific theories becomes evident in the work of Edwin Herr. Herr (1979) is also more developmental in theory when he emphasizes that "exploration and identity occur in relation to various developmental tasks that appear at different chronological ages and must be confronted and successfully resolved if individual career decision making is to be effective and purposeful" (p. 121). However, factors such as personal values and personality characteristics must be considered in order to fit occupations to individuals (p. 120). These aspects are what Jespen (1984) defined in the structural theory of career development (pp. 138-139).

During the time in which the Late Baby Boomers were developing career paths, structural and developmental theories of career development were predominant. The notion

of a social, or environmental, influence on students developing careers was somewhat of a fringe theory newly emerging on the scene. However, there is a clear path in the career development literature from the early 1960s to the mid 1980s illuminating the emergence of the social theory.

#### The Impetus of Career Development

Career development is predicated on the notion of differentiation. Tiedeman (1963) wrote, "Erickson says that failure to settle on a vocational identity is the root of identity diffusion that must be understood in a developmental way" (p. 28). Therefore, the impetus of career development is to bring clarity to this continuously differentiating ego-identity (p. 57). Effective career development guides a child through a career maturation process known as "developmental task" which is based on life stages (Borow, 1984, p. 174).

The noblest of career development purposes may be helping students break free from the psychological limits on choice placed on them by family, society, or unfair stereotypes (Herr, 1979, p. 124). Students must also have the ability to meet the diverse human needs found in society so that individuals can make free and informed choices (p. 25). Counselors, teachers, mentors, and parents who take on the task of developing youth bring together the concepts of

the individual and introduce them to the world of work (Campbell et al. 1973, pp. 31-32; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 51).

Career developers educate students to the knowledge and skills required to plan a career and prepare for work (Herr, 1979, p. 121). These individuals instill personal development to help people understand themselves and their place in the world (p. 28). Then, they help them accept this role and make it a reality by planned, purposeful behavior (pp. 119-120). The goal is to enable students to make informed career choices by enhancing their problem-solving skills, decision-making ability, and goal-setting capabilities.

More specifically, career development is to help students differentiate between personality and choice as part of a problem-solving aspect (Campbell et al. 1973, pp. 31-32; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 37). The distinction between personality and choice goes back to career development theories that state that "integration cannot be achieved without prior differentiation" (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 37). Jespen (1984) also speaks of "real-world" problem-solving identification as the process of describing and identifying the client's problem for goal setting. He calls this process "diagnosis" or "needs assessment" (p. 136).



Real-world learning is immediately applicable to the student's lives and enhances the career choice process. When real-life learning occurs, more attention is given to individual desires than to the tasks proposed by the formal learning situation (Fellenz & Conti, 1989). Education through formal means does not generally prepare people to learn from everyday life experiences (Sternberg, 1990, p. 35). Therefore, by creating real-life career differentiation situations for students, the career choice stands a better chance of being successful.

Sternberg (1990) differentiated between problem-solving in real-life settings and in academic settings to help adult educators create learning environments that facilitate real-life problem solving. First, adults have to recognize that a problem exists. This is usually the case for problem solving in real life. In formal learning settings, however, someone else often identifies the problem for the student. Not only do adults have to recognize problems in real-life, they must also be able to correctly define them to determine the appropriate solution. However, if adults "are taught that they are always going to have problems defined for them...they are not going to be ready for practical problems" (p. 36).

The "structuredness of problems" in real life are different than those in academic settings (Sternberg, 1990, p. 37). Academic problems are often well-structured. On the other hand, real-life problems are often ill-structured. Teaching students to solve well-structured problems is not preparing them for solving problems in real life (p. 38). Perhaps this explains why problem solving as career development was not effective for individuals who found their career unsatisfactory later in life and ultimately changed careers.

After problems have been identified, the next steps in the problem solving process is decision making and goal setting. These are important steps in career development. Decision making is exemplified through crystallization and a series of goals (Campbell et al. 1973, pp. 31-32; Jespen, 1984, p. 136; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 46). Here, developers help clarify cognitive and affective behaviors in developmental and decision-making stages (Jespen, 1984, p. 153). The goal here is to enable students to take action on decisions made (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 48).

There are five distinctive steps in the career development process. The steps are: crystallizing a vocational preference, specifying it, implementing it,

stabilizing the chosen vocation, and consolidating one's status and advancing in the occupation (Herr, 1979, p. 121).

#### Career Development: Mid 1960s to Early 1980s

Families have a huge influence on career choices by individuals during their formative youth. Early identification with work and career often comes from parents or influential family members (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 11). The child observes proper, productive behavior at home that transfers to one's concept of work (Borow, 1984, p. 163). Known as the status attainment model, socioeconomic status indicators of education level and occupational status transfers to the child's occupational attainment desires. This level of job attainment often coincides with the father (Borow, 1984, p. 173; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 70). Many times, occupational inheritance occurs when individuals "inherit" careers from a family member. This is especially true in careers such as medicine, law, small-business ownership, and farming (Borow, 1984, p. 163). On the other hand, the exact opposite is frequently true when individuals intentionally takes on the career different than their father (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 20).

Through a supportive environment where one is able to successfully fulfil a particular role one experiences, "I am what I learn", this often translates into career choices

(Tiedeman, 1963, pp. 12-14). Another point to consider in the same vein is that people becomes what they see. This is manifested through occupational imagery through television and movies (Borow, 1984, p. 172).

Other career development explanations are more intrinsic in nature. For example, interests often become an avocation that can evolve into a career (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 12). Hobbies and the notion of translating what one does and learns into what one is are also related to career choice (pp. 14, 19). For example, a young woman who chooses to pursue a career in athletic training because of her keen interest in sports has translated "I am what I do" into a career choice. A young man who transfers his life long study of the piano into a career of teaching music is an example of "I am what I learn". Whatever the method, early childhood experiences have a great impact on subsequent development (Campbell et al. 1973, p. 16).

School counselors, teachers, and mentors played a critical role in how a person's career choices were developed. Specifically, these career developers were responsible for identifying problems by formal and informal client assessment (Jespen, 1984, p. 137). Often, formal instruments were used such as a formal needs assessment, inventories, questionnaires, interviewing, and aptitude

testing (Herr, 1979, p. 122; Jespen, 1984, p. 137; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 52).

Both formal and informal assessments lead to planning systems that are then used based on gathered information to establish goal-setting, objectives, and on-going evaluation for the child (Miller, 1984, p. 436). Many strategies exist that played an important role in the ways careers were developed. The first and most prevalent of these was by creating experience.

Career experiences may be created in many ways. Role exploration can be constructed both inside and outside of school through craft classes (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 12). Sometimes experience can be extended to apprenticeship programs into the trades (p. 76). Career awareness can often be achieved by career exploration with different age groups and can often involve community collaboration (Herr, 1979, p. 121; Jespen, 1984, p. 139 & 435). The goal of experience building was to introduce the world of work to the student's frame of reference. Students can learn from the activities themselves and from reflecting upon the experience. People can imagine themselves enacting the occupation they are considering entering (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 39). This enabled students to test themselves against social realities and

complexities (Borow, 1984, p. 180; Tiedeman, 1963, pp. 55-57).

### Intentional Changes

To make a new beginning, one must heed the inner callings that come as a gentle breeze as well as when the stimulus is stronger. This is where and when change can happen (Bridges, 1992, pp. 136-138). To really change, a person must recognize that the significant part of the old reality has to die and give way to a new self (p. 100).

It is important to distinguish the differences between intentional change and unintentional change. Unintentional change refers to all changes caused by chance or external events. For example, this occurs when an employee's job is replaced by a machine. Intentional change, on the other hand, is when an individual deliberately and voluntarily chooses the change and then strives to achieve it by taking action (Tough, 1982, p. 48). Either way, changes are achieved within individuals and within their lives (p. 13).

Another way to view intentional changes is to lump them into categories. There are home or life changes which are events such as getting married, having a child, or retiring. Other forms of changes are personal changes such as new eating habits, different sleeping patterns, or starting school after years of absence. On a whole different level

are changes that happen from within. Inner changes can be a spiritual awakening, a deepening social or political awareness, psychological insights, changes in self-image or values, or the discovery of a new dream (Bridges, 1992, p. 23; Tough, 1982, p. 34). Emotion, soul, spirituality, and the body are integral to the process of deep, significant change (Clark, 1997; Dirkx, 1997; Merriam, 2001, p. 68; Nelson, 1997; Scott, 1997).

For change within a person to take place there must be three distinctive events. First, there is an ending such as quitting smoking or giving up television. Second, the ending is followed by a period of confusion and distress. During this period the person comes to terms with the old and learns to live with the new. After the person accepts the ending and accepts the new, the change is complete which initiates the final stage--a new beginning (Bridges, 1992, p. 9). Sometimes a change is instantaneous or transpires within a short period of time while some change takes years to come to fruition (p. 77).

When change is a long transitional process, a person tends to ignore the "old" while pursuing the "new". However, a person should take time with inner transitional change, but one does not have to come to a standstill while self-

renewal is happening. To ignore the "old" could jeopardize the new coming into existence (Bridges, 1992, pp. 77-78).

Some changes within people are internal and can be either psychological or spiritual. Other changes are external and might involve a change such as wardrobe or hair color. Several changes can involve two levels. First, change might take the form of several related particular changes. Second, change can be a broad, underlying direction or theme such as being more assertive or more independent (Bridges, 1992, pp. 29, 37; Tough, 1982, p. 34). Often change is beneficial to not only the individual but also to others. "Individual change and social change are intertwined and interdependent, not separate and competing" (p. 42). Change is a prerequisite for continued growth, and continued growth is deeply-rooted in all human beings (Bronte, 1997).

Intentional change is so important that individuals will usually take charge of their own intentional change (Tough, 1982, p. 55). In fact, repressing the inner urging to change can lead to health or psychological problems and even unhappiness (Bridges, 1992, p. 40). Social scientists believe that people change as a result of some aging sequence (Levinson, 1978, p. 199). For example, Bridges (1992) maintained that for many the need to change happens at mid-life (p. 64). Based on a series of lengthy



interviews Tough (1982) believed that a persons' intentional change process is more idiosyncratic and unpredictable than such writers suggest (p. 57). This view on change contradicts the adult development theories reported previously.

However, a person usually initiates intentional change after personal, inner reflection or self-examination. Such reflection can uncover hidden interests and expose gaps between actual and desired reality; therefore, it is a desired change (Tough, 1982, p. 59). This hypothesis is similar to the adult development theories reported earlier. Whether or not change is the desired outcome, people should not resist exploring all possibilities available to them (Bridges, 1992, p. 81).

Individuals involved in intentional change generally perform three major tasks: choosing, planning, and achieving the change (Tough, 1982, p. 50). Without the aid of an instrument such as the interview described by Tough (1982), people probably would be amazed at the organized effort they made toward intentional change (p. 56).

Tough (1982) reported many facts related to change as a result of his numerous interviews of individuals who had engaged in intentional changes. Many reported that intentional change was seen as "huge, enormous, or of

central importance" in their lives (p. 26). Most of the people in his study achieved either most or all of their stated targets as a result of their change efforts. Overall, change contributed to happiness, satisfaction with life, and well being (pp. 154-155). The most frequent reported reason for intentional change was related to career, and changing careers was the most significant reason for making a change (p. 26). Additionally, the reason most people changed careers was because of internal reasons (p. 49).

The hardest change to initiate is a new career because it comes down to time and money. However, many have underestimated how often people do change careers because careers are thought of as linear. Also, "we have not realized how often important accomplishments come from such turning points" (Bridges, 1992, pp. 139-140). In addition, the most successful career change comes from gradual shifting and planning or a series of choices (Bronte, 1997; Glassner, 1994, p. 184).

Almost every time an adult is involved in internal change, learning is certainly in the center of the event (Tough, 1982, p. 10). Adult learners make day-to-day decisions on what and how to learn in the majority of all learning efforts, and they complete many tasks in each learning effort (p. 124). In a few formal learning settings

in order to optimize the successful potential to change, "students are helped to learn how to set goals and plan their strategies, and generally 'learn how to learn'" (p. 130). Other times change often involves unlearning old constructs rather than learning new ones (Bridges, 1992, p. 100).

Many individuals use a period of change as the impetus to a new kind of learning. Edward Gibbons wrote, "Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: The first from his teachers; the second, more personal and important, from himself". The second education opens into new areas at every turning point (Bridges, 1992, p. 81).

There are some cautions that come with intentional change. Initiating one change can lead to a cascade of others. It is unknown if one can live with those changes. For example, leaving a career to follow a dream may lead to financial disasters or other unknown problems (Glassner, 1994, p. 58), or a spouse may make a life altering change that forces changes on the partner that the partner may not like or want. This, obviously, can cause major conflict between the two.

Knowing why, how, when, and how much responsibility people take in the change process can be of major importance

to professional groups (Tough, 1982, p. 155). Many unknowns still exist, however, such as: (a) are people engaged in intentional or unintentional changes; (b) are they taking charge of their own change; (c) if so, by how much; and (d) do people realize they are initiating their own change.

### Adult Learning

#### Philosophy of Adult Education

The philosophical position that undergirds the study of Baby Boomers seeking second career changes through formal learning comes from the humanistic viewpoint from noted authors such as Rogers, Maslow, and Knowles. The basis of humanistic education is the development of people who are opened to change and continued learning, people who strive for self-actualization (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 120).

According to humanistic psychologists, one important need of individuals is to achieve complete self-identity through the development of their full potential (Knowles, 1970, p. 23). Complete self-development is a universal human need, and an underlying sense of movement toward this goal is needed for mental health (p. 23). Maslow (1970) offers a theory of human motivation based on a Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1970, pp. 35-58). The Hierarchy of Needs are also expressed in the literature of adult education (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 120; Knowles, 1970, pp. 23-24). The needs

are hierarchical; therefore, a person cannot move up the hierarchy until each level has been achieved (Maslow, 1970, pp. 35-58). At the lowest level of the hierarchy are physiological needs, such as hunger and thirst, that must be attended to before a person can cope with safety needs. Safety needs are those related to security and protection. The next three levels of Maslow's hierarchy are love, affection, and belongingness needs, followed by esteem needs or to feel that one is useful and one's life has worth. Finally, at the top of the hierarchy is the need for self-actualization (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 120; Knowles, 1970, pp. 23-24; Maslow, 1970). "Self-actualization means actualizing one's potential, becoming everything one is capable of becoming" (Knowles, 1970, p. 24; Maslow, 1970). In adult education, the implication is that the adult educator must help each individual learn what is required to satisfy the needs at whatever level one is aspiring (Knowles, 1970, p. 24; Maslow, 1970).

In a humanistic environment, the act of learning is a highly personal effort. The process of learning is intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated (Elias & Merriam, 1995, pp. 126-127). The importance of the self-concept also has an effect on learning.

A positive or negative self-concept can promote or inhibit learning respectively. Rogers also feels that

there is a real and an ideal self, that which the person would like to be. The discrepancy between the two can provide a stimulus for learning. (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 126)

According to the humanistic view of adult education nearly all adult learning is voluntary (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 135). However, current socioeconomic and geopolitical conditions may challenge this notion.

### Role of Learning

As adults develop and move from one life stage to the next, many transform their lives in some way. This transformation may manifest itself through radical change or just some small aspect of life. For whatever reason change transpires, it usually involves learning. Actually, it is a supported notion that people can be profoundly changed through learning (Merriam, 2001, p. 94). Learning in this instance can be learning that varies to include such things as how to sail a boat or learning for the sake of a new career.

Learning in adulthood is a concept that is not easily defined. On one hand, one might think that learning is simply acquiring knowledge not previously known while on the other, learning might be defined as a process that brings about dramatic change within an individual. In reality, the learning process not only enables adults to acquire new information it also helps them make sense of their lives,

"transforming not just what we learn but the way we learn, and it is absorbing, imagining, intuiting, and learning informally with others" (Merriam, 2001, p. 96). The nature of education is basically the same no matter when or where it occurs (Houle, 1996, p. 29). Learning:

Deals with such basic concerns as the nature of the learner, the goals sought, the social and physical milieu in which instruction occurs, and the techniques of learning or teaching used. These and other components may be combined in infinite ways. (pp. 29-30)

To Lindeman (1926/1961), one of the pioneers in the modern field of adult education, education is grown from experience. He asserted that the events of home, the local neighborhood, and the community were vastly more important than far reaching events that seem enchanting. Experience "is first of all, doing something; second, doing something that makes a difference; third, knowing what a difference it makes" (Lindeman, 1926/1961, p. 87).

Change in adulthood is inexorably linked to learning especially in regard to the concepts of andragogy, self-directed learning, transitional change, learning how to learn, and reflection. Although all these aspects of adult education are important, the two major theories may very well be andragogy and self-directed learning (Merriam, 2001, p. 4).

Andragogy

When people think of learning, they often think of school where the teacher or instructor stands in front of the class and lectures for an hour. This teacher-centered approach is referred to as pedagogy (Knowles, 1980, p. 40). This approach treats the students as passive learners. With the pedagogical model, the teacher controls the curriculum. This method is commonly used with both children and adults.

In contrast, andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). The andragogical model assumes that adults take an active role in the learning process from curriculum development to evaluation. With andragogy, learners direct their own learning approaches and needs. The instructor is not the "sage on the stage" but rather is a facilitator or resource person that works with the learner to reach desired outcomes. Although Knowles' intent was to explain the differences between learning in children and adults, he has asserted that andragogy can be an effective approach for all stages of life (Knowles, 1984, p. 13). However, andragogy is perhaps most effective with adults since they bring with them a vast reservoir of knowledge and experience to the learning experience (Knowles, 1980). Houle (1996) agrees that andragogy is the most learner-centered approach in adult education (p. 30).



In adult settings, classrooms should instill an environment that both physically and psychologically accepts, respects, and supports the learner. Further, there should be "a spirit of mutuality between teachers and students as joint inquirers" (Knowles, 1980, p. 47).

Knowles' (1980) andragogical model was originally based on four assumptions of adult learners and how they develop:

Concept of learner--Their self-concept moves from one of being a dependant person to one who is self-directed. Adults have a deep psychological need to be self-directed in many learning situations. This self-concept is constantly moving toward self-maturation.

Role of learners' experience--As individuals grow they accumulate a reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning.

Readiness to learn--Learners see education as a process for developing increased competence to achieve their full potential in life. Their readiness to learn is oriented in the developmental tasks of social roles.

Orientation to learning--As real life problems occur some learning situations require immediate attention. Their time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application. People are performance-centered in their orientation toward learning. (pp. 43-44)

Knowles (1998) added two other andragogical assumptions to the four he first presented in 1970.

Motivation--Adults tend to be more motivated to learn things that help them solve problems in their lives or results in internal rewards. This does not mean external rewards like salary increases, but rather an internal need-satisfaction motivation.

Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking learning it--Knowing why an adult needs to learn something is the key to giving them a sense of volition about their learning. The learning that adults value most will be learning that has personal value to them. (P. 149)

The learner-centered concept of andragogy is important of multiple reasons. First, adults engaged in intentional change are often motivated internally to learn things that lead to desired outcomes. Second, adults are oriented to learn for change in real-life contexts that are immediately applicable to their career change goals. Third, adults are likely to take charge of their own learning needs in contrast to methods they likely encountered as developing teens.

### Self-Direction

As adults move from one transitional phase to another and incorporate learning into these transitions, most adults take control over their own learning. Knowles' assertion is that adults become increasingly self-directed as they mature (Merriam, 2001, p. 8). However, it was through Tough building on the work of Houle, who provided the first descriptions of self-directed learning (p. 8). Knowles (1975) defined self-directed learning as:

A process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for

learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. (p. 18)

Self-directed learning can be further described as having two distinctive parts. First, self-directed learning is self-teaching where learners have total control over all aspects of their individual learning experience. To fully immerse oneself into self-directed learning, a person becomes both the educator and learner at once (Smith, 1982, p. 90). The second concept of self-directed learning for this study lies in the individual accepting complete personal autonomy of the learning situation. In other words, this is personally shaping the goals and purposes and taking ownership of the learning (Knowles, Houlton, & Swanson, 1998, p. 135). Understanding the concept of self-directed learning is critical for understanding how adults go about learning to facilitate change.

There are three specific goals of self-directed learning (Merriam, 2001, p. 9). The first of these is that the goal of self-directed learning is the development of the learner's capacity to become self-directed. The second goal is the fostering of transformational learning. The second goal is grounded in the transformational learning theories presented by Mezirow. The third goal for self-directed

learning is the promotion of emancipatory learning and social action.

### Transformative Learning

Adult learning, adult development, and career development concepts are all wrapped in separate theories that range from behavioristic or psychoanalytic perspectives. What may be a missing dimension in these psychological theories are the ways adults make meaning of their experiences (Mezirow, 1991, pp. xi-xii). Mezirow concentrates on the significance of rational thought and reflection in the transformational learning process (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 17). An important aspect of adult learning is the process of substantiating previously acquired knowledge. It is through this validation process that adults either accept or reject this knowledge and create meaning (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5). In transformative learning, "we reinterpret an old experience (or a new one) from a new set of expectations, thus giving a new meaning and perspective to the old experience" (p. 11).

By reflecting in action without interruption, "our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it" (Schön, 1987, p. 26). Thinking through a situation after it has happened is often referred to as "reflection-on-action" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 233). It can

occur anytime during a situation or much later such as in a formal learning environment.

Knowledge is not merely out there to be discovered, rather it is created from interpreting and reinterpreting in light of new experiences (Mezirow, 1996). Often, the reason a person reinterprets an old experience is because of conflict. A "perspective transformation" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 14) begins with a "disorienting dilemma" which is often manifested as a personal crisis (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168). Thus, transformation theory reiterates that people make intentional movement in adulthood to resolve these conflicts and to move to developmentally advanced ways of thinking by transforming meaning schemes and perspectives by critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991, p. 147). The purpose is to create intentional change.

Transformational learning can lead to worthwhile, long-lasting change. While transformative learning does appear to follow stages, it does not follow clearly defined developmental stages. However, once a person reaches a new understanding following a transformative learning experience, the person does not regress to a point before that understanding was reached; it is irreversible once completed (Mezirow, 1991, p. 152).

Transformations that produce significant meaning usually happen in adults after age 30 (Mezirow, 1991, p. 193). Older adults are usually more mature and experience a higher level of cognitive differentiation than their younger counterparts. Mature adults are also more aware of their psychological factors and have clear and established goals. Additionally, with each transformation experience, adults become better at reinforcing changed behavior (p. 193). If an adult is to initiate effective change, a successful transformation must take place. To successfully transform, an adult makes meaning of the present life stage while planning for the next.

#### Learning How to Learn

To become a true self-directed learner, one must learn how to learn. In many cases, an adult may take on a learning task years after formal learning has been completed. Learning how to learn, therefore, is "the idea that it is as important to teach adults how to learn as it is to specify particular curricular domains for learning" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 64). In developing the concept of learning how to learn, Smith (1982) stressed that:

Learning how to learn involves possessing, or acquiring, the knowledge and skill to learn effectively in whatever learning situation one encounters. If you possess the necessary knowledge and skill, you've learned how to learn; and when you help yourself or others acquire that kind of

knowledge or skill, the concept is still at work.  
(p. 19)

Beyond definitions, learning how to learn requires basic skills, general understanding, and self-knowledge. The keys to learning how to learn are knowing oneself as a learner in order to gain important insights into strengths and weaknesses, understanding individual preferences for the learning methods, and creating meaningful learning environments (Smith, 1982, pp. 20-22). Knowing one's learning style may have the greatest implication for success in learning (p. 26).

To maximize effectiveness, it is important for learners to receive special preparation for the learning tasks they undertake and the approaches they utilize (Smith, 1982, p. 26). Desired learning outcomes related to the concept of learning to learn come from educational experiences that stem from an individual with an open mind, a willingness to change, positively acting upon the results from understanding self, and most importantly, heeding the learning's processes (p. 45).

Education and training are different. While "education calls people forth to change" (Smith, 1982, p. 45), teaching people to learn how to learn requires training (p. 139). In this context, training takes on a more utilitarian concept than that of education. "The way in which training relates

to development of skill in learning and to learning style...[is that] training can be directed at improved effectiveness in self-directed learning" (p. 139). Training implies deliberate efforts to change behavior. To deal with the need to change in positive ways is to enable learners to progress in positive directions. Sometimes this requires an individual to unlearn previous behaviors and to then replace them with positive new behaviors to integrate change (p. 143).

"Learning is a fundamental concept and is always involved in some kind of change" (Tough, 1982, p. 10). These concepts of learning how to learn will become critical to individuals who find themselves in the middle of mid-life transitions looking for learning opportunities to facilitate change. Adults who do engage in learning are most likely to be successful if they adapt adult learning principles in their change effort. An important hidden factor is how adults, who are engaged in some sort of career change that required learning, are going about learning and whether they feel that the learning is effective.

### Relationships of Concepts

#### Developmental Tasks

There are several areas in which adult education, adult development, and career development theories relate to each



other. First and foremost is the notion of developmental tasks. According to Havinghurst (1948/1972):

A developmental task is a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproved by the society and difficulty with later tasks. (P. 2)

These tasks are derived from both inner and outer forces such as physical change, cultural pressure of society, and personal values and aspirations of the individual that make up the personality of the self (p. 5).

In describing the life cycles, Levinson (1978) described the developmental tasks of the mid-life transitional period as questioning one's role in life, exploring possibilities for change, and acting on change possibilities (p. 49). Each transitional period to move from one life cycle stage to the next is predicated upon completing certain developmental tasks.

Developmental tasks are basic to both human development in general and to career development (Campbell, 1973, p. 16). Guidance is helping students to master developmental tasks based on life stages (Campbell, 1973; Gyspers, 1984; Herr, 1979). Some specific tasks in career development might include the steps of crystallizing a vocational preference,

implementing it, and consolidating one's status and advancement in the occupation (Herr, 1979, p. 121).

Knowles (1970) has viewed developmental tasks as producing a "readiness to learn" at various life stages and as presenting teachable moments (p. 45). "In a person's role of worker, his first developmental task is to get a job" (p. 46).

### Crisis

Incongruence within any particular stage is referred to as an identity crisis, and each life stage will produce a crisis (Erickson, 1959, p. 111). Before the individual can successfully advance to the next life stage, that crisis must be solved. Levinson (1978), based on his study of the life cycles of men, reported that most men go through either moderate or severe crisis during the mid-life transition (p. 60).

Career development psychologists have also embraced Erickson's theory of crisis. Career development is related to adult development in that individuals go through differentiation and integration which Erickson called the psychosocial crisis (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 5). Tiedeman (1963) also accepted Erickson's notion that failure to settle on a vocational identity is the root of identity diffusion (p. 28).

In adulthood, learning is tied to a triggering event. Such triggering events are most often related to career changes (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 107).

Transformational learning is precipitated by a perspective transformation, or disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991, p. 192). That is, one's familiar patterns of coping with life events prove to be ineffective (p. 192).

### Change in Behavior

The framework of relating development to specific age periods has led to a number of educators to propose a link between age-appropriate tasks and behavior and the fostering of learning activities for adults (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 102). Havinghurst was one of the first writers to tie together these ideas into what he termed as the teachable moment (p. 102). The idea of the teachable moment is grounded in the concept of developmental tasks that arise in a certain period in a person's life (p. 102) such as career change.

One of the goals of career development is to help clarify cognitive and affective behaviors in the development of decision making stages (Gyspers, 1984, p. 153; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 37). The integration, or change in behavior, cannot be achieved without prior differentiation (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 37).

Most definitions of adult learning include the concepts of behavioral change (Merriam & Caffaralla, 1999, p. 109). Knowles (1970) wrote that “[adult] education is not concerned with having the instructor perform certain activities; it is concerned with helping students achieve changes in behavior” (p. 255).

### Experience

Individual experience is also closely tied to adult development, career development, and adult education. “There is a strong link between the motivation to participate in learning and an adult’s life experiences and developmental issues” (Merriam & Caffaralla, 1999, p. 391). Career development creates activities to form experience for reflection after an activity (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 57). Also, early experiences in life have a great impact on subsequent development (Campbell, 1973, p. 16). Knowles’ (1970) andragogical principles and humanistic philosophies are partly built upon the learner’s experiences.

### Contemporary Theories of Adult Learning and Development

Career development occurs within socioeconomic contexts. Therefore, career choice is influenced by conditions in the macro system. Each cohort is affected differently by changes in the system (Lemme, 2002, p. 312). For example, because of the large numbers of Boomers in the

workforce, the Baby Boom cohort in the labor force is saturating many career segments and forcing younger workers to consider career alternatives (Merriam & Caffafella, 1999, p. 19; Wagschal, 1997). To remain competitive with other Boomers as well as younger workers, this means that Baby Boomers with many years left in the workforce are faced with the pressure of keeping their resumes up do date, to become aware of other opportunities, and to be flexible and portable (Lemme, 2002, pp. 312-313).

Crisis often motivates adults to seek career change, and career changers often look to education to solve their crisis. Boomers who seek formal learning to facilitate career change are typically highly pleased with their decision (Glassner, 1994, pp. 168-169). The media has stereotyped the nontraditional adult student as a timid mid-life housewife going back to school after a divorce or facing an empty nest. In reality, the Boomer as student is ambitious and self-assured (p. 178). This work to school transition is often forced by changes in the economy (Boulmetis, 1997).

In order for Baby Boomers to become flexible and mobile many are influencing trends in formal learning organizations. Less than a decade ago, over 42 % of college students were 25 and older. All signs point to this trend

continuing for some time (Foltz & Luzzo, 1998). Individuals entering into the mid-life transitional stage are returning to college for the experience that was abandoned early in life (Stewart & Ostrove, 2000). Baby Boomers released from the duty of child raising are launching new careers and going back to school (Bronte, 1997; Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998). Of the adults seeking formal learning opportunities, more than 50 % are doing so for career changes (Bronte, 1997; Krain, 1995), and many of these are seeking to receive credentials (Bronte, 1997).

For a variety of economic, psychological, or physiological reasons, people are not ending their careers with retirement (Boulmetis, 1997). Because people are working longer, because their job has become obsolete, or because they may have to re-enter the workforce, individuals are building skills to remain employable (Vanston, 2000).

Some people will respond to and thrive in the rapidly changing environment because they view the new working conditions as greater freedoms or challenges or as greater opportunities for self-expression. Other mid-career workers, however, are likely to become casualties of the new culture of uncertainty in the working world (Sonnenberg, 1997). To maintain equilibrium in the super-industrial revolution, people will have to meet change with change and increase

adaptability (Toffler, 1970, pp. 373-374). By doing this we stand a better chance of surviving and gaining control over their own destinies (pp. 373-374). To adapt, people have shifted away from thinking about what they are by thinking about what we are becoming (p. 384). By doing this, they avoid future shock.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Design

This study utilized a descriptive research design. "Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects of the study" (Gay, 1992, p. 217). The descriptive design was based on the concepts of naturalistic inquiry. Naturalistic inquiry is flexible and does not involve the investigator in manipulating the conditions of the research (Guba, 1978, p. 3). Naturalistic inquiry is a fluid, subjective approach that aids in discovery, description, understanding, and interpretation of the research (Lively, 2001, p. 27). This descriptive study explored the perceptions of Baby Boomers who have changed or who are changing careers.

#### Population

A population is the group of interest to the researcher (Gay, 1992, pp. 124-125). The accessible population for this study was Late Baby Boomers living and working in and around



the urban Tulsa Oklahoma area who were actively seeking a career change through formal learning.

The subset of the population is called a sample. A purposive sample is a selected group based on the purpose of the study (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 138). The sample consisted of 25 participants. To ensure that a wide variety of backgrounds and second career choices were represented, five individuals were chosen from each of the following diverse learning organizations: (a) private university, (b) community college, (c) technical school, (d) public university, and (e) commercial learning establishments. Participants from these organizations provided a wide variety of educational levels, socioeconomic status, and reasons for actively pursuing a second career. The point at which no new themes or categories emerge is known as theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A sample representing the urban population of 25 participants was chosen because the saturation point will most likely occur before that point.

To select the sample that will most likely aid in achieving the research objectives of this study, a maximum variation version of the purposive sample was chosen. The purpose of this sampling method was to seek out those who represent the widest possible range of characteristics of

interest for the study for diversity and potential patterns that span across different cases (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 55-59; Merriam, 1998, pp. 62-63). Maximizing the differences is vital for discovering categories, developing theoretical properties, and developing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 55).

Maximizing brings out the widest possible coverage of ranges, causes, and conditions necessary for understanding the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 57). As the researcher maximizes differences by changing the scope of the research, for example, by going to different organizations, the researcher discovers more startling differences in the data (p. 57). As the researcher attempts to understand how the differences in data fit in, a better understanding of the operation and generality of scope of the study is achieved (p. 57). In the study of Late Baby Boomers, an attempt to maximize the differences among groups was made by selecting five diverse types of learning organizations.

A purposive sample is one in which the researcher can gain the maximum amount of information and understanding from a specific sample (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). The purposive approach allowed the researcher to choose a sample that would yield the greatest amount of insight. A stratified sample is the process of selecting in a way that identified

sub-groups in the population are represented in the sample (Gay, 1992, p. 129). The purpose of stratified sampling is to assure desired representation of the sub-groups.

To create a purposive sample and to maximize the scope, individuals were identified at each of five types of organizations to act as a key contact person (Merriam, 1998, p. 83). The contact person identified willing participants to take part in the interview. A snowball technique for sampling is asking each participant to refer other participants (Merriam, 1998, p. 63). When needed, a variation of the snowball technique was used by asking interviewees to identify potential research participants until enough valid interviews were completed in each learning organization category. Potential interviewees were individuals who were actively seeking career changes and participating in formal learning or individuals who have recently completed formal learning and have recently changed careers.

#### Procedures for Collecting Data

When a person's behavior, feelings, or interactions with the world around them cannot be observed, then interviewing becomes the solution (Merriam, 1998, p. 72). Interviewing is the best solution in studies where only a few participants are involved (p. 72), such as in this study

of 25 Late Baby Boomers. The study was qualitative and was self-report research which collected data by interviewing each member of the sample (Gay, 1992, p. 231). Data collected from a population can determine "the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables" (Gay, 1996, p. 286).

Interview questions that are open-ended in nature where the researcher can ask participants for both facts of a matter as well as for the participants opinion about events is optimal for gaining important insights about a phenomenon (Yin, 1989, p. 89). A formal interview, on the other hand, where the participants respond to a certain set of questions, is more consistent than an informal interview (p. 89). However, the best interview strategy is to combine open-ended with the formal interview to use a semi-structured interview (Merriam, 1998, p. 75).

The semi-structured approach is especially relevant since the goal of interviewing the sample of this particular study was to gain an understanding of both the participants' perception and reality of Late Baby Boomer second career issues. However, one might wonder how such a study could examine both perceptions and reality. First, the reality with which a naturalistic researcher must deal exists only in the minds of the participants and depends heavily on

their individual perceptions (Guba, 1978, p. 15). Second, the naturalistic investigator recognizes that a person experiences multiple realities based on constantly changing conditions such as time, people, settings, and circumstances. Finally, naturalistic inquirers recognize that reality, "like an onion, has many layers (p. 15)." Therefore, for this study, reality is based on how one perceives their current set circumstances.

The data desired from the interviews was two-pronged. First, the questions sought to investigate the realities driving the change. In other words, the questions probed for what are the events that initiated a second career. Second, they also sought to uncover the perceptions driving the change. That is, they probed to determine how events have effected their perceptions. The goal of this interview was to obtain the participants' reaction to their environment.

Reality "is a multiple set of mental constructions... made by humans; their constructions are on their minds, and they are, in the main, accessible to the humans who make them" (Lincoln & Guba, (1985), p. 295). Since a human researcher is the primary instrument of collecting data and analyzing the data, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews (Merriam, 1998, p. 201). "Most agree that when reality is viewed in

this manner, internal validity is a definite strength of qualitative research" (p. 201). It is important in this type of research to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexities of human behavior in context, and to present a holistic account of what is happening (p. 201).

Different types of questions yield different information. Asking questions about personal experiences is a good way to get data on perceptions, and this should be followed up with how the participants felt about their experiences (Merriam, 1998, p. 76). Another way to receive perception answers is to ask the participant for their opinion (p. 76). Questions should be structured in a familiar language so they are understood (p. 76). This strategy allowed the interviewer the freedom to explore, probe, and ask questions that illuminated the subject (Patton, 1990, p. 283). Since the interview was semi-structured, probes were used to follow-up on something already asked. Some probes were built into the protocol while other probes were added at the interviewer's discretion for clarification when needed. However, during the interviews, it was up to the researcher as to how closely the interview guide and follow-up probes were used

based on the answers given by the participants (Kvale, 1996, p. 129).

Before the final set of interview questions are used in the field, pilot interviews are crucial for trying out questions (Merriam, 1998, p. 75). The purpose of the pilot interview is to obtain feedback from the participants to revise questions that are apparently unclear, reword questions that are confusing, and throw out questions that yield no data (Gay, 1992, p. 233; Merriam, 1998, pp. 75-76). Additionally, the researcher gains valuable practice in interviewing skills (Merriam, 1998, pp. 75-76). The pilot interviews were conducted using a similar population as the one being used in the study.

Two pilot interviews were conducted. The first pilot interview yielded a fair amount of data, but the researcher had to ask numerous, specific follow-up probes to receive quality answers from the participant. Therefore, the questions were revised prior to the second pilot interview. The second pilot interview garnered much more data with far less follow-up required. However, the researcher used jargon from the literature in the interview questions and had to stop and explain terminology to the participant. The questions were slightly revised again after the second pilot interview. The revised questions that resulted from the two

pilot interviews remained consistent throughout the data collection process.

After the final interview questions were determined, the same basic questions were asked of all participants. The interviewer used a written guide which indicated what questions to ask (Gay, 1992, p. 232; Merriam, 1998, pp. 81-82). However, the interviewer had the latitude to use follow-up questions to clarify unclear or incomplete responses (Gay, 1992, p. 231). The interviews were conducted solely by the researcher and were tape recorded to ensure objectivity (Gay, 1992, p. 233; Merriam, 1998, p. 87).

Specific procedures were followed by the researcher before, during, and after each interview session. Before the interview began the participants read and signed the consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board. The interviewer also verbally explained the project and guaranteed the participant's anonymity. During the interview, a tape recorder was used to record the interview. The primary purpose for the tape recording was for data back-up and a way to store the data. The interviewer also took notes during the interview and recorded any actions. Immediately following each interview, the researcher wrote down additional field notes from the interview and typed the notes into a word processor as soon as possible after each



interview. Data were coded according to the procedures outlined for the constant comparative method of data collection and analysis. The interviewer also kept an interview log for each interviewee which included the interview number, and date of interview, responders comments, and researcher notes (Merriam, 1998, pp. 87-91).

### Interview Protocol

The interview questions can be described within the following broad categories: demographics, socioeconomic factors, adult development, career development, change, and adult learning. Only two pieces of demographic data were gathered: the year in which the participant was born and whether the participant was male or female. No other demographic information was gathered.

The following questions were used on this interview protocol:

1. Tell me what you've been doing professionally for the last couple of years.
2. You're taking this training, how does it fit in?
  - a. How did you see the need?
  - b. What are your perceptions?
  - c. What kinds of things did you do (or, are you doing) to prepare for your second career?
  - d. What's driving your learning experience?
  - e. When did you begin?

4. Tell me about what career changes you're planning.
  - a. Why are you changing careers?
  - b. When did you begin?
  
5. What got you into your first career?
  - a. How did you get prepared for your first career?
  - b. What were your perceptions?
  - c. Did you receive career guidance in high school?
  
6. What are your thoughts on retirement?
  - a. Do you have any specific retirement plans?
  - b. Do you see another career change in the future?
  
7. If you could develop a high school career development program, what would that look like?

The interview began with a simple icebreaker question about what the participant has been doing professionally for the last couple of years. The icebreaker was intended to put the participant at ease and give the researcher a sense of the participant's vocational background. This question allowed the participants to talk about something with which they are familiar and set the tone for the remainder of the interview in that the questions were going to be broad, open-ended questions. The icebreaker allowed the researcher to determine in what type of career the participant was involved, and this aided in the wording of questions that would follow.

Following the ice-breaker, a series of questions and probes were asked to gather data to address the research questions for the study. The second question and follow-up probes were asked to get a sense of the current learning situation in which the participants were engaged and their perceptions of their adult learning experience. The third question and follow-up probes were asked to gain insight as to the reasons the participants were changing careers and their possible relationship to adult development theories. The fourth question and follow-up probe was asked to better understand the participants' reasons for choosing their first career and the career development tactics they may have used to prepare for their first career. The fifth question and follow-up probe was asked to develop an understanding of what the participants were thinking about the future and their perceptions of retirement to determine the effect that current socioeconomic factors may have on planning for the future. Finally, the sixth question was added after the pilot interviews based on the recurring theme that developed from the follow-up probe about how the participants prepared for their first career. In this discussion many participants indicated that they received little or no career counseling in high school.

Although the questions were formulated in such a way as to avoid preconceived categories, there were broad objectives in mind to ensure that each broad category of inquiry was adequately covered. The questions that related to socioeconomic factors were an attempt to ascertain if they had any effect on the career change. Answers to socioeconomic questions also help to answer the research question concerning why Late Baby Boomers are changing careers. The objectives of the questions related to adult development were to determine if life-stage theories are valid for Late Baby Boomers seeking second careers and to help answer the research question of why they are changing careers. The questions related to career development were aimed at answering the research questions of how Late Baby Boomers initially prepared for their career and of what Late Baby Boomers are doing differently now than they did the first time to prepare for second careers. The questions related to adult learning were designed to answer the research questions of how did Late Baby Boomers initially prepare for their career and of what Late Baby Boomers are doing differently now than they did the first time to prepare for second careers. Finally, the questions related to career change were to answer the research question of why Late Baby Boomers are changing careers.

## Data Analysis

While data was being gathered, the constant comparative method of data analysis developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used as the method to collect the data. The strategy employed in this method is to do just what the name implies--to constantly compare data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 105; Merriam, 1998, p. 159). The process begins with the first interview which is then compared with the next interview. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then "constantly compared" to each other until consistent conceptual categories can be formulated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 101-114; Merriam, 1998, p. 159).

There are four stages of the constant comparative method of data analysis: (a) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (b) integrating categories and their properties, (c) delimiting the theory, and (d) writing the theory. One stage leads to the next, but earlier stages remain in operation simultaneously throughout the analyses, and each provides continuous development to its subsequent stage until the analysis is complete (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 105-115).

The constant comparative method was developed by Glaser and Strauss as a method for generating new grounded theory. The broad guidelines of this method were used in this study

to analyze the data from 25 interviews concerning their perceptions of their learning experiences related to the career change process. Consequently, the first two stages of the constant comparative method were used similarly to the way described by Glaser and Strauss. However, the final two stages were modified to fit the needs of this study.

### Comparing Incidents

The analyses begins by coding each incident in the data into as many categories of analysis as possible as categories emerge or as data emerge that fit the category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 p. 105). The defining rule for the constant comparative method is: "While coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category" (p. 106). This constant comparison of the incidents starts to generate theoretical properties of the categories. The analyst starts thinking in terms of the "full range of types or continua of the category, its dimensions, the conditions under which it is pronounced or minimized, its major consequences, its relation to other categories, and its other properties" (p. 106). As categories and properties emerge, the analyst will discover two kinds of categories and properties: those that have been constructed by the

analyst and those that have been gleaned from the research data (p. 107).

After the first interview was complete, several broad conceptual categories were recognized and were typed into a word processing document. By following this technique after each of the subsequent four interviews data began logically fitting into existing categories while simultaneously new categories were discovered. At this point in the constant comparative process, the categories and defining properties were moved to a table within the word processing software to collect the data while separating the supporting properties by individual participants. After about 8 interviews, there were approximately 30 categories. The next, new category did not emerge until the 13th interview. The final new category did not surface until the 16th interview. All other subsequent interviews the responses were categorized into existing categories.

After coding a category a few times, the analyst is likely to find significance in the rationale used in the analysis. Usually, at this point the analyst will be simultaneously thinking about the coding of current incidents, what will be found in the next incident, and whether better categories could be generated. The second rule of the constant comparative method is: "Stop coding and

record a memo on your ideas" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 107). With clearer ideas, the analyst once again returns to the data for more coding and constant comparison (pp. 107-108).

After all of the interviews were complete and the data coded a closer review of the data revealed that a couple of categories split into separate categories. For example, a category changed from "support" to "positive support" and "negative support." Upon completion of the first look at the data, there were 36 separate categories. Additionally, other categories were collapsed into one. Each category was also analyzed to determine what themes might emerge. Upon reviewing the career path category it became apparent that three distinct types of career paths emerged from the comments made by the participants.

It is a good idea to write memos on, as well as code, any field notes that were taken during the data gathering. Memo writing of field notes provides an immediate illustration of an idea before it becomes lost in the sea of data. It is important, however, that an illustration should be used only once (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 108). The thorough understanding of the data "requires that the analyst take apart the story within [the] data" (p. 108). This means that the analyst arranges and re-arranges the



field notes and memos for the actual writing of the fourth step of the constant comparative method of analysis (p. 108).

After each interview, the researcher made a note of the mannerisms and comments made outside of the interview. For most interviews, there was nothing to report, but there were several interviews where potentially significant events occurred that were noted and added as categories. For example, there were three separate interviewees who cried at various points in the interview. Another commented on how helpful the interview had been to shed light on the ineffective career path she had been perusing. Others were extremely interested in the results of the study and expressed a desire to view them once they were complete.

#### Integrating Categories

As coding in the process continues, the constant comparative units change from comparison of incident with incident to comparison of incident with properties of the category that resulted from initial comparisons of incidents. What happens is that constant comparison causes the accumulated knowledge pertaining to a property of the category to begin to become integrated. The knowledge can then be related in many different ways resulting in a unified whole. Categories also become integrated with other

categories of analysis. At this point, the researcher can get a broader understanding of the data as different categories and their properties become integrated through constant comparisons that force the analyst to make some related theoretical sense of each comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 108-109).

### Delimiting the Theory

Delimiting occurs on two levels: the theory and the categories. First, the theory solidifies, in the sense that major modifications become less frequent as the analyst compares the next incidents of a category to its properties. Later modifications are mainly on the order of clarifying the logic, taking out non-relevant properties, integrating elaborating details of properties into the major outline of interrelated categories, and, most importantly, reducing items so that the analyst discovers underlying uniformities in the initial set of categories or their properties (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 109-110). At this point in the constant comparative method no new major categories emerged indicating that the categories were saturated. In fact, many of the categories collapsed into broader categories, therefore reducing the total amount of categories. For example, there were separate categories on the participants thoughts on retirement, what they thought a career

development plan should be for current students, and their perceptions on their recent learning experiences. These categories were collapsed into one category titled reflection. By combining these categories into one, all non-relevant data were removed and the findings became much more clear.

The second level for delimiting the theory is a reduction of the initial list of categories for coding. As the work with the data and subsequent theories continues, the analyst becomes committed to the process. This commitment allows the analyst to cut down the original list of categories for collecting and coding data. In turn, the consideration of coding and analyzing of incidents becomes more focused. This allows the analyst to devote more time to constantly compare incidents and merge them into smaller sets of categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 111). Delimiting in this study happened when the categories of intrinsic reasons for changing current career, extrinsic reason for changing current career, intrinsic reason for choosing new career, and extrinsic reason for choosing new career were collapsed into one new category. The data within these categories were so similar and the ideas overlapped so much, it made sense to collapse them into one new category that better explained what the participants were saying.

### Writing the Theory

At this stage of the process the analyst has coded data, a series of memos, and a theory. The discussions of the memos contain the content behind the categories, which will become the major themes of the theory presented later in writing. Then, the analyst can "return to the coded data when necessary to validate a suggested point, pinpoint data behind a hypothesis or gaps in the theory, and provide illustrations" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 113). Using the constant comparative method makes likely the achievement of a complex theory that corresponds closely to the data because the constant comparisons forced the analyst to consider the amount of diversity in the data. Diversity in this context means that each incident is compared with other incidents or properties of a category in terms of as many similarities and differences as possible (pp. 113-114). The constant comparison of incidents in this way tends to result in the creation of a developmental theory. It is developmental in the sense that it is continually in process. In comparing incidents, the analyst learns to view the categories in terms of both their internal development and their changing relations to other categories (p. 114).

This process is an inductive method of theory development. In order to make theoretical sense of such a

variety of data, the analyst must develop ideas on a level of generality higher in conceptual abstraction higher than the qualitative material being analyzed. The analyst must at this point bring forth underlying uniformities and diversities in the data. To master the data, the analyst must reduce the terminology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 114-115).

### Internal Validity

Formal knowledge is often generated from research conducted within the context of higher education. The problem with such research is that the findings often do not transfer into real-life settings (Linkenbach, 1995, p. 125). Internal validity probes how research findings match reality (Merriam, 1998, pp. 201-204). Inquiry methods designed to obtain validity can have positive effects when used in tandem with other techniques designed to build a case for reliability (Guba, 1978, p. 71). While such a "nested" use of techniques is usually recommended for the sake of validity, it can also be used to bolster reliability (p. 71). Comparable results from multiple approaches strengthen the reliability claims of each of the individual approaches. Therefore, in an effort to enhance internal validity the researcher employed variations of Linkenbach's (1995) techniques in the design of this study.

Linkenbach's (1995) approach includes three distinctive stages. The first stage consisted of the collection and analysis of data (p. 112). The second stage involved the use of a modified Delphi exploration using peers of the researcher in order to help rate and prioritize the data collected in the first stage of the study (p. 121). In the third and final stage data that was collected and prioritized in the first two phases were presented to stakeholders in the field in focus group meetings to place the findings in a more useful form for future action (p. 126).

#### Peer Examination

The first stage of the Linkenbach (1995) approach was peer examination. Peer examination is the process of engaging a disinterested peer in extensive discussions of one's findings, conclusions, and tentative analyses (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). The purpose is to test out the findings with someone who has no vested interest in the study (p. 237). Since the data collection in this qualitative research study was continuous, the peer examination approach was used by asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerged (Merriam, 1998, pp. 201-204). Three of the researcher's peers with data gathering experience were used in a confidential,

professional debriefing relationship throughout this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237).

The panel of peer reviewers consisted of three individuals whom the researcher knew. They were chosen because of their data collection experience, their knowledge of adult education, and their familiarity with the subject matter. One of the peer review panel has a Doctor of Education in Adult Education and has extensive experience reviewing and critiquing qualitative research studies through her position at the university in which she works and on the doctoral candidates committees on which she has served. The other two peer reviewers are adult education doctoral students who are currently involved in extensive research projects and who have completed multiple qualitative research projects in their graduate academic studies.

Each of the peer reviewers reported that the themes and categories are valid based on the participant's comments. The researcher initially reported four main themes that emerged as a result of data analysis that were directly related to the four research questions. The peer review panel saw and recommended that the four main themes be delimited to three: preparation, transformation, and

reflection. The findings were split into these three main topic areas and reported in three separate chapters.

### Member Checks

Member checks was the second phase of the Linkenbach (1995) approach to achieve internal validity. Member checks are the "process of testing hypotheses, data, preliminary categories, and interpretations with members of the stakeholder groups from whom the original constructions were collected" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, pp. 238-239). This technique is an important step for establishing credibility (p. 239). Member checks can be done formally or informally and with individuals or small groups providing an opportunity for participants to elaborate, react, respond, and verify the researcher's interpretation of what was communicated through the original interview process (p. 239). This process provides the researcher an initial opportunity to analyze, assess, clarify, and summarize an interview as well as providing an aid with analysis (p. 239).

Two people served as the member check panel for this portion of data verification. One person who served as the member check for this study is also the anchor for the peer review panel. Not only did this person use her expertise in evaluating qualitative research by serving as a peer review,



she also served as a member check since she also participated in the study. The other member check participant works with the researcher. This member works as a corporate trainer and is currently participating in formal learning as a means to change careers.

Individual meetings were scheduled with the member check participants to present the categories. The information was also left with the participants so they could reflect on the information. Both peer review panelists report that the data is valid as reported and no changes were needed within the themes and categories.

#### Focus Groups

The third stage of the Linkenbach (1995) approach to internal validity was to present the findings to interested stakeholders through focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to use the findings to aid in achieving internal validity and to place the findings in a format for useful future action (p. 126).

Focus groups were held with stakeholders from industry, technical schools, and adult education to seek their reaction to the findings of the study and to solicit their initial conclusions related to the findings. A focus group provides data collection through group interaction of a topic (Morgan, 1997, p. 6). The use of focus groups can be a

good supplementary source of data and is often used to help understand data findings (p. 2). After the interviews were complete and all the data were coded and analyzed but before the final analysis and the writing of the conclusion chapter of the dissertation, focus group sessions were conducted. A focus group used in this manner can be of great value through a follow-up data collection method that pursues exploratory aspects of the analysis (p. 27). The design of the focus group for this purpose is relatively simple: (a) determine the types of participants, (b) use a structured interview with high moderator involvement, (c) use six to ten participants per group, and (d) use a total of three to five groups (p. 34). The focus group can be used to confirm observations, provide additional perspectives, and corroborate emerging themes (Joiner, 2003, p. 83).

Recruitment procedures for focus group members needs to be specialized (Morgan, 1997, p. 39) when working with specialized categories such as the interview results of Late Baby Boomers. Since the objective of the focus group is not to achieve generalizability but rather to interpret the data from a specialized group (p. 35), a purposive method was used for choosing group participants. The focus groups were conducted with three specific types of audiences: industry, technical school, and adult education. These three groups

represent the stakeholders of the data results. One focus group was conducted with each group. Key informants were chosen from each group to identify potential participants. For industry, the researcher used his association with several business associates with high interest in the concepts of this study. To capture the technical school audience, the researcher used contacts at Tulsa Technology Center which had several students participate in the study. Finally, to reach the adult education audience, the researcher used a professor of adult education who was conducting a class on research to identify adult education students who were willing to participate in this focus group.

Although Morgan (1997) suggests that a structured interview be used with high moderator involvement (p. 39), a slight variation to this was employed. The purpose of these focus groups was to simply invite and capture the reaction of the focus group members. At each focus group session, the findings were presented using a handout that was an overview of the findings. The moderator simply asked for the participant's reaction. A few probes were used to help get the discussion started; examples of these probes are "What is your reaction to this presentation?" and, "Do you see a

significance in these findings?" The researcher acted as moderator, and the focus groups were tape recorded.

With the help of the key informants for each group six to ten participants for each focus group session were invited. However, even as little as three participants is acceptable for this type of focus group if the participants are highly involved (Morgan, 1997, pp. 42-43). A total of 30 individuals participated in the 3 focus groups. At the industry focus group, there were 5 participants; these included a project manager from a local telecommunications firm, a call center manager who is responsible for hiring and training employees, two corporate trainers, and one financial analyst. The technical school focus group consisted of a supervisor and 10 of her nursing teaching staff from a local career training center. A class of non-traditionally aged doctoral students and their professor made up the adult education post focus group where a total of 14 individuals participated. Not only did the industry group provide business expertise, two of the members are non-traditional students currently attending college. In addition to providing adult education insights, the individuals within the adult education focus group represented industry as well as higher education based on

their experience in their respected professions. Thus, the focus group participants were very diverse.

Upon completion of each of the three focus groups, the data was analyzed using the constant comparative method of data analysis as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Findings from both the initial interviews and the focus group reactions were included in the final report.

Generalizability is an important question to address in studies such as this one on Late Baby Boomers changing careers. The issue, however, is not generalizability, but applicability. Providing a rich, thick description "so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgement" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 124). "The description must specify everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings" (p. 125). This practice of allowing the practitioner decide whether or not a case is applicable is prevalent other fields of research (Merriam, 1988, p. 177). Another strategy to address the issue of generalizability is to use many case studies to study the same phenomenon. In multi-case analysis, the use of predetermined questions and specific procedures for coding and analyzing data enhances the generalizability of findings in the initial case (Yin, 1994).

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS: PREPARATION FOR FIRST CAREER

#### Introduction

The Baby Boom has left an indelible mark on our history and our society. There is no doubt of the influence the decades of the sixties, seventies, and the eighties has had on the Boomer generation including the group of participants gathered for this study. The Late Baby Boomer just missed the spiritual awakening of the tumultuous sixties (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 71). During the seventies, the Late Boomer felt the futility of attending college, and college enrollment plummeted. When they entered the workforce in the eighties, they were not as well paid as their traditionally-aged Boomer siblings, and they struggled to survive depressed economies and creative government interventions (p. 71).

The participants of this study share in many things. Now, in the beginning years of the 21st Century, many of these Late Baby Boomers share in the pursuit of mid-life career corrections. To initiate career change they are using formal learning as a necessary means in which to achieve

their goals (Gordon & Shinagel, 2001, p. 54). The need or desire to change careers is a great motivator to learning since it is related to an immediate problem or task (Tough, 1979, pp. 39-40). To achieve their desired change objectives learning projects were vital to learn for a changing society and to learn for a new career (p. 42).

Information gathered from interviews with 25 Late Baby Boomers served as the data for this study. Each interview ranged from 30 minutes to an hour, and the interviews targeted their perceptions on the topics of this study. The participants were extremely open and candid in the interview. Data gathered from the interviews span a wide duration of time in the lives of the participants. The information gathered from the interviews has been categorized and is presented in chronological order. The range of responses represent a wide range of years. Some go as far back as the participant's childhood career aspirations and how they learned for their first career. Others are more current such as how their career change was initiated and their perceptions of learning for a new career as an adult. Others look into the future such as reporting on the participant's plans for retirement.

The data were reported in chronological order since the research questions were written in the same way. The

research questions dealt with how the Late Baby Boomers initially prepared themselves for a career, with changing careers, and with what they are now doing differently from the first time they prepared for a career. There were a total of 20 categories that emerged from the data; 18 of these fall under the umbrella of each of the research questions. In addition, there are two other categories of "gender and age" and "field notes".

The findings were broken down into three main concept areas: preparation for first career, transformation to new career, and reflection on career change, and each of these is presented in a separate chapter. Preparation for First Career addresses how the Late Baby Boomers of this study prepared for their first career. Transformation to New Career discusses why they are making career transformations and how they are making the transformation. Reflection on Career Change chronicles the participants' perceptions, thoughts, and feelings on their past, present, and future.

With qualitative research the reader or user is more concerned with generalizability than the researcher. However, the researcher has the duty to provide enough detailed description of the data's context to enable the readers to compare where it fits within their own situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, the data emerges from the



data but the researcher is still obligated to prove that it has actually emerged and to describe it fully. The researcher has to show that the categories are saturated. In this study this was achieved by tallying the number of comments and calculating the percentage of comments in each category.

#### Profile of Late Baby Boomers

There were 25 total participants for this study which is comprised of five individuals from five types of formal learning organizations: public higher education, private higher education, technical school, community college, and commercial learning establishments. Each participant was born between 1955 and 1964 which represents the Late Baby Boom era. In 2004, the youngest participant turned 40 years of age, and the oldest turned 49. Each participant was either actively engaged in formal learning specifically to change careers or had recently changed careers and used formal learning as a catalyst for change.

All 25 of the interviews of this study were conducted one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. The participants did not fill anything out nor were they asked to mark any type of demographic information. Gender was observed by the interviewer while age and the year that change began were asked by the researcher.

### Age Change Began

Each participant will be in their 40s in 2004, but the average age that career change began for the participants is 41, the median is 40, and the mode is 40. The youngest age that change began was 37 years of age while the oldest age that change began was 48 years of age. The age at which the participants began a change coincides with many life cycle theorists who believe change often transpires at mid-life. More specifically, Levinson (1978) stated that the mid-life transition begins at age 40 or 41 and lasts for about five years (p. 192).

### Gender

Participants of this study were mostly women. In fact, 17 (68%) of the 25 participants are women while 8 (32%) are men. The percentages of men to women in this study are in line with the NCES (2003) demographics that states that 63% of the people over the age of 40 who participate in formal learning are female and 37% are male (p. 7). Additionally, several of the participants were attending an adult program at a local private university in which 64% of their participants are women and the average age is 38. A local technology school also has had a larger proportion of women (55%) over men (45%) since 1998.

The ratio of men to women differed between each type of educational setting. All five (100%) of the participants from public higher education were women. Three of the five (60%) participants from private higher education were women, and this is close to their overall representation of 64% in higher education. Four of the five (80%) participants from the community college group were women. Three of the five (60%) from the technical school category were women. The only category in this sample in which more men than women were interviewed was the private commercial educational group which had three men (60%) and two women (40%).

However, this distribution reflects higher education is beginning to realize that a large part of its population are composed of non-traditional students who are largely female (Gordon & Shinagel, 2004, p. 55).

#### Educational Level

Information regarding the highest level of education was also attained. Eleven (44%) of the participants have earned a high school diploma as their highest educational achievement, six (24%) of the participants have earned an associates degree, seven (28%) of the participants have earned a bachelors degree, and one (4%) has earned a graduate degree. Only six of the participants earned a degree in preparation for their first career, and those who

earned a degree later in life did so as non-traditional students.

Career Path

The participants of this study have in common the shared background and experience that have brought them to the point of changing careers. Although their backgrounds and experiences are different, they are similar in that all of them have embarked down the road of career change. As they take the road of career change, three distinct career paths have emerged from the data: New Discovery, Old Dreams, and a Consolation career. Table 1 represents a brief participant overview. The participant names have been changed in order to maintain anonymity.

Table 1: Career Paths

<b>Name</b>	<b>Formal Learning Type</b>	<b>Highest Level of Education</b>	<b>Age Change Began</b>	<b>Old Career</b>	<b>New Career</b>
<b>New Discovery Career Path</b>					
Frank	Commercial	Bachelors	38	Electrical	Engineer
Dale	Commercial	Associates	45	Evangelist	Computer Programmer
Katie	Technical School	High School	37	Secretary	Nursing
Kim	Private Higher Ed	High School	40	University Admin.	Counselor
Rhonda	Private Higher Ed	High School	38	Homemaker	Business Owner
Todd	Private Higher Ed	High School	38	Executive	Helping Others
Amanda	Private Higher Ed	Associates	39	Business	Executive

Mary	Public Higher Ed	Graduate	40	Children Education	Adult Ed Admin.
Nancy	Public Higher Ed	Bachelors	42	Homemaker	Teacher
Larry	Technical School	High School	41	Stocks Broker	Nursing
<b>Old Dreams Career Path</b>					
Trudy	Community College	High School	37	Trainer	Business Law
Sarah	Community College	Associates	40	Financial Analyst	Human Resources
Gary	Community College	Associates	37	Chef	Computer Programmer
Barbara	Community College	High School	43	Photographer	Business Admin.
Julie	Public Higher Ed	Bachelors	40	University Admin.	Medical Examiner
Betty	Public Higher Ed	Bachelors	41	Business	Teaching
Paul	Technical School	Bachelors	43	Teaching	Nursing
Audrey	Technical School	High School	44	Banking	Surgical Tech.
Hillary	Technical School	Associates	43	Banking	Surgical Tech.
<b>Consolation Career Path</b>					
Sam	Commercial	High School	38	Musician	Real Estate
Natalie	Commercial	High School	41	Homemaker	Computer Animation
Diane	Commercial	Bachelors	48	Evangelist	Computer Animation
Alice	Community College	High School	47	Homemaker	Childhood Develop.
James	Private Higher Ed	Bachelors	38	Computer	Management
Emily	Public Higher Ed	Associates	40	Business	Teaching

A person usually initiates change after a personal, inner reflection or self-examination. Such reflection can uncover hidden interests and expose gaps between actual and desired reality (Tough, 1982, p. 59). When this self-evaluation is coupled with experience, many people discover a new career path to pursue. A New Discovery career path is one in which a person discovers a more desirous path to take or discovers a path for the first time. Others change occupations to incorporate previous education or recapture a desire that was abandoned earlier in life (August & Auintero, 2001; Foltz & Luzzo, 1998; Sullivan, 1999). The Old Dreams career is one in which a person, for whatever reason, decides to pursue the career they wished they would have chosen in the first place. A Consolation career path is one in which a person pursues a career that is not their first choice. The consolation path can be forced by physiological limitations or chosen because continuing on their preferred path is no longer desirable.

#### Building a First Career

Career development is much more than finding and training for a job. The distinction is clear between an occupation, what one does, and a career, which is the course followed throughout one's lifetime. Career development represents the total sum of an individual's psychological,

sociological, educational, economic, and chance factors encountered in a normal lifetime (Gyspers, 1984, pp. 620-621). Further, career development will carry over into whatever role individuals find themselves whether it is work, school, home, or community (pp. 620-621).

Six categories surfaced from the interviews that address the question of how Late Baby Boomers initially prepared themselves for a career. Participants talked about what career they aspired for as a child, their high school career development, reasons for ruling out potential careers, and the reason for choosing their first career. Interviewees also commented on their learning experience to prepare them to enter the workforce.

#### Childhood Career Aspirations

Twelve (48%) of the 25 people interviewed mentioned having a childhood dream of what they wanted to be when they grew up. One of the five who did pursue their childhood dream career chose it as their first career choice but was forced to change careers at mid-life. Four of the five who did pursue the career of their childhood dreams did not choose it as their first career but have chosen it as their second career. Seven of the 12 did not choose their childhood dream as either their first or second career.

Only one of the participants pursued their childhood dream as their first career choice. Sam is a 44 year old real estate agent. However, real estate was not his first career choice. Since he was a young boy he practiced playing the drums and the guitar. After high school he formed a band and traveled around Oklahoma playing music for money wherever he could find the work. To make ends meet Sam worked at the local hospital by day and played music at night, all the while waiting for his big break. At around the age of 38 he took a long look at his life and realized his big break was not likely to happen. He also realized his aging body could no longer handle the long days and late nights. Sam also thought of the future and did not see a fruitful retirement if he remained on his current path. Sam decided it was time to find a new career. Sam said:

Music was the only thing that survived adolescence. Actually this interest developed from the first grade. When I first heard the Beatles and saw the Monkees on TV, I knew that's what I wanted to do.

Sam's pursuit of fame is an example of what career development theorists describe as "I am what I see" in that what one wants to become is manifested through occupational imagery through television and movies (Borow, 1984, p. 172).

Four other participants chose a career that was their childhood dream, but it was not their first career choice. They did go back to it when the opportunity arose. Nancy,



who left the business world to become a stay at home mom and is now learning to become a teacher, stated:

This interest in teaching has been there since the 5th grade. I don't know why I didn't do it in the first place.

Hillary found the banking business to be impersonal and the customers greedy. At the age of 43 she decided to pursue a more rewarding career. Hillary commented:

I always had an interest in the medical field. In high school I wanted to be a psychiatrist, but my father said; "No you don't want to listen to people's problems all day."

After Hillary made this remark, she sighed heavily, indicating genuine disappointment that her father would not let her pursue this dream. Julie wandered from one job to another, many times taking jobs out of convenience from family members who owned businesses. Julie indicated regret for not pursuing her childhood career dream by stating:

The main thing that struck me in high school was biology. I loved the human body; I loved exploring all the different aspects of that. Looking back on it now I realize I should have stayed on the same track.

The recurring comment from each of the five individuals who did pursue their childhood dream career started off with "I always wanted to" followed by their childhood dream.

Of the 12 who did mention a childhood career dream, 7 (28%) did not follow their dream for either their first or second career choice. Among these are seven separate reasons

for not pursuing their childhood dream career. Also, the types of careers the participants wanted to obtain were as diverse as the participants; no themes emerged.

### Career Development

Counselors, teachers, parents, and mentors who take on the task of developing youth bring together the concepts of the person and bring them into contact with the world of work (Campbell et al., 1973, pp. 31-32; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 51). The goal is to enable students to understand themselves and their place in the world to make informed career choices (Herr, 1979, p. 121).

As the participants made their way through high school and into college or a first job, all of them were affected by career development in some way. While some experienced positive career development experiences, most of the participants had either a negative career development experience or no career development experience at all. In many cases career development was not a formal school-based program, rather many individuals in the study were influenced by family members or were compelled to develop their own initial career. Although the intent of this line of inquiry during the interview was to determine the perceived effectiveness of high school career development, it quickly became clear that a great deal of career

development for this group was informal in nature and administered in the home.

Only three (12%) of the participants indicated they experienced positive career development during high school. Two of the three participants who indicated positive career development received it the traditional way through a formal school program. One of the few participants who had definite career plans for both the first career and the career change was Frank. Frank commented:

At Union High School they had a great industrial arts program and the coach taught drafting and industrial arts. He told me about the vo-tech programs, but what he offered was just as good. I took college bound courses. I did that because I thought I would be limited in career options without the college. Limited on earnings potential.

The only participant of this study with a graduate degree, Mary was another participant who followed a decisive plan to begin her first career. Mary stated:

Some personality inventories that told the taker what you might be good at. The results told me I would be good at teaching, counseling, or dancing. I had conversations with friends, teachers, and parents who told me I would be good as a dance instructor. I love dancing.

Families have a huge influence on career choices by individuals in their formative youth. Early identification with work and career often comes from parents or influential family members (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 11). One of the three people who received positive career development during their

high school years indicated it was through contact with family members and not a formal school setting which made for a positive career development experience. Kim would rather stay at home with her children than work; unfortunately, her economic situation will not allow her to pursue that goal. However, she did receive positive career development from the home which is evident when she stated:

Probably my older sister is the closest to a role model I had. She got a degree and worked professionally in what she got her degree in. She was proud of her work and what she did. She went to OU, so I went to OU.

On the other hand, 22 (88%) of the participants stated their high school career development experience was not pleasant or was nonexistent. When the three who received positive career development experiences informally from a family member, the ratio of those with positive formal career development experiences is reduced to just two out of 25 participants. Expressed another way, 92% of the participants either received poor formal career counseling or no formal career counseling in high school. When asked if they received career guidance in high school, many respondents laughed as if the question were a joke. Others became indignant when talking about the lack of guidance they received. For example, Sam answered:

There was no such thing. I never met a guidance counselor. I feel they had no time or interest in

me. I did take the ACT, and I was higher than average in everything but math. In our school, there was no such thing as career development.

Kim responded with the same disdain:

My counselor never talked to me about my college options, never tried to persuade me not to finish early and try to enjoy my senior year. I got no guidance ever. There was no vocational training at all. If there was a vo tech program, I was not aware of it.

Alice, who is also making the transition from the role of homemaker to a career outside the home answered with anger when she stated:

The career counselor at high school only dealt with the girls who were going to college, and they didn't have much to do with me.

Many other responses were without the emotion of the previous three and were similar to the following:

I didn't have a career development program in high school. My counselor never mentioned or urged or tried to talk about any choices we might have or any career ideas we might have.

Trudy, a corporate trainer trying to break into business law, said this with sadness in her voice toward the end of the interview:

My problem was that I really didn't know what I wanted to do. I let my classes influence me. Maybe I did let the little chart influence me on what field I went into. I like science, this chart says it, it's kind of a hard realization 20 years later that I chose a path just because a chart said that.

Formal assessments were used as a means to create a career strategy (Miller, 1984, p. 436).

Out of the 22 participants who indicated either negative or no career development in high school and the one person who received positive career development at home, 7 of these 23 participants received some sort of career advice from the home instead of formal school-based counseling. Some of the informal experiences were perceived as positive experiences while others were not. Eleven (44%) of the participants of this study had no perceptible career development in their formative youth.

Some of the informal career development experiences had a negative or possibly benign influence on the participants. For example, one participant commented, "My parents always expected me to go to college". Another said, "My mother taught me how to be a housewife...." "My parents sort of encouraged me to go to college, but I knew I had to pay for it. I saved money in a jar." One person stated, "My interest in business comes from my parents telling me this was the way to go."

#### Career Development Type

There are three widely accepted career development theories: structural, developmental, and social. A structural developmental theory describes the personality characteristics of a person's psychological makeup such as interests and abilities that evolve over a lifetime. The

developmental perspective focuses on behavioral change over time such as going from one life stage to another. The social theory considers the interaction between the individual and environmental events and then how a person relates to them (Jespen, 1984, pp. 138-139; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 4). Based on the participant's comments during their interview, the researcher has categorized each person into one of the three career development categories or categorized them as undeterminable when the participant fits into no clear category.

Five (20%) of the participants high school career development was structural. Participants were categorized as structural because they stated that their career development consisted of personality profile testing, or it was based on their interests or abilities. Four out of the five participants who were classified as structural also received their primary career development at school. Nancy stated:

No career development program. I did have a class my first year of college, and I took a test to tell me what career I should have. I answered the questions based on what I wanted to do, and I didn't answer truthfully so I think my answers were a little skewed.

Rhonda is currently working in the mail room of a large corporation but labels her current career as homemaker. She dreams of owning her own business and is currently enrolled in college courses to help her reach her dream. Rhonda

shared the following experience that demonstrates the structural career development theory:

I had no career development in high school. I did take the test and it said I was a hand- eye-visual and recommended I become a mechanic. But the test results didn't go into detail or tell what I was supposed to do about being a hand-eye-visual which I think was the downfall of the test.

Three (12%) of the participants' high school career development were developmental. Participants were categorized as developmental because they stated their career development was based in differentiation and integration, or their career developed as a result of changed behavior over time. Two of the three participants who were classified as developmental received their primary career development at school. Todd is now a successful executive in a successful business. Someday soon he hopes to retire and pursue a career that focuses on helping others. In high school Todd received developmental counseling. For example:

In high school I had a counselor tell me I wasn't smart enough to go to college; he said I was better off going to technical school. He based that on my behavior because I was a screwball rather than finding out if I had ability or not. I think everyone has ability. I think as a kid it's self-fulfilling because kids believe what they are told. That's why I didn't try during school.

Trudy also received developmental counseling, but hers stemmed from her home.



I discovered that I didn't want to be a teacher from talking to my sisters—two of them were teachers. I wish I hadn't wasted two semesters before I figured that out.

Six (24%) of the participants high school career development was social. Participants were categorized as social because their career developed as a result of an interaction between the individual and environmental events. Five of the six participants who were classified as social received their primary career development in the home. To repeat a quote earlier from Kim:

Probably my older sister is the closest to a role model I had. She got a degree and worked professionally in what she got her degree in. She was proud of her work and what she did. She went to OU, so I went to OU.

Audrey, a laid off banker now in surgical nursing school, also experience social career development. She said:

High school was just a social thing. I had no goals except get a house and be a homemaker. That's what my mother trained me to do and that's what I did. From the first I can remember I was taught to iron and take care of the home and cook and take care of children. It never entered my mind at age 17 that I didn't have to do that, not even once.

Eleven (44%) of the participants high school career development was undeterminable. Participants were categorized as undeterminable because there were no obvious career development tactics employed during their formative youth. All of the eleven participants who were classified as undeterminable also had no primary career development at

school or in the home. After he washed out of college Larry went into stocks and bonds simply because his father was in that business and gave him a job. Larry is a prime example of demonstrating no determinable career development when he stated:

In high school I played football and played football in college. The only reason I went to class was to remain eligible to play. I had no interest in school. I quit school but went back later and had a hard time paying attention. I didn't have any development in high school about a career. I went into college without knowing what I wanted to do.

There were differences between gender and career development type. Of the three career development types, women were predominately social with 35.3% with 17.6% structural and 5.9% developmental. Men, on the other hand, were 25% structural and 25% developmental and no social. About half of the participant's career development type were undeterminable with 50% for the men and 41.2% for the women.

#### Choosing a First Career

After the participants completed high school some went straight to a career while others went on to college. Before they began their first career, however, the participants went through some sort of process to determine what types of jobs they would obtain. Many participants obtained and quit many jobs until they settled on what they would consider their first career.

### Reasons for Ruling Out Potential Initial Career

There were 30 comments that relate to the reasons for ruling out initial careers. Twelve (40%) comments reflected a dislike for the chosen career. Twelve (40%) comments spoke of undesirable career conditions such as job security or job availability in a particular region. Four (13%) comments related to not being able to perform the physical aspects of the career. Two (7%) comments for ruling out potential careers addressed a change in family structure. There are differences between the categories "dislike" and "undesirable". Dislike addresses a stated dislike for a job. Undesirable, on the other hand, addresses an displeasing career condition such as having to move or the company not being solvent.

Twelve of the 30 (40%) comments relating to dislike being the reason for ruling out a potential career were noted. Betty stated, "I took one computer class and decided I didn't like that at all." Audrey remarked:

Every day was the same old thing, and I got bored. I think it's a blessing that job went to Texas, and I wouldn't go because chances are I would still be there. I didn't go home every night saying, "Wow, that was really exciting," I never felt that way.

Twelve (40%) of the 30 comments spoke of undesirable career conditions as reasons for ruling out an occupation as the first career. For example, Trudy said:

I enjoy being a trainer, but I really don't see the security in this field unless I do a lot of traveling.

Gary, who is trading in the culinary arts for computer work because of health reasons stated:

The bad thing about being a chef is there wasn't much job security or retirement. A chef wouldn't stay at a place for more than 4 or 5 years.

Another comment addressed undesirable career conditions rather than a dislike for the job itself. Todd said:

There were a couple of jobs I felt the companies were not going to do well so I bailed. One company I worked for was started by Jimmy Hoffa. I think the owner was connected to the mob, so I quit.

Four (13%) of the 30 comments state the reason for ruling out a career was for physical reasons. Trudy said she suffered physically:

One reason is because using the microscope so much I developed these severe headaches. The doctor said it was because of the microscope.

Kim had to give up a lifelong desire to be a singer:

In my junior year I was going to OU and majoring in music and vocal. I was having difficulties with my throat and found I had nodules on my throat. I was told I would have to quit singing. This is when the whole career thing in singing was squelched.

### Reasons for Choosing Initial Career

Through the course of the interviews, there were 32 comments made that shed light on the reasons the participants chose their first career. Nine comments were made that indicated the participants just "fell into" their

first career. Seven remarks were made that demonstrate how they were influenced by a family member to choose a first career. Five comments suggest that a career was chosen because the person enjoyed it. Ten other comments were made in regard to the reasons for choosing a first career, but no themes emerged from the remaining comments. However, some of the other reasons for choosing a initial career were differentiation, childhood aspiration, life-changing event, making money, convenience, mandatory requirement, and no degree needed.

Nine (28%) of the 32 comments regarding the reasons for choosing a first career indicated that they "fell into" a career. The term "fell into" is a direct quote from four of the nine comments. The other five comments just implied that they "fell into" their first career. For example, Audrey said:

I fell into the investor banking thing. In college I worked in clothing retail and got into the finance side. That led to jobs in banks. The career path just happened; it was not planned. The pre-school job was more of a job of convenience while my kids were young and I could take care of them.

Hillary made similar comments when she said:

I started in the field while I was in school working part time, and it kind of stuck. I started out as a teller as an entry level position. After I got my degree, I went back to the bank because I was familiar with it. That's the field I stayed in because once you're in a field, it's hard to get out of.

Families, specifically parents, often play a large role in their children's career development (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 11). Seven (22%) of the 32 comments are about how the individuals were influenced by family members in choosing a first career. Frank chose a first career that was the same as his father's. To him it was a natural selection. Children often take on the same role as their parent (Borow, 1984, p. 163). Frank said:

My interest in my first career--I had always been interested in design and graphics. My dad was a designer. My parents divorced when I was about 7. It seemed natural to me to be doing graphic arts. In high school I received awards in drafting. I decided I wanted to pursue the mechanical over the graphic when I went on to college.

Alice was also influenced by her parents when she chose a first career. This was evident when she said:

Before, I worked in an office environment. I started that in high school because that's when my parents channeled me into it with a mind-set that girls went to school to become secretaries.

Alice went on to change careers at mid-life. Some Baby Boomers changed careers because their first career was taken to please their parents after they came to hate their first career (Glassner, 1994, p. 17).

Very few of the participants chose a first career for self-fulfilling intrinsic reasons. Only 5 (16%) of the 32 comments that referred to reasons for choosing a first

career were about the participants enjoying their job. For many, however, early childhood experiences have a great impact on subsequent development (Campbell et al, 1973, p. 16). Amanda, a driven manager who is working toward becoming an executive, carried over her high school interests she enjoyed. Amanda said:

I was always put in these leadership positions in high school. I enjoyed it, and I felt like I made some type of impact. I went to finishing school after high school for a year and did their customer service program. That's how I got started in the cable business. I thought about playing sports, but that never really panned out.

Betty is changing a career she likes to one that will allow her more time to spend with her children. Betty also reported enjoying a first career that began from a high school experience. Betty made this reflection on starting her first career:

I decided on my first career because of an intern job I had in high school. Instead of going to school the second half of the day, I went to work, and I really liked it. I enjoyed working in the offices.

#### Learning for the First Career

All of the participants received some sort of training to learn how to perform their first career. Some of the learning experiences happened in preparation for a career while other learning experiences happened simultaneously to performing the job. After the participants described their

learning experiences, they were asked to describe their perceptions of that learning experience.

### Learning for the First Career

Education and training are different. While "education calls people forth to change" (Smith, 1982, p. 45), training takes on a more utilitarian role than education. Each person in the study learned how to perform the job one way or another. Some ways of learning included formal learning, and others were informal ways of learning. Each participant's mode of learning fell into one of the following categories: on-the-job training, degree or certification, formal learning outside of the job, formal training from the job, and self-taught learning.

Eleven (44%) of the participants received most of the learning to perform their job via on-the-job training. On the job training constitutes sitting side-by-side with someone to learn or simply being thrown into a position to learn the job by first-hand experience. Larry's form of on-the-job training is informal:

My training was on-the-job training because you don't need a license or anything. I learned how to sell stocks and bonds from my dad. He got me my first job and taught me how to survive. I learned by watching and learning from other people and asking questions. I mainly learned from mimicking people. I learned the laws and stuff formally, but how to make money I learned by watching others.



Katie is learning to be a nurse because she craves the one-on-one relationships nurses have with people. While she was training for her first career, however, Katie experienced the classical example of on-the-job training. Katie said:

My training was on-the-job training; I just got in and did it. To learn the job, I went with someone for 4-6 weeks following them. Then I did the job with them watching me. If there was something I didn't know how to do, I would just ask someone.

Although degree, certification, formal learning, and formal training could be lumped together as formal learning, they will remain separated at this time because there are differences in the perceptions of these types of learning methods when learning for a first career. However, it should be noted that if these categories were lumped together, then 12 (48%) of the 25 participants would have learned to perform their first career through formal learning.

Six of the participants earned a degree as a means of learning for their first career. These individuals took the traditional college route right out of high school. Julie took the college path because of what her parents and teachers were telling her. She stated her degree had nothing to do with her first career. Julie said she got her degree because:

I got that degree because I was being told that people my age just needed a degree to get a job--any job.

All along it was Frank's plan to get a degree. He, too, took the traditional college route:

In high school I received awards in drafting. I decided I wanted to pursue the mechanical over the graphic when I went on to college.

Two people attained a certification, two people took formal classes, and two people received formal training as a means of learning for their first career. Individuals who earned a certification for a career did so before pursuing a job. One person stated, "First I went to vo tech and got a secretarial certificate. Then I went to Tulsa Junior College." Individuals who took formal classes were similar to those who attained certification except they fell short of attaining a certification. Those who received formal training are the participants who were taught by their employer as a means to learn how to perform their job. Emily, the mother of triplets who left the business world to become a teacher because it would allow her to both work and "be there" for her children, indicated she had a lengthy training program: "For my very first business job I had a 13-week training program."

Self-directed learning is when the individual takes the initiative to undertake the learning situation from setting goals to evaluating the outcomes (Knowles, 1975, p. 18). Two (8%) of the 25 participants taught themselves how to perform

their first career. At a very young age Sam taught himself to play the drums. His self-directedness mainly stems not so much that his parent's disapproved, but that the nature of his career choice was not mainstream and therefore frowned upon by his parents. Sam said:

When I started out as a drummer, it was just imitation. Everything I learned in music was self-taught and stuff I learned when playing with other musicians.

Being self-taught is no less effective than other forms of formal learning (Tough, 1979, pp. 2-3). When individuals are in charge of their own learning, they can plan their own lessons and forms of evaluation (pp. 2-3). However, as an adult, Sam did go on to lament that not having a degree or some sort of formal documentation that legitimized his learning closed many avenues of the music career.

#### Perceptions of Initial Learning Experience

When it came to learning for their first career, each of the participants were asked to comment on their perceptions of the experience as to whether it was a positive or negative experience. Eleven (44%) of the participants indicated that their primary mode of learning for their first career was on-the-job training. Of those 11, 3 stated it was a positive learning experience, 2 stated it was a negative experience, 1 was ambivalent, and 5 had no comment regarding their learning experience.

Six (24%) of the participants said their primary mode of learning for their first career was a college degree. Four of the six indicated that was a negative learning experience and two were ambivalent toward the experience.

Two people received a certification before beginning their first career, and both participants indicated it was a positive learning experience. Two other participants participated in formal learning but did not earn a certification. Both indicated it was a positive learning experience.

Two of the participants learned their first career by formal training provided by their employer. Both said that was a negative learning experience.

Two of the people indicated they taught themselves how to perform their first career. One person said it was a negative learning experience, and the other did not comment on the experience.

Overall, there were 31 comments made in relation to the participants perceptions of learning experiences for their first career. Seventeen (55%) of the comments were negative in nature, 11 (35%) indicated a positive perception of the learning experience, and 3 (10%) of the comments were neither positive nor negative. Within the positive and

negative comments there were no discernable themes that emerged.

Over half of the participants had negative perceptions toward their initial learning experience. Sarah earned an associates degree right out of high school. She worked many years at a large insurance firm, but recently found herself unemployed because her job was replaced by automation. Sarah is currently pursuing an Old Dreams career, and upon reflection, found her impersonal degree program lacking.

At Tulsa Junior College you're basically on your own and it was lecture with students at their desk. There was no interaction like there is now. I quit Tulsa Junior College because of the way an instructor acted. She said she didn't care if we passed or failed, but we just had to do all this work.

Betty also failed to see the relevance in her degree program. Upon completing a four-year degree she realized the futility in it during a job interview.

That was one of the problems with my original degree. I thought it was just a degree in business management but felt I had no idea how to do it. My perceptions of my first college experience is that I was a little disillusioned about it. I even wrote in a paper that when I was interviewing for a job I realized that this is wasn't what I really wanted to do at all. It's not what I thought it would be.

Although Todd's learning experience was not formal, his corporate training experience is similar to both Sarah and Betty's formal learning situation. They both experienced

uncaring attitudes by those who were supposed to teach them.

Todd expressed alienation toward his learning experience:

Most companies don't do a lot of good training. It's like "here you go". Although, it could have been good to learn as you go. It's mostly learning by trial-and-error with very little training.

Thirty-five percent of the participants indicated they enjoyed the learning experience while preparing for their first career. The concept of the role of experience being a valuable resource for learning likely contributed to the perception of enjoying the learning experience (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). James is a third generation Navy Seaman. Since leaving the Navy he is working toward his second career because, as James put it, "I was laid off twice because the department was wiped out." James reported enjoying his initial learning experience. He said of the experience:

My learning experience was enjoyable to learn for my first career. I certainly learned over time. You certainly can't replace the life experiences. I think the experiences complimented the book learning.

Larry not only learned from others, he created his own learning experiences and translated them into making money.

At the stock exchange, I sat there and made phone calls for 90 days and never made any money. Then I started listening to the old guys who were making money and doing that. Then I started making money and kind of went from there.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS: TRANSFORMATION TO NEW CAREER

#### Initiating Career Change

The second research question dealt with why Baby Boomers born from 1955 to 1964 change careers. Responses into this area fell into four specific categories. Many years after completing high school and preparing for a career, the participants of this study began a second career. All of the participants of this study share the distinction of beginning this change at mid-life. Each participant has a clear reason for initiating career change and employed specific tactics for choosing a new career. During this transitional phase, they also ruled out many potential new careers. As a result of this transition and after looking back at their initial careers, a defining career path has emerged.

As adults advance from one life stage to another, they go through transitional periods before moving from one stage to another (Levinson, 1978, p. 23). A transitional period for Late Baby Boomers changing careers includes deciding to abandon a undesired career, deciding upon a new career, and

learning in order to complete the change process. Some theorists confine the change to age parameters, while others view them by the resolution of crises or completion of tasks or responsibilities (Clark & Caffarella, 1999, p. 5). Times of crisis that can lead to positive life changes are predictable, normal, and healthy (Levinson, 1978, p. 199; Sheehy, 1976, p. 21). A person cannot move to the next stage until the crisis is resolved. Changing careers and learning are both means of solving a crisis. In this context, crisis is referring to crisis within the self that is internally driven, and it is not an external crisis one might encounter that happens as a result of the environment.

Upon analyzing the interviews, it was discovered that there were 66 comments relating to the reasons for initiating career change. Upon close examination of the participant's comments, it quickly became clear that some of the comments were intrinsic in nature and others were extrinsic in nature. There were more intrinsic reason comments for initiating career change than there were for extrinsic reasons. In fact, there were 40 (61%) intrinsic comments and 26 (39%) extrinsic comments.

#### Intrinsic Reasons for Change

Every since America was founded the notion of being a productive citizen has been imprinted on each generation



that followed. Without employment, therefore, self-esteem plummets. For many Americans employment is much more than a measure of income; productive employment is an essential measure of self-worth (Glassner, 1994, p. 53; Rifkin, 1995, p. 195).

Intrinsic reasons for career change are the crux of the adult development theories. The career task for many adults is not so much for reaching prestige or a large income as it is developing a flexible work role that is interesting and productive as well as financially rewarding (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, pp. 99-100). Individuals at mid-life move away from advancing for personal gain to develop a more tender and ethical self (Sheehy, 1976, p. 31). People also look to change careers when they feel their current career does not meet their "dreams" (Levinson, 1978, p. 220). Erikson used the term *Generativity* to describe the urging of people to become more productive and more creative and to seek to correct social injustices (Sheehy, 1976, p. 280).

Once all of the intrinsic reasons for career change were analyzed, categories within this theme began to emerge. The data diverged into three main topics: (a) they initiated career change because they felt they would enjoy the new line of work, (b) they felt that their new career would be

self-fulfilling, and (c) they felt that they could help people in their new career.

Thirteen (33%) of the 40 comments pertaining to intrinsic reasons for career change were that the participants felt they would enjoy their new career. In this category the words "fun" and "enjoy" were frequently used to describe the reasons for changing careers. For example, Diane had to leave the ministry because a car accident left her unable travel long distances. Since she was forced to change careers Diane decided to make the most of the situation. She said:

With the things I was qualified to do, I decided I wanted my second career to be fun. I chose an animation career because I wanted to do something that was fun.

Julie parlayed her enthusiasm toward crime scene investigation into a viable potential career:

I've always loved the mysteries and always read murder mysteries and was always intrigued by not so much CSI [Crime Scene Investigation] but actual case files. Then I thought I could put the chemistry and biology classes I always loved with being an investigator. But it's not about the money. People ask how much money I will make, and I don't even know. It's not about the money. I've never pursued a career that was about the money.

Another 13 (33%) of the 40 comments were directly related to the participants desire to find a career that was self-fulfilling. The people whose comments fall into this category wanted to fulfil a certain need through career

change. Mary, the only participant with a graduate degree, express deep fulfillment with her career change:

I think a lot of it was divinely inspired because I definitely feel called by God to do be doing what I'm doing. It's so fulfilling and satisfying. I could have never come up with this plan. Each plan sort of dovetailed into the next; they overlapped. After I got my doctorate, I was still a full time academic consultant, but I knew I would be a full time academic person some day. But that didn't occur to me two steps ago. It wasn't all revealed at once.

Kim also internalized her pursuit of a new career when she said:

This is more of a personal goal than a professional goal although it will help me professionally. Since I advise students about their academic pursuits, I almost feel hypocritical advising them to pursue education when I don't have it.

According to the life stage development theorists, helping people is one of the main reasons for career change. Erikson (1959/1980) used the term Generativity to describe the desire to help (p. 129). Eleven (30%) of the 40 comments were related to the participants stated desire to help people. In the teaching profession, second career teachers are often motivated by altruistic desires and perceived personal benefits. They also believe they offer valuable skills from their previous positions that will enable students to apply the knowledge they learn in the real world (Chambers, 2002, p. 212). After leaving the business world because her husband's job was transferred out of state,

Emily said she could transfer her previous skills to the classroom:

The day I stepped into my kid's first day of class in kindergarten I decided to become a teacher. That's when I enrolled to become a teacher. Not only did I think I had things I could bring to education, I thought I could bring a change to public education where I thought I was contributing to society and to the welfare to my children. This career does both of those for me.

Emily's comments are related to the concept of Generativity where a person seeks to guide new generations to maturity (Erikson, 1959/1980, pp. 165-168). Rhonda knows firsthand what it is like to struggle and work for an impersonal employer. She said:

If this takes off and is a successful business I'll open another business. I'm definitely in the frame of mind that I want to take care of my employees. To help them out because I know I've been there. I've pulled myself up from the bottom. I want to continue to grow; I feel that if I don't continue to grow, I'll become stagnate, and that's not what I want to do; life is too short.

Rhonda's use of the term "stagnate" is important because it is the opposite of generativity is stagnation. Stagnation leads to frustration and crisis. However, according to Levinson (1978) "both generativity and stagnation are vital to man's development" (p. 30). A person must feel the pangs of stagnation to know or to sense the need of generativity (Levinson, 1978, p. 30; Sheehy, 1976, p. 21). This sense of the need for generativity is evident in Rhonda's quote.

The fact that the adults in this study are changing careers may indicate that they are going through an identity crisis. In order to take one's place in society, an individual must acquire a conflict-free occupation (Erickson, 1959/1980, p. 118). When occupational conflict exists, a person must change careers or continue to deal with the internal crisis (p. 133). It is important to note that crisis in this context is not talking about a crisis as in an emergency, rather it is an internal crisis in which people try to identify their true selves (Sheehy, 1976, pp. 242-243). The intrinsic reasons for career change presented here tend to coincide with the stage development theorists notion of the mid-life transitional adult.

There was a fourth category that emerged indicating the participants initiated career change because of family reasons, but there were only three comments relating to this subtopic. These comments directly relate to the desire to change careers so that they can accommodate their children's school schedule and be at home when their children are at home. Also, others waited until their children were older before making a change. It is not uncommon for someone to wait until the children are out of the house before initiating change (Bronte, 1997; Drucker, 1999). For example, Emily said:

I wanted to make the career change because the business world is not a 9-5, Monday through Friday job. Having three small children, it is very important for me to be there for them.

Thinking of the future, Nancy decided to change careers but carefully considered her children first:

I'm making this change because the time has come for me to re-enter the workforce. My kids are in school and I decided I wasn't going to get anywhere without a job.

#### Extrinsic Reasons for Change

In contrast to the intrinsic reasons for initiating career change are extrinsic reasons. Extrinsic socioeconomic reasons for change are events in which the individual has little to no control. Mezirow (1996) calls these events disorienting dilemmas (p. 168). People will change careers in order to solve these conflicts in meaningful ways through transformational learning (p. 147). In the interviews, there were 26 comments made that indicate extrinsic reasons for changing careers. The most predominant reason for initiating career change was for monetary reasons. While changing careers for monetary reasons are extrinsic, it is within the control of the individual, however, which differs from socioeconomic reasons. The next most predominant reason for initiating career change was because of socioeconomic reasons. One comment was made that indicated career change was sought because of an injury.

While many mid-life adults seek to change careers for the pursuit of personal development, a recent survey indicates that money is higher in importance than both enjoying a career or the feeling of usefulness in a job (Beatty & Burroughs, 1999). Money was also an important motivator for many of the participants of this study. Nineteen (73%) of the 26 comments related to extrinsic reasons for initiating career change are due to monetary reasons. Monetary reasons includes money, benefits, and job security.

Many companies are going to contingency workforces to get out of paying benefits to workers. A contingency workforce is one in which an employer hires just-in-time employees on a part-time basis and uses them only when needed. For a contingency employee, the problem is that they do not qualify for benefits. However, workers strongly desire benefits such as medical insurance, retirement plans, sick pay, and paid vacations (Bartkowiak, 1993, p. 811; Larson & Ong, 1994, p. 194; Wiens-Terus & Hill, 2002, p. 304). Kim, for example, changed careers and was willing to accept lower wages in exchange for a retirement plan:

That's one of the reasons I want to change careers to work at the specific college is because they have retirement programs and a 401k plan. I wouldn't make as much in the college as I would in the private agency, but the benefits are worth more than that.

Larry's sole consideration was money. He found an occupation that paid well and is pursuing it vehemently:

I'm making this change because I want to make more money, I need a paycheck for stability and benefits. As a nurse I can make as much in 40 hours than I did in 80 hours before.

Amanda's desires are similar to Larry's except that she specifically chose a career she wanted:

I like the team, I'm definitely a team player and I like to make the team look good and I look good. They don't even have to give me the title of director as long as they pay me for it and give me the responsibility that comes with it.

Six (23%) of the 26 comments, or nearly one-fourth of the comments made relating to extrinsic reasons for career change, were about socioeconomic matters. For example, Kim was forced to go to work because her husband lost his lucrative job:

Honestly, the economics wouldn't allow me to do what I really want to do which is to be a stay at home mom. Three months after I quit 9/11 happened, so that took away a big portion of our financial stability since my husband works at American Airlines. That had a lot to do with me getting back into the workforce.

Betty also decided to change after her husband's job was adversely affected. They decided not to move with the position, but that decision came with a price. Betty commented:

I always had that thought in college that I wanted to be a teacher, but it sort of went away after I became a mother. But I liked being with kids and



volunteering. Then my husband's job moved to another state, and he was unemployed a while. Then I began thinking about what I could do to contribute. So after the mentoring job I had along with the substitute teaching is when it hit me to go back and get your certificate.

The next two comments are directly related to a growing trend where job functions or categories are shrinking or disappearing altogether (Canton, 1999, p. 93). Corporate downsizing is another contributing factor to disappearing jobs to which Late Baby Boomers are susceptible (Glassner, 1994, p. 13). James, for example, is looking for a more stable career, which is evident when he stated:

I have been laid off twice because the department has been wiped out.

Sarah's position was another victim of technology when her job was replaced by a computer program she helped to develop. Sarah said:

The thing with Prudential is that I wanted to stay there but they eliminated my department.

At times, developmental tasks one must face are due to illness or injury (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 5). One (4%) comment was related to a life altering injury which initiated career change. Gary said:

I've been a chef for the past 25 years. I've worked all over. Then I had a bad back injury, and I had to change careers because I couldn't do that kind of work anymore. I basically decided to make the change when I was laid up for a year after my car accident. When I was stuck in bed for that year,

someone gave me Web TV, and I became interested in computers.

Some of the participants had comments in both the intrinsic and extrinsic categories. However, based on the predominance of responses, they were placed in one category over another. Fourteen (56%) of the 25 participants initiated career change for intrinsic reasons, and 11 (44%) changed for extrinsic reasons. Adult development theorists suggested that most change at mid-life is because of individuation or generativity. While this is true for the participants of this study, the number of career changers due to extrinsic reasons is almost half.

#### Tactics for Choosing a New Career

Tactics for choosing a new career means that individuals intentionally used some process to choose one career over another. Some of the participants tried multiple jobs before settling on what they felt was their new career. There were 22 comments related to tactics for choosing a new career. The tactics were distributed as follows: thinking (12) followed by experience (3), networking (3), testing (3), and feelings (1).

Over half (55%) of the comments related to tactics for choosing a new career had to do with thinking. Twelve comments state that some sort of cognitive function was used to choose a new career. By reflection in action without

interruption "our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it" (Schon, 1987, p. 26). During his mid-life transitional period, Todd spent a great deal of time contemplating how he would change:

I've been thinking about a theology degree just to understand things. I've also been thinking about getting my MBA and teaching. I think I would enjoy teaching and talking to people. I want to help people understand. This is my natural progression. There aren't enough good teachers.

Trudy also put a lot of thought into how she would change and carefully considered what others were telling her:

I had to ask myself could I do this day in and day out. I wasn't sure exactly what it was I would be doing in science or biology. It was recommended that I do these studies, but I never figured out what work I would be doing.

Katie had been thinking of making a change for a long while, and actually made it when the opportunity was there:

I have been thinking about this change for a long time, but I wanted to get my three young children up in age before I began school. I actually thought about it in college, but didn't do it because of my children. I wanted them in a stable environment and a little older first.

There were three comments related to experience as a tactic for choosing a new career. Frank, for example, used his experiences with a big company to leverage a change in career:

The company may have pushed here and there with relocations and cutbacks. I wouldn't have taken the engineering test as quickly as I did, but it worked out.

Betty believes she would have not been a good teacher right out of college. She feels it is her life experiences that will lead to a successful career transition.

For me, it has taken all the experience after college to develop me into someone who will be a good teacher.

There were also three comments related to networking as a tactic for choosing a new career. For example, Julie decided what she wanted to do and also decided she would take the matter of finding a new position into her own hands. This is evident when she stated:

It's all contacts. Just like anything else it's who you know. I'm calling around introducing myself and asking for tours. Interviewing people and asking what their day-to-day jobs are like. I met with the medical examiner who gave me a grand tour of his office and I learned more and more about it and that's when I decided to go to school to get that degree.

An adult facing a career transition might seek some form of guidance or counseling (Boulmetis, 1997). Similar to the structural philosophy of career development for career minded youth, three of the comments made were related to taking tests to determine for what career a person might be suited. One such comment was made by Sam, the only individual to hire a professional career counselor at mid-life:

What's interesting is that before I got into real estate I went to a professional career counselor and sat down and went through a bunch of tests. We

got together every week for a few months until we narrowed it down.

One person relies on her feelings to make career decisions. Mary believes her intuition is stronger than thinking when it came to choosing a new career. She said:

If I start thinking, it gets me off track, but if I go to my internal feelings I'm better off. I feel that I'll be at [my place of employment] for the rest of my career.

### Reasons for Ruling Out Potential New Careers

Before many of the participants settled on what would become a new career, the process of choosing included ruling out potential new careers. The construct of career development is made up of the concepts of differentiation and integration (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 36).

The locus of career development is in a presumably continuously differentiating ego-identity as it is formed from experience. Differentiation is distinguishing by a specific difference; of separating an aspect from its larger considerations; of distinguishing a part from the whole. (p. 36)

There were 23 comments made regarding the reasons for ruling out potential new careers. From the comments, only "undesirable" (7), "not enough money" (4), "too much time/money to start-up" (4) emerged as themes. Other reasons included "career counselor" (1), "didn't want to uproot family" (2), "not suited to career" (1), and "physically unable" (1).

The predominant reason for ruling out potential new careers was due to undesirable job conditions as evidenced by 8 (35%) of the 23 comments. Paul is the only participant of this study who is from a country other than The United States. He said that social status is determined by one's profession. For a brief period Paul worked as a mechanic, but soon realized that profession was not for him. Paul said:

The profession is stigmatized. I chose not to go into it because of the stigma. Mechanics were known as drop-outs, and I didn't want anyone to think I was a drop out.

Kim also discovered undesirable conditions in a potential career and opted to look for another. She said:

The learning and reading and talking to the faculty at my program and professionals in the field I've decided that's not what I want to do. The legal liability issues, and the fact that the psychological problems are becoming bigger and harder to handle.

Four comments indicated that certain careers were not taken because of poor pay. Not surprising that Todd, who chose a career solely for money, also ruled out a potential career because of money. He stated:

When I was about 38, I had this interest in training and was going to be a trainer or to go to school to get a teaching degree. I coached for some time which spawned the teaching interest. Finances drove not going into teaching or training. It was a pride issue because my wife was making 50k and I would be making only 30k.

The hardest career change to initiate is one that comes down to time and money (Bridges, 1992, pp. 139-140). Four comments were also posted that related to the requirement of needing too much time or money to start up in a particular career. Barbara's love is photography. If she could choose a career for herself that is what she would do. However, it is not feasible for her at this time due to the cost involved. Barbara said:

I always took tons of pictures and took a bunch of photography [courses] at Tulsa Junior College. I still love to take pictures, but to do it professionally it would require a lot of money.

There were several isolated comments made. The other comments were related to career counselor testing, did not want to uproot family, and physically unable to perform the job.

Although the desire to pursue religious endeavors is a characteristic of Late Baby Boomers as they now see themselves morally wise compared to early adulthood (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 311-312). Ready to give up the stressful life of an executive, Todd is an example of pursuing a new career for religious reasons. He said:

I have a desire for missionary work or music ministry. A lot of that depends on my wife. I have family here and I wouldn't want to leave them behind. This is holding me back - there's no telling what I would do if I wasn't married and have a family. But, it's not about the money. But, I'm not quite there. I want to help others. I watch

people like missionaries and they have so much substance and worth, but there's so much to it.

### Career Path

Based on the participant's circumstances, each was placed into one of the three career path categories. Ten (40%) of the 25 participants fell into the New Discovery category; 9 (36%) of the 25 fell into the Old Dreams category; while 6 (24%) of the 25 participants settled for a Consolation career. Examples of the evidence that supports placing the participants into career path categories is as follows:

A New Discovery career path is one in which a person discovers a career they did not know existed or thought they might desire. Mary is on the New Discovery career path. Her new career evolved on a seemingly logical path that was not preconceived. She called the path "divine intervention." After years in the same profession, Mary discovered a new world and pursued it vehemently. Rhonda never had a career besides being a stay-at-home mom; then it was just a series of jobs after her divorce. Rhonda accidentally found her New Discovery career path after realizing a strong desire to become a bar owner while working as a bartender. Emily left her initial career because her spouse was transferred to a different state. Emily's New Discovery career was chosen



because of convenience and she saw a deficiency in the field of teaching. Emily feels she can make a difference.

An Old Dreams career path occurs when a person pursues a career they wanted to take as a young adult, or was a career they dreamt of as a child. Hillary's initial career was not her first choice. In fact, she was talked into taking it by her father. Now, after several years as a stay at home mom, Hillary decided to re-enter the workforce in a career that she wanted to take in the first place. Sarah was laid off because of corporate downsizing and seized the opportunity by changing careers that was her lifelong interest. Audrey is learning to leave a career she is not totally happy with to pursue a dream she had since she was a young teenage girl.

A Consolation career is one in which a person takes as merely a means to make ends meet. It is totally utilitarian. After 25 years of chasing a career in music, Sam decided he would never make it in that field and changed careers in order to provide for the future. Kim's first career choice was singing but she had to give it up due to medical reasons. Her second career choice was being a stay at home mother but had to abandon that career because her husband was laid off due to repercussions of 9/11. Finally, Kim chose a career where she thought she might be able obtain

adequate benefits to provide for her family. Larry chose his new career to make money because his old career did not adequately supply financial security for the present or the future.

In creating a career path, gender played an important role. For females, 47.1% pursued predominantly Old Dreams careers, 35.3% were in the New Discovery category, and 17.6% chose the Consolation career path. Men's dominant career path category was New Discovery with 50% which was followed by Consolation at 37.5% and Old Dreams at 12.5%.

The career paths the participants are pursuing relate to each of the five formal learning types. Within public higher education, three participants are pursuing Old Dreams and two New Discovery; at private higher education four are on the New Discovery career path and one is on the Consolation track; within community college there are two Old Dream, two New Discovery, and one Consolation career path; at the technical schools four are on the Old Dreams path and one is on the Consolation; and at private commercial establishments, three are on the Consolation career path and two are on the New Discovery path (see Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Career Path in Learning Type

	Public Higher Education	Private Higher Education	Community College	Technical School	Private Commercial
Old Dreams	3		2	4	
New Discovery	2	4	2		2
Consolation		1	1	1	3

How the participant's careers were developed were compared to career paths they are currently on with the following results. Of the nine individuals on the Old Dreams career path, two (22%) received structural and three (33%) received social career development. For four (25%) of the people categorized in the Old Dreams career path their career developmental type was undeterminable. Ten of the participants were determined to be on the New Discovery career path where two (20%) received structural, three (30%) received developmental, and two (20%) received social career development; for three (30%) participants in the New Discovery career path their career development was undeterminable. In the Consolation career path there were six participants. One (17%) received structural career development, one (17%) received social career development, and career development type was undeterminable for four (66%).

Those who are initiating career change for intrinsic reasons are more likely to have a New Discovery or an Old Dreams career path than those who are changing for extrinsic reasons. In fact, those in the study who are changing careers for intrinsic reasons only account for 14.3% of those in the Consolation career path and 42.9% of those changing careers are in both the New Discovery and Old Dreams career path. In contrast, the percentages of those changing careers for extrinsic reasons are more evenly distributed by having 36.4% in the Consolation career path, 36.4% in the New Discovery career path, and 27.3% in the Old Dreams career path (see Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage of Career Path and Reason for Change

	Consolation	New Discovery	Old Dreams
Intrinsic	14.3	42.9	42.9
Extrinsic	36.4	36.4	27.3

### Learning for a New Career

The third research question dealt with how Baby Boomers make the changes for a new career. Those in the study were chosen to participate because they were using a form of formal learning as a means in which to change careers. This section will report on the reasons for choosing learning as a means for career change, the reason for choosing the

current or recent learning organization for career change, the perceptions of their current or recent learning experience for career change, the differences in their learning experiences between their first career and current career change, and learning beyond the formal learning program.

### Learning as a Means for Career Change

Almost every time an adult is involved in change, learning is at the center of the event (Tough, 1982, p. 10). In fact, of the adults seeking formal learning opportunities, more than 50% are doing so for career changes (Bronte, 1997; Krain, 1995). Adults as learners make their own day-to-day decisions on what and how to learn in addition to completing the many tasks of learning (Tough, 1982, p. 124). Nearly all adult learning is voluntary (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 135) even if the learning is forced upon an individual because of socioeconomic change. The individual either chooses to learn and change or to do nothing and risk crisis.

These turning points in life mark the transitions that change the life course. Life before the turning point is different than life after the turning point. Making transitions require adaptation and coping. For many adult learners this transition is welcomed and becomes a fierce

personal goal no matter what other events are going on in life. Even with the complexity of family and career responsibilities, adult learners find a way to cope. Achieving the educational goal becomes the most important thing (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994, p. 270).

There were 46 comments made as to the reasons for choosing learning as a means for career change. Within the 46 comments 3 clusters of reasons emerged. The first cluster was related to money, the second cluster dealt with preparation, and the third cluster was related to internal reasons for choosing learning for career change.

Costs in terms of time and money, deciding what types of learning to pursue, and how the learning situation will be approached are important considerations adults think about before beginning a learning experience (Tough, 1979, p. 82). There were 18 (40%) comments that were related to the money cluster of reasons. Specific words to describe the themes within this topic were "free", "marketability", "required for advancement", and "make money". Trudy feels that if she is to advance within the company where she works, or if she is to make a good salary, she will have to have a degree. Fortunately for Trudy, her company offers educational assistance to pay for schooling. Trudy is taking

advantage of that benefit with the hopes of advancement and an increased salary. Trudy stated:

The company will pay for all of my schooling. The financing is beneficial and had a big impact on the decision to go back to school. It made it easier to go back....I was just thinking I really feel like without an education or degree. It limits job opportunities. Before I never realized that. Until you realize [what] they pay someone without an education and the requirements for advancement, it requires a degree....I feel my management wants a combination of experience and a degree. I think all major companies are looking for that. I've noticed all people here that get advancements have a degree.

The second cluster of reasons for choosing learning was preparation. There were 14 (30%) comments related to preparation. The specific words used to describe preparation were "credentials", "certification", and "preparation". Many mid-life individuals using formal learning as a means to change careers are seeking to receive credentials (Bronte, 1997). Natalie worked in retail as a young woman, but quit work to become a homemaker. In 2002 Natalie received a kidney transplant which she called "a life saving event." Now that her children are older she has decided to learn computer animation. She said:

I'm learning to use computer software. I'm working on certification and I hope to work part time somewhere in architecture or anywhere I could use it.

Hillary is looking for certification to increase her chances of employment:

I might work in plastic surgery in the future. That's why I'm getting certified because I think it can lead to me getting a job at Tulsa Regional Medical Center.

One important need of individuals is to achieve complete self-identity through the development of their full potential (Knowles, 1970, p. 23). Complete self-development is a universal human need, and movement toward that goal is needed for mental health (p. 23). A sense of self, a strong academic self-concept, and achievement motivation are needed to survive the rigors of formal learning (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994, p. 270).

There were 14 (30%) comments made that relate to internal reasons for choosing learning as a means of career change. Specific words used to describe internal reasons were "educated", "self-satisfaction", "sense of security", "as an example", and "discovery". Todd is intrinsically motivated to use learning as a means to be an example to others:

I've also been thinking about getting my MBA and teaching. I think I would enjoy teaching and talking to people. I want to help people understand. This is my natural progression.

Rhonda hopes to gain a sense of security from the knowledge she gains as a result of learning:

I hope that these classes I take will help me apply the logic and knowledge I have with experience with university learning. It won't be so hard.



Sarah is looking for empowerment with her education:

Let me tell you the main reason I went back to school. My husband is always reminding me that he is older than I am. I'm like you are not going to die and leave me without an education. He's always talking about upping his insurance and things like that. I need to know that if I ever need to have a degree I have one. He doesn't think I need to go to school. He doesn't understand why I'm going. Right now I don't need to, but I don't want to be forced into it 20 years from now.

Many people share the strong desire to complete unfinished work that was abandoned early in life (Stewart & Ostrove, 2000; Tough, 1979, p. 60). Not only does Todd wish to receive a degree to enable him to help people, he also has a strong desire to finish the degree he began earlier in life.

I just want to finish what I started. I want direction. I always just fell into a job just because I really didn't know where I was going. I was one of those people who really didn't know what they wanted to do when they grew up.

#### Learning Organization for Career Change

The participants of this study attended some form of formal learning organization. Several reasons for choosing their perspective organization emerged during the data gathering process. There were a total of 35 comments made as to the reason for choosing the learning organization. The most predominant reasons with four or more comments were convenience (6), recommended (5), price (5), reputation (4), and fast completion (5). Other noted reasons that had two or

less related comments were mandatory, advertising, certification program, Christian program, desired degree, easy program, job placement, quality of instruction, and transfer associates.

Each of the five types of learning organizations had comments relating to the reasons they were chosen by the participants. Public higher education had 6 (17%) of the 35 comments, private higher education 12 (34%) of the 35, community college 4 (11%) of 35, technical school 10 (29%) of 35, and private commercial learning organizations had the least amount of comments with only 3 (9%) made relating to why they chose their formal learning organization.

The participants in public higher education chose their program because of "certification program", "convenience" (2), "easy program", "recommended", and "reputation". Private higher education participants chose their program for the following reasons: a "Christian Program", "convenience" (3), "desired degree", "fast completion" (4), and "price" (2). Community college participants cited "convenience", "mandated by state", "price", and "transfer associates" as reasons for choosing their program. Individuals in technical school stated that "job placement", "price" (2), "quality of instruction", "recommended" (3), and "reputation" (3) were reasons for choosing their school.

Finally, participants from private commercial organizations said that "advertising", "mandated by company", and "recommended" were reasons for choosing their learning organizations.

Convenience and reputation were two main factors for Emily who chose public higher education to train for her new career. She said:

This training works very well with my plan because I can come to Broken Arrow instead of driving to Tahlequah. Northeastern State University (NSU) is one of the highest rated teaching schools in the country. In fact, I just received a grant from the USDOE and it was rated as one of the highest rated grants from the government and it went to NSU so that speaks well of the university. I chose NSU because of these reasons. Convenience was another contributing factor and principals look for teaching credentials from NSU.

The matter of convenience was also a consideration for Betty, but she was also looking for certification.

I chose NSU because of the convenience to my home. Probably because I can get certified here and it's the only place that's convenient to me. I wouldn't have driven two hours to get it.

Cost and timeliness were deciding factors for Kim to choose her private higher education program. Kim feels she can earn a degree in a reasonable amount of time and at a low cost.

I took this course because it took the least amount of time to complete for both bachelors and masters. I can get both my bachelors and masters in just 2 years instead of 5 and it only costs 30,000 dollars. I plan on taking about a two-year break

after my bachelors because it has been such a huge strain on my family and me.

Time was also a consideration for Sarah when she chose her private higher education experience. In addition to time, she also felt her degree would help her obtain the career for which she is searching.

I either want to get into HR or project management. There are a lot of jobs in HR and this degree is a combination of both. I looked at a lot of universities and this one had what I was looking for. It fits in by having the degree plan I'm looking for. Plus I can get in and out in about a year instead of a couple of years. It's saving me money and time. I need to get this done and get a job again.

When it came to choosing a community college, Barbara was looking at cost and a program that would easily transfer her credits to a four-year university.

I chose Tulsa Community College (TCC) because it was inexpensive and affordable; it's a lot less than a regular 4-year university. Oklahoma State University (OSU), where I plan on transferring my hours, has a partnership after I get my Associates degree, which means absolutely nothing to me, will transfer to OSU and I don't have to worry about them picking and choosing individual credits to accept or not accept.

Alice chose her community college due to convenience and because they offered a convenient on-line program. She also benefits by being reimbursed for tuition by going to the community college she chose.

I chose TCC because they are close and offer an on-line program. The state won't pay for other programs in childhood development.

Reputation and job placement were deciding factors for Hillary in choosing a technical school. She said:

I've heard lots of good things about this program and the instructors. I wanted to come here because of what I heard about the program. A friend of mine at the hospital where I work part time used to work here and have good things to say about it. They're really interested in helping people getting a job after the program is over.

Audrey was also swayed by the reputation of the technical school she chose to facilitate her career change; price was also important.

I chose this program because of the price, TTC is a lot cheaper than Platt. I think vo-tech is a secret and see it as a place for high school kids. I don't think there is a comparison in price. We are the 60th class so they have been doing this a while. When I meet people while doing my clinicals everyone I've spoken to knows the teachers, and they know the program and have good things to say about it. That's how I know I made a good choice.

Natalie was looking for learning that was creative and fun, that is what she found while looking in the paper one day and decided upon her private commercial learning organization.

I chose this school by looking in the paper. Their ad said something about creativity and that's what I was looking for and it sounded fun so that's what I chose.

If Frank was to change careers within his company, it was mandatory that he take specific courses from their vendor.

Southwestern Bell Corporation (SBC) is sending me to engineering courses in the SBC campus in Texas. I'll be further learning basic engineering skills

in design. They have made a lot of improvements in the field that I will be catching up on. This is a requirement.

### Perceptions of Learning Experiences for Career Change

When it came to learning for their new career, each of the participants were asked to comment on their perceptions of the experience. Sixteen (64%) of the 25 participants had positive feelings toward their current or recent learning experience, 7 (28%) participants had negative perceptions of their learning experience, and 2 (8%) had both positive and negative perceptions of their learning experiences.

There were differences of the learning perceptions between males and females. Over three-fourths (76.5%) of the women viewed their current learning organization as positive compared to 37.5% of the men. Exactly half (50%) of the men perceived their current learning experience as negative compared to 17.6% of the women. One (12.5%) male and 1 (5.9%) female had both positive and negative perceptions.

Whether or not the participants felt their learning experience while learning for a new career was positive or negative can be broken down by type of learning organization. From the public higher education group, four (80%) of the five participants felt their learning experience was positive. Four (80%) of the five participants from private higher education felt their learning experience

was positive. From the community college group two (40%) of the five participants felt it was a positive experience, two (40%) of the five felt it was a negative experience, and one person had both positive and negative comments. From the technical school four (80%) of the five participants felt their learning experience was positive. From the private commercial learning organization group, two (40%) of the five participants felt it was a positive experience, two (40%) of the five felt it was a negative experience, and one (20%) person had both positive and negative comments.

There were 82 comments on perceptions of current or recent learning experience for career change: 50 (61%) positive, 24 (29%) negative, and 8 (10%) ambivalent comments. Most of the comments that support the positive category included the terms "real world" or "real life" along with other descriptors such as "enjoy" and "feel". Many people find pleasure in the act of learning (Tough, 1979, p. 60). Mary feels that learning is both empowering and fun:

This whole learning thing is empowering and life changing. It is fun. I'm really not interested in the goal but the process of a positive movement.

Gary wants real-life learning:

I'm not going to school for the grade. I want to learn. I want my experiences to be real life, that's where I really learn.

Amanda likes the writing aspect of learning and finds the learning easy:

I like to write, and there is a lot of writing in this program. A lot if it is opinion based on what you've learned in different modules, and I find it very easy. The assignments fit into what I do at work.

Many learning projects that are related to career preparation and keeping up as new knowledge is discovered indicates that individuals will have to keep up with constant changes in their field (p. 35). However, only one of the participants is concerned in keeping up with technology. For example, Natalie is anticipating future learning experiences:

I see this field being continuous learning because of the technology. I know learning will be part of my life, and I think it will get better and better.

According to futurist thinking, power shifts in technology is changing the industrial landscape and this shift will realign economic and social boundaries with a convergence of leading edge technology (Canton 1999, pp. 3-8).

No predominant themes emerged that describe the negative perceptions. However, the phrase "not real world" was made or implied five times. Following are examples of negative comments toward learning for a new career. Diane kept telling the director of the private commercial school that the learning needed to be more real-world:



I keep telling [the director] the students should be working on projects that match the real world; how much would we charge and how long it would take to complete a job like real world marketing. I keep telling the director things because we're not well rounded and not prepared.

Sam also realized his training was not real world:

It's been difficult. The day-to-day real estate business I really didn't learn in school. When I first walked into the office, I basically knew nothing.

Julie and her friend were treated as traditional aged students that led to frustration.

At my school there is no orientation for incoming adults like there is for traditional freshman. It's been very frustrating. I went to orientation; actually my girlfriend and I who is the same age as I, were the only ones there my age. We had some people come up to us and say that the parents should be in another room. I feel like I was back in the Dark Ages. I was shocked there was not orientation that at least said we realize you are adults welcome to school.

Barbara was critical of the teaching staff at the community college she attended.

At [local community college] I'm not real impressed. I'm not impressed with the instructors at Tulsa Community College. I take classes in the evenings and most of them are not prepared for class. I don't know why they are instructors. I guess it's an extra pay check for them. Very few of them are good instructors who knows how to teach and enjoy teaching and comes in prepared. It's a joy to come in and learn. It's just wonderful. But that's rare.

The "structuredness of problems" in real life are different than those in academic settings (Sternberg, 1990, p. 37).

Academic problems are often well-structured. On the other hand, real-life problems are often ill-structured. Teaching adults to solve well-structured problems is not preparing them for solving problems in real life (p. 38). This could explain why problem solving during career development was ineffective for both initial career development and was an ineffective learning experiences for some for a new career. When the teacher failed to create real-life situations for them at their initial career development or as adults in their current learning situation, they could not comprehend there was a problem to solve. Ineffective career development and ineffective teaching strategies can lead to negative perceptions.

## CHAPTER 6

### REFLECTION ON CAREER CHANGE

#### Differences Between First Career and New Career

As the data collection progressed five different categories emerged that attempt to answer the final research question of what Baby Boomers are doing differently now to prepare for second careers than what they did the first time around. The categories are (a) the differences in learning experiences between first career and career change; (b) self-directed learning beyond the formal learning program; (c) support from family, friends, or mentors; (d) recommendations for high school career development programs; and (e) thoughts on retirement.

#### Differences in Learning Experiences

After the first few interviews, it quickly became clear there were distinct differences in the participant's learning experiences between their first career and their career change. In fact, 129 remarks related to learning differences were made by the participants to compare and contrast the differences. Of the 129 remarks, 48 (37.2%) of them were in reference to first career learning experiences

while 81 (62.8%) comments were made in reference to career change learning experiences. As part of the data analysis, the comments were separated into two categories: initial career and new career.

The obvious difference in the participant's learning experience is age. As the participants learned for their initial career, they ranged in age from about their late teens to early twenties. This age range from adolescence to early adulthood coincides with the developmental tasks from the life cycle theorists (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 72).

Of the 48 initial career comments regarding differences in learning experiences between first career and current career change, there are several distinct groupings of comments. One person experienced external forces that affected the learning experience. Two people commented that they had no computer when they initially prepared for their first career. Only four comments suggested they implemented adult learning principles (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44) in their initial learning for careers, and these comments were made by the only four individuals who indicated their learning for their new career learning experience did not differ from their initial career learning experience. More than 85% (41) of the comments, however, were directly related to Knowles' six assumptions about the adult learner.

There were 82 comments regarding what participants were doing differently than when they prepared for their first career. Of the 82 comments, over three-fourths (77%) were directly aligned with Knowles' six assumptions (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44; Knowles, 1998, p. 149).

In regards to Knowles' assumptions, there were 32 comments that align with "readiness". Adults as students view education as a way to increase competence, therefore, their readiness to learn is tied to the developmental task (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44). Common words participants used to describe readiness were "plan", "focus", "discipline", and "committed". Comments such as "I have to plan out my whole week and work it out with my husband while I deal with everything at school", "now I'm much more focused", "now I have the discipline I didn't have then," and "I'm committed because I'm paying" demonstrate the participant's readiness to learn.

There were 10 comments associated to the concept of an adult being "self-directed". As children or adolescents, students are likely dependent learners. As adult learners, people have a psychological need to break the dependency and become self-directed in most learning situations (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44). For example, the following comments clearly indicate taking control of the learning situation:

Specifically I am taking more responsibility for my education.

At TJC it was classes I had to have, now it's classes that I like.

This time around I'm just taking one class at a time now, I'm not in a hurry to get done and am enjoying the classes more.

and Julie said:

Professionally I'm getting out there in the field while I'm pursuing my degree instead of waiting until I graduate by doing volunteer work...to make sure this is what I want to do...I'm more proactive instead of just being a student until I graduate.

There were nine remarks related to "orientation" to learning. Knowles (1980) wrote that adults as students demonstrate an immediacy in their learning, as well as a performance centered approach to solving problems (p. 44). Trudy's comments indicate both immediacy and performance:

Now it's about not skipping classes. It's about learning as much as I can and applying it. That's what I want to do, take what I learn and show management that I have the skills to get the job done.

There is also no postponement of application with Hillary who stated:

My approach to learning here is different because I learn it and apply it. Here they show you the correct way to do it first, not learn by mistakes.

Frank tied in the problem solving aspect of the orientation to learning concept:

At school we learned the theory and the equations and were tested on it and that's it, but here you have to be more creative to solve problems. We also learned to work in teams where we didn't do that at school. That was a good learning experience.

Seven comments were recorded that were geared toward "motivation". Adults are more motivated to learn something that helps them solve the real problems of life that result in internal rewards (Knowles, 1998, p. 149). For example,

This time around there are serious consequences-- there is a lot of money involved, if I want this career the degree is required. Again, I want it for myself.

It's about your own self-worth. I want to prove to myself I can do this and make an A, to me even a B is not acceptable.

Now the learning is challenging, but rewarding, I like it.

Through school, many children and adolescents obtained an education by the "transmittal of knowledge" which is supposed to last throughout one's lifetime. The process is known as pedagogy. In contrast, andragogy is learning that helps a student mature and take on more of the characteristics of the adult on which andragogy is based (Knowles, 1970, pp. 37-39). Audrey sensed the difference between learning as a child and an adult:

I think adults learn differently. Number one, as an adult you're spending your own money, you've told your family and friends you going to school and they're depending on you to do this because you said you were going to do it. And, it's about your own self-worth.

There were three comments relating to "experience". As adults, they bring a great deal of experience with them to the learning situation and this can be a great resource for learning (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44). For Mary:

I could not have done it without the life experiences. I wouldn't have the temperament or desire. I was probably the most unconfident person who entered the master's program. I was learning about life and that life-learning made me more successful in the masters and doctoral program.

Emily also knew her life experiences added to her learning experience:

I also bring more life experience to the table than I did then so my level of thinking and my level of learning are more in balance then they were previously.

Finally, there were two comments related to "why adults need to know why they need to know something". Knowing why an adult has to know something is vital to the learning experience (Knowles, 1998, p. 149). For instance, Frank said, "At Telecordia we had outlines and vendor documents and we knew exactly what was going to be covered."

In addition to the comments relating to Knowles' assumptions, eight other comments related to higher cognitive and reflection practices such as thinking, discussing, and reflecting. For example, "Not to say I didn't take things seriously before, but now I really thought through what I am doing" and "now I'm thinking of it



as an adult in that I know that it is taking me someplace” are akin to Schon’s (1987) analogy that our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it (p. 26).

There were 11 other various comments relating to the differences between learning for current career change and learning for a first career. However, they were unrelated to each other or to the themes.

#### Learning Beyond the Formal Learning Program

Older adults with years of life experience look for new knowledge that fits their understanding of their world and engages their experiences in positive ways. They prefer to take part in determining the content of their studies. They also prefer to learn from peers and seek to modernize traditional pedagogy to include more flexible teaching formats (Gordon & Shinagel, 2004, pp. 55-60). Knowles (1970) called this learner-directed approach self-directed learning. For this study self-directed means that the learners are searching for things and specifically targeting needs to help them achieve their goals.

Over two-thirds (17) of the participants mentioned participating in additional learning activities to enhance their formal learning experience for a new career. This figure is consistent with research that found that about 70% of all learning projects are planned by the learner (Tough,

1970, p. 1). There were 31 total comments which indicated self-directed learning. However, 26 (83.9%) of the incidences were informal learning events compared to just 5 (16.1%) that were formal certification or credentialing learning situations. All 31 learning situations listed here are self-directed with the conscious effort to combine with the formal learning for the career change.

From the comments, there were many topics for informal self-directed learning activities such as networking (7), volunteering in the community or with children (7), reading (5), utilizing life experiences (3), creating hands-on experiences (2), and working with computers (1). Successful self-directed learners report that learning networks of fellow enthusiasts were their most important resource in developing their expertise (Brookfield, 1986 ,p. 43). Additionally, the use of such things as books and computers are devised for the purpose of facilitating skill development or acquiring knowledge (p. 48).

All of the comments the participants used to describe informal self-directed learning are related to some sort of experience. Education is grown from experience. Lindeman (1926/1961) asserted that the events of home, the local neighborhood, and the community were vastly more important than far reaching events that seem enchanting. Experience

"is first of all, doing something; second, doing something that makes a difference; third, knowing what a difference it makes" (p. 87).

The most predominant of the informal self-directed learning comments were networking, volunteering, and reading. Networking involves getting out and talking to people in the subject area. Networking is also a way to "accumulate a reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning" (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44). Gary commented:

To help me learn the business, I network with friends in the computer world that I have made all over the United States. I also help out friends of mine with their computers and networks.

Seven of the participants said they learned informally through volunteering. Volunteering took on many forms such as community service and working in their children's school classroom; all of which are associated with "making a difference" in the community (Lindeman, 1923/1961, p 87). In addition to adding to the community, the participants were able to use volunteering as a self-directed learning experience. For example, Betty said:

When I started out, I was substitute teaching. I also volunteer as a Sunday school teacher and do client enrichment with my kids, and that helps me with my school.

Reading simply meant that participants would find reading material on a subject and read the material for a better understanding of their new field. By choosing their own reading material, participants have total control of the learning situation (Smith, 1982, p. 90). For example, Sam stated, "I went to the bookstore and bought books from the top people in real estate."

The less predominant informal self-directed activities include utilizing life experiences, creating hands-on experiences, and using computers. Although these self-directed methods were used less than the methods mentioned previously, they also reflect experienced-based self-directed learning.

There is a strong link in adults between motivation to learn and their life experiences (Merriam and Caffaralla, 1999, p. 391). Todd used his life and work experiences to learn how to perform his job more effectively.

Life experiences, work life experiences. I watch and learn, I have always been coachable and followed leaders; listened to them.

After tending bar a few times Rhonda decided she wanted to own her own establishment. To prepare for bar ownership she found a way to informally learn the business. Hands-on refers to Rhonda's need to get out and physically explore her new field as a learning experience.

I've tended bar off and on for a few years. I used to have a deli and snack bar. I did more of the books while my sister ran the place. It's not just a products/service economy. It's turned into a knowledge, hands on, and trial and error [economy].

Another aspect of self-directed learning is self-teaching where learners have total control over all aspects of their individual learning experience. To fully absorb oneself into self-directed learning a person becomes both the educator and learner at once (Smith, 1982, p. 90). In addition to what she is receiving through formal learning, Diane is also using the computer to teach herself computer programs to enhance her learning experience.

I'm also teaching myself Photo Shop and other Microsoft animation programs because of this place.

A few of the comments regarding self-directed learning referred to utilizing formal learning events. There were three comments stating that the participant was engaged in seminars. One person responded:

I'm also going to a lot of conferences and seminars to learn. These are not mandatory. I think having these workshops on my resume will make me stand out.

Another two comments were about participants receiving additional credentials in addition to their formal learning organization experience for learning for a new career. For example:

I have attended some seminars in MS certification and done some courses on line. I'm also pursuing

becoming certified in other areas. This is all on my own time outside the company.

According to the literature on self-directed learning, this type of learning occurs when the learners come to regard knowledge as relative to, and in context with, their personal objectives (Brookfield, 1986, p. 47). Additionally, the highest level of autonomy is realized when adults make a conscious and informed choice, among learning formats and activities to best achieve their personal career change goal (p. 56); this is what the participants of this study have done.

#### Support

Whatever the reason for changing careers, individuals who feel a great level of support were highly motivated to advance from contemplating a change to actually going through with the change initiative (August & Quintero, 2001; Higgins, 2001; Sterrett, 1999). In the interviews almost all of the participants mentioned some level of support from family, friends, or mentors. The level of support ranged from a spouse doing extra household chores to a lifelong mentor guiding every step of the way. Most of the support received was encouraging, but there were a few examples where some participants received discouraging support from someone they cared about. Encouraging support meant that the participant received encouragement in the form of help,

support, or words of encouragement. Discouraging support is defined as someone saying discouraging words to the participant, or by withholding support toward their desired outcomes.

All but two (92%) of the participants mentioned receiving encouraging, discouraging, or both types of support. Four (16%) of the participants received encouraging and discouraging support. Only two (8%) individuals mentioned receiving discouraging support only. Most of the participants, 17 (68%) of the 25, indicated that they received encouraging support from someone close to them.

Support for the participants came in many forms. For some, support meant that family members made sacrifices so their loved ones could pursue their career change through learning. Amanda received support:

My husband volunteered to work midnights so I could go to school and keep this job. My job is more demanding, and his is more of an 8-5 job.

In addition to a spouse, one's parent often played a critical role with support. James stated:

I have received tremendous support from my wife, and my father is always saying how proud of me he is. I followed in my father's footsteps in that neither one of us graduated high school. We both went to the Navy and got our GED there and went on to careers from there.

In addition to spouses and parents, children of adults making change also made a positive impact as demonstrated in Emily's comment that:

My kids understand that mom has a job to do even though she doesn't make money; her job is a student. They support by being resources and in me trying learning methods I learn in class. My husband is very supportive and picks up the load. We've come to realize that the house won't be perfect or the dishes aren't done immediately. My fellow students are also supportive; we all help each other. The grant is a support mechanism to me because I can have a tutor if I need one. The instructors here are great support and are flexible in scheduling.

Relatives are not the only encouraging support mechanisms for the participants of this study. Bosses and mentors also served an important role as supporter. For example, Barbara was fortunate to have a boss act as a mentor:

The accountant I worked for was like a mentor for me because he would sit down with me and explain how to do things and why instead of just saying do this or do that. I really learned a lot from him.

Paul was lucky to have two men serve as role models; one from his childhood still gives him advise, and another he met as an adult also serves as a strong supporter. Paul tearfully said:

A man in Africa was the first person I knew who was a male nurse. He was a role model for me. Another man went to London as a pharmacist. He told me you are never too old to do what you want, but you'll have to get out of Africa. The man in the hospital was a nurse there when I was sick. They were trying



to get me to leave, and he told them I was his brother. He told me to consider him my brother, and we have been close every since. He is my role model.

Not everyone had the positive experiences listed above. On rare occasions, participants indicated they received discouraging support. For example, "My kid's aren't too happy about it because I'm not at home as much, and we have to rush a lot," "[my husband] doesn't think I need to go to school. He doesn't understand why I'm going." Hillary told of how her father gave her discouraging words:

I always had an interest in the medical field. In high school I wanted to be a psychiatrist, but my father said, "No you don't want to listen to people's problems all day" [heavy sigh].

There is also a relationship between the type of support and the career path of the participants. Of the participants who received encouraging support, only 17.6% of them are on the Consolation career path. Most of the people who had encouraging support (52.9%) are on the New Discovery career path, and 29.4% are on the Old Dreams. On the other hand, those who received discouraging support split with 50% in the Consolation career path and 50% in the Old Dreams career path.

#### Recommendation for Career Development in High School

After the first few interviews, it became apparent that the subject of career development was a passionate topic.

Therefore, a formal question was added to the list of questions. During the course of the interviews the participants were asked, "If you could develop a high school career development program, what would that look like?" There were 59 comments that dealt with recommendations. The comments broke down into these categories: explore (15), real-life (12), choices (8), educate (6), assessment (5), do what you want (3), educate counselors (2), goals (2), include everyone (2), involve parents (2), and morals (2).

Differentiation is a critical aspect of career development (Tiedeman, 1963. p.36). Before students can settle upon a career they must discover what careers might be appealing and what careers are definitely not for them. Most of the recommendations from the participants of this study suggest that students should explore, or differentiate, between potential careers. Those comments include:

Explore their likes and dislikes along with why they like or dislike something.

In this day and time you need to be educated and be prepared. I think it's a bad message that girls think they have to grow up and have children before growing up and exploring.

Let them find out if that's what they really want to do and what it will take to succeed in that field.

They need to get out there and get their hands on something.

Formal education does not necessarily prepare students to solve real-life problems such as choosing a career (Sternberg, 1990, p. 35). To enable students to overcome the structure of classroom learning and apply it to real life settings, several of the participants suggested that career development should mirror real-life. For example:

It would not be what is the next step and develop a goal to reach the next step. It would be to throw that out the window because life is not like that. Life is more like a - b - w.

Kids need to know more about occupations besides what they saw from Mr. Rogers. We need more internships so they can get real-life experience.

My career development program would be to have the kids to really see the career, not just hear about it from the teacher.

And, as Betty said:

I think a career development program should get the kids out into the places where they will actually be working to get an idea of what they will actually do. They need to see what people really do. Have people come in or kids go to where people are working. Before they begin college let them know what people actually do. Give them comfort that they'll not be thrown into a position.

After differentiation, students must integrate their choices into a career (Tiedeman, 1963. p.36). Integration is deciding upon a career and working toward making the career choice a reality. Decision making is incorporated through crystallization and a series of goals (Campbell et al, 1973, pp. 31-32; Jespen, 1984, p. 136; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 46).

Many of the recommendations made by the participants include the strategy of incorporating choices into their career development. Some of the comments that intimated differentiation and integration through choices are:

Build a list of suggestions and let them decide what they like. Teenagers need a lot more guidance, they think they know what they want, but they really don't. It should be a process.

It is important to remember that whatever vocational path advice others give you may not be the best to you.

Kids just need to know what their career choices are at a very young age. The more information they have to make those choices the better their opportunities would be.

Individuals entering the job market in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will need a diverse choice of educational curriculum to survive in an ever-changing job market (Toffler, 1970, pp. 272-273). By having a diverse educational background workers are better equipped to sustain several careers. Many of the participants felt that an emphasis should be placed on obtaining an education as a means to prepare for a career. For example, "They should also know what type of class work would be involved before they get into them," "Don't focus on money making, but focus on education", "I think the curriculum should be interesting," and "I feel the more knowledge you give them and independence the better off they'll be".

As developing teens many Boomers who have changed careers discovered that their first career choice was chosen too early before exploring who they are (Glassner, 1994, p. 96). Career counselors often use formal assessment tools, such as questionnaires, interviewing, and aptitude testing, to help students determine potential careers based on who they are (Jespen, 1984, p. 137; Herr, 1979, p. 122; Tiedeman, 1963, p. 52). Many comments by the participants suggest that teenagers should go through the traditional assessment process. For example, "The kids take the tests that tells them what they might like, but they really don't know what that means" and "assessment into capabilities or personality profiles".

Several of the participants said that students should be able to choose the career they wanted, or to not choose a career for that matter. The important thing was that students should choose a career they really wanted to do. They should not worry about what others think, or about how much money they might make. The notion of do what you want is epitomized by this comment by Frank:

If I had done what I really was interested in at first, it wouldn't have taken as long to get to where I wanted to be. That's going to be my advise to my children is to make sure of what you really want to do.

The remaining topics only had two comments each, but are worthy of mentioning as potential recommendations for future career counseling programs. Career counselors should have more education; students should obtain and work toward a goal; career counseling should be all inclusive and not just for the college bound or wealthy by including the poor and the problem kids; to make career counseling more effective, the parents should be involved in the decision making; morals and ethics in the business world should also be taught in junior high and high school.

#### Retirement

In order to better understand some of the decisions Late Baby Boomers are making today in regard to changing careers, a look into their future could be quite revealing. Therefore, the participants were asked to comment on their perceptions of retirement. There were a variety of responses, and the following retirement scenarios emerged from the participants: have to work because of lack of retirement funds, never want to retire, undecided on retirement, want to retire as soon as possible, and never thought about retirement.

The most frequent retirement scenario, 9 (36%) of the 25, was that the participant would have to work because of lack of retirement funds. Given the Late Baby Boomers poor

savings records, few of them can retire or think about early retirement because of inadequate retirement funds (Semke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 84, 90-91). Dale and Audrey were the only couple who went through the interview together. Audrey, who is a traveling evangelist, is changing careers because of an injury that prevents her from traveling. Dale is also a traveling evangelist and is changing careers to accommodate Audrey. On retirement, Dale said:

Since we're second career people, we blew it the first time around in regard to retirement and having a home. I would like to enjoy retirement, but with no money I have to work 20 more years before we can think of retirement. It's kind of scary that I have to live and exist just to have a retirement. Having a teenager in the house, we're still concentrating on her and haven't thought about retirement or planned for it. We need a financial counselor to tell us what to do. We still have a lot of decisions to make, and we're not totally sure what we're going to do. I know it will be something South. This is part of my preparation.

Audrey had similar worries as Dale. She believes having a new career will ease their retirement worries:

Retirement scares me because I have none. I was never able to afford to put money aside. I always needed everything to live on. But now I can put money aside and will have a career and not have to be dependent on a husband because of the profession. Now I worry about it every day.

For many, the bad economy has kept thousands of people who might have retired early from doing so. Older workers are

now staying in the workforce longer in unprecedented numbers (Gordon & Shinagel, 2004, pp. 62-63).

The next most frequent retirement scenario reported by the participants, 8 (32%) of the 25, was that they never want to retire. For example, Natalie said:

I haven't really thought about that. I do have a 401k, but I don't pay attention to it. I figured I would always keep working even if the business takes off, but not be there as much -- let someone else take care of it. I can't see myself not working.

A recent survey suggests that two-thirds of Baby Boomers plan on working after retirement (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 89). As Boomers age and begin to retire, however, some will seek socially significant roles and positions that reflect their acquired talents (Gordon & Shinagel, 2004, p. 54). For example, Julie stated:

I don't see myself retiring actually. If I get to do what I really want to do, which I think I can with this degree, would be to be a consultant. If I'm forced to retire, I could travel around and be a consultant. I don't see myself sitting around in a rocking chair in retirement. Money is of some concern but not as much now that I'm married. My husband has a retirement, so I think we'll be OK. If I do work for the state, I can get some retirement, but the pay is not that good.

Another predominant retirement scenario that was described by 6 (24%) of the 25 was that they are undecided on retirement. Undecided differs from never thought about it in that the undecided group has thought about retirement but



have not come to a final decision as how to approach retirement. Natalie has chosen not to make a decision on retirement but has deferred that decision to her husband:

I haven't really thought about retirement. My husband does, but I haven't done anything about it. I take it a day at a time. I'm relying on my husband to take care of all of that.

Katie, on the other hand, does want to retire but is undecided as to when that will happen:

I hope I have a good retirement plan to retire. Hopefully the company I work for after finishing nursing school will have a good program so I can be financially secure. I want to retire with my husband. Even if I retire as a nurse, I'll probably always talk medical to people. But I'm not in a hurry to retire although we do talk about doing things when I retire, but there is no date to it.

Only one person stated that they wanted to retire as soon as possible, and one person never thought about retirement. The lack of people wanting to retire early only corroborates the economists who say that the Late Baby Boomer will not retire early (Krugman, 2003, p. 198). One reason people do not want to retire early is for fear of running out of money before the end of their life (Simon-Rusinowitz, & Wilson, 1998). Human longevity is increasing with each new generation because of advances in medicine and sanitation and because of changes in family roles (Kinsella, 2004, p. 91). Scientists even predict life expectancies to increase even more for individuals alive today (p. 94).

Although longer life is viewed as a celebration or success story, as Boomers reach older age successes soon turn to trepidation about elevated levels of pension and health costs and about how they will plan and save for retirement (p. 92). Also, many people simply do not want to face retirement; therefore, they will continue in the workforce longer (Beatty & Burroughs, 1999; Fullerton, 1999; Krain, 1995; Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998).

After running cross tabulations with the data in the retirement and career path categories a link between the two emerged. Most (62.5%) of the people who indicated that they never want to retire are in the New Discovery career path, only 12.5% are in the Consolation group, and 25% are in the Old Dreams category. However, those individuals who feel they will have to work well into retirement age because of a lack of retirement funds were mostly within the Old Dreams career path (50%), another 40% were in the Consolation career path, and only 10% were in the New Discovery career path category. Thus, those in a New Discovery career are willing to work at it longer than those who have been in the same career for several decades.

Results of the cross tabulation between educational level and primary influence for career development were compared to the participants thoughts on retirement with the

following discoveries. First, individuals with formal career development counseling achieved higher levels of education than those with informal career development as their primary source of career development. Five (71%) of the seven participants whose primary career development advise was formal attained an educational level higher than high school. Only three (43%) of the seven participants whose primary career development counseling was informal attained more than a high school education. Second, three (38%) of the eight participants who chose to work beyond retirement years have more than a high school education. In contrast, 5 (50%) of the 10 participants who indicated they will have to work into their retirement years because of a lack of retirement income have only a high school education.

#### Gender and Age

Several comments were made throughout the interviews but did not make it into one of the thematic categories related to career development. However, comments fall into distinctive themes: gender and age.

The Baby Boom is the first generation in which women broke the stereotypical role as homemaker (Levinson, 1997, p. 403). However, some women still feel that society forces them into certain gender roles. Gender was an expressed issue only for the female participants. For example, Diane

felt that being a female will adversely affect her in the job market.

I think because I'm older and a female that the younger students can go out and get a job easier than I can. That's one of the reasons I want to be self-employed so I don't have to worry about that.

Another woman commented on her teen years and how her role was formed. Even back in the late 1970s, as the participants of this study prepared for their first career, the goal of career development was to break down the unfair paradigm that placed women into traditional work roles (Herr, 1979, P. 124). However, most of the participants of this study did not receive formal career development. For example, Alice felt she was "channeled" into a female role.

When I was growing up, all the girls were going to college, but I was channeled in the old-fashioned girl role and was comfortable in it.

One of the key concepts of adult learning is the vast amount of experience adults bring with them to the learning situation (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44). Additionally, people reflect upon and validate their experiences to create meaning (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5). Individuals in the study are fully aware of their age and how it is affecting them. Some people recognized that with age comes experience as typified in this comment, "I look at things differently now because of my age." Another comment represents how people adapt to their age: "I don't think things are so bad for people

changing in the middle. It's not a bad thing." The one self-actualized participant said this about old age, "People say that the day you die is the day you stop learning."

Some of the participants deny that their life-experiences are beneficial. However, experience is an individual's "living textbook" (Lindeman, 1926/1961) and adults learn through situations not through subjects (pp. 4-6). People learn "where they are" from their own culture and experiences (Adams, 1998, pp. 206-207). Although Alice was discounting her life experiences from being a traditional woman seeking traditionally female roles, she had great insight into herself when she stated: "I always felt like I grew up in the wrong generation." Additionally, Amanda felt that the experiences in the here and now block any learning that might come from them.

I think a lot of people want to think about retirement but find it hard because the life experiences in the here and now make it hard to look into the future.

However, without a "perspective transformation" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 14) both Alice and Amanda could experience a "disorienting dilemma" which is often manifested in personal crisis (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168).

#### Validation of Emergent Themes

In an effort to validate the themes that emerged from the interviews a three pronged approach of peer review,

member checks, and focus groups was used. The results of the peer review indicated that the themes and categories were valid based on the participant's comments, but recommended that the four major themes be delimited into three.

Individuals who served as member checks also reported that the themes and categories were valid. The result of the focus groups were more complex than just reporting that the themes and categories were valid.

Part of the data collection process included presenting the findings of the 25 interviews to three specific interested groups. Focus groups were conducted with representatives from industry, technical school, and adult education. The purpose of this method was two-fold. First, it served to help establish internal validity. Second, it helped to determine if the findings are useful or applicable in multiple settings. Therefore, the results of the focus groups were used to suggest or corroborate findings and conclusions.

The format was seminar for each of the three focus groups. First, the participants were given a broad overview of the purpose and methodology of the study. Then they were presented with a description of each of the main categories of the findings: adult development, career development, learning for first career, choosing a new career, career

path, learning for a new career, and retirement. After each category was presented, the participants discussed the accuracy and interpretation of the findings for their particular settings in each category.

### Adult Development

The age at which career change began was the first point of discussion at the adult education group, and it came up at the other focus group meetings as well. At the industry session a call center manager who hires many people each year said:

I had to keep telling myself that we're looking at one segment of the population [because] I kept trying to apply it to both older and younger Boomers.

One adult education participant asked if there was an age limit in which crisis can happen. She also went on to say "I'm older than the people in your study, but I feel that I'm in crisis mode." According to Erickson (1959/1980), psychosocial crisis happens at all eight life stages (pp. 178-179). Therefore, age does not matter as developmental tasks and crisis can happen at any age.

One of the participants at a technical school believes that it is "typical across the board" for women to initiate change the age of 40. She stated that many of the women who come through her classes are about 40 years old, and many are changing careers because of divorce or because their

children are now out of the house which creates an opportunity to make a new start. Another participant added "This is so interesting because I'm sitting here listening to everyone. I am 42 and changed careers at 40."

Another topic related to adult development to which the focus groups responded was the notion of change at mid-life being related to extrinsic reasons. In response to the researcher's comment that he did not think that Levinson would have ever believed that 45% of the people are changing because of extrinsic reasons, one participant commented:

When that was written in the late 70s people had jobs and they weren't getting laid off. They were changing because they wanted to.

Another person added, "Look at what was going on for the Late Baby Boomers, we had Nixon in office, the oil embargo, then Carter getting voted out of office." These comments parallel the problem statement for this research.

### Career Development

Just as in the 25 interviews, the topic of high school career development proved to be an emotional issue with each of the three focus groups. For example, a person at the adult education focus group reacted by stating, "I was told not to go to college" which drew a big reaction from the group. This prompted an informal survey of the participants which indicated that all of the individuals who attended



that focus group session received either discouraging or no career counseling in high school; these results are similar to the survey results.

After many stories of horrific counseling experiences, someone in the adult education group commented:

I think people have more choices now than they did when they were of guidance age. That may be why they feel they had inadequate guidance during high school.

Perhaps this is why there were so many people pursuing New Discovery career paths because of the previous lack of choices. In other words, they found something later in life that they did not know existed earlier in life. A participant at the technical school group session had a similar comment relating to choices when she stated:

Many people in your study were in high school during Viet Nam, so many felt like their choices were different because of the military. There wasn't much funding for career development at that time.

Most of the participants stated that they received negative or no career development advise from school teachers or counselors. However, when Late Baby Boomers were at career development age the United States was experiencing turbulent times. Other comments that related to career development of the 70s and 80s come to the defense of the formal career development process because of the turmoil

going on at the time. One person who went to a large urban high school in the 70s said:

In the 70s, all they did was act as probation officers. There was a lot of conflict resolution, or they were schedulers. They were busy doing other things that took them away from counseling.

Other comments were made at the adult education focus group in defense of ineffective informal career guidance from family members that stereotyped women or forced individuals into unwanted careers.

I think parents are more in tune now than they were then [when the Late Baby Boomers were deciding on their first career]. I think parents now would be more helpful with their children to help them find a career.

Involving parents was a recommendation made by many of the survey participants when asked what they thought high school career development should look like. In response to the previous comment the researcher commented on career development literature which states that parents with professional careers are more likely to have children follow in their profession footsteps than any other type of career (Borrow, 1984, p. 163). To this comment someone rebutted:

That goes to people at the poverty level too and how generations continue having similar careers. I know parents who didn't want their kids to go to college but instead wanted them go out and get a job.

Another person quickly relayed a similar story:

Where I grew up, people didn't want their kids to go to college. They wanted them to stay on the farm and work.

This conversation is supported in the career development literature (Tiedeman, 1963), which states:

We tend to look to parents or other family members as the source of elementary vocational goals. These figures seem to be the objects of early identification. Such identifications lend considerable definition to a youth's vocational situation particularly when the adult, especially a parent, actively fosters identification. (P. 11)

### Learning for First Career

The topic of learning for their first career also evoked much conversation among all three focus groups. The findings suggest that most of the people who pursued a degree in preparation for their first career viewed the experience negatively. Importantly, both the technical school and the adult education groups knew the reasons the interview participants viewed their college preparation negatively because many had the same experiences. For example, one of the technical school focus group participants stated:

I bet the people with degrees complained about the talking head and the learning not being real world. I think they may expect the teacher to teach them to be a practitioner where in reality the education is just a foundation and the practitioner comes from practice and experience.

Another person at this meeting echoed this sentiment by stating, "I think this is common...[My] degree didn't

prepare me for real life". The adult education focus group had a similar notion when someone from that focus group commented:

A degree is more general information and not immediately applicable. A degree is more background, preparatory information, where certification is more specific and gives the individual what they want.

This person noticed that all of the interview participants viewed certification positively while most of those who earned a degree in preparation for their first career viewed the experience negatively. These criticisms can be traced back to two of Knowles' (1970) assumption of the adult learner: adults learn best when they know why they need to learn something, and adults want to learn something that is immediately applicable (pp. 43-48). Knowles' assumptions do seem to corroborate the notion of one of the nursing instructors at the technical school focus group who stated:

I find that a lot of people in nursing feel like they can't pass the boards with their degree. A lot of nurses when they hit the floor at the hospital would comment that this is not real life.

A great deal of discussion was generated at the industry focus group regarding the initial learning experience findings. The call center manager felt the information presented contradicted his personal perceptions of formal training his company provides. He said:

I find it interesting that the people did not like on-the-job training, and they did not like formal training provided by the company. I find it surprising because in a recent employee survey the majority said they found value in training, but wanted more hands-on training and mentor time.

One person countered that there is a lot of stress involved with on-the-job training, and another speculated that on-the-job training is not adequate. It could be that employees want real-world training, but they want it in the safety of the training environment.

At the adult education focus group, someone asked "Who's going to hire someone who taught themselves how to do the job?" Sam, the self-taught musician, demonstrated the same concern when he stated:

I never learned to read music and that hurt me in developing this into a career.

Some people at this focus group felt that years ago teaching oneself to do a job was more prevalent than in modern times. The group concluded that many people still teach themselves to perform a career but justify their learning by obtaining official certification. In a similar example, four of the five people from the interviews who are now attending technical school prepared for their initial career via on-the-job training. Now that they are changing careers, they are going to technical school so they can learn by doing and have a degree to help them obtain recognition for learning.

The professor of the adult education focus group beautifully summed up the comments on the perceptions of initial learning experiences by stating:

Those who had a positive initial learning experience come back to the traditional standard of public higher education. However, the people who had a negative initial learning experience go to private school and some go to community college. It is no surprise that someone who is successful would go back to higher education but that those who were not so successful or did not have that positive experience would go to community college.

#### Choosing a New Career

Before the participants in the study chose a new career, they ruled out potential careers through differentiation. One of the interview participants was going to be an auto mechanic, but after doing the job for a while he discovered that mechanics in his country were stigmatized as being drug users and people who could not find jobs elsewhere. This notion was brought home when one of the adult education focus group participants related a similar experience.

Experience will tell you because of bad experiences. I know a lot of kids would never become a police officer because of the view they have of the police because they would be stigmatized.

#### Career Path

Individuals in each of the three focus groups quickly began to use the career path terminology from the study.

Additionally, each group correctly used the terminology to classify which of the three career path categories in which the participants belonged. For example, one of the people at the industry focus group stated:

I wonder if most of the women are in the Old Dreams career path because many of them paused to have families first.

A similar comment was made by one of the adult education focus group members:

I'm not surprised because women are told what they can and can't do. They go back and do what they wanted to do in the first place. I was told to be a teacher so I could take the summer off and raise my children. That's not what I really wanted to do so I went and got a job as a counselor because what I really wanted to do was be a psychologist. That's what seemed to fit me most due to my knowledge and my dreams.

In response to this comment, another member said:

That was the time period we were in. That's what everybody was being told.

Another theme regarding career path that was shared by each of the three focus groups was in regard to the Old Dreams career path. All three focus groups stated that the fact that most of the women were in the Old Dream career path was because of bad counseling or unfairly stereotyping women into job roles.

When the information on the Consolation career path was presented, the call center manager questioned the reasons why people are changing careers. He said:

I wonder how many people moved into a career because that was the only option? I was surprised by the last new hire class where we had so many applicants who have never had customer service experience.

The same person went on to say this about New Discovery and Old Dreams career paths:

I think what you have presented supports some of the feelings I've had over the past few years about new hires. I think there's a freshness of the people coming in now days. They're there because they want to be there and not forced into it. I think they have a better work ethic than the younger people do. What you're finding may validate why our new hires feel and act the way they do.

At the technical school meeting, a member who was also an Early Baby Boomer postulated this theory as to why people pursued an Old Dreams career. He said:

When people from my generation were going to work, the 70s were a milieu of change. People wanted to do good; people wanted to save the world; and now these people see the chance to change and do good because they always wanted to do that.

#### Learning for New Career

All three focus groups generated a great deal of discussion on the topic of learning. This is not surprising because the adult education and technical school communities main emphasis is learning, and industry spends billions each year on training their employees (Daley, 2001). The topics that generated the greatest amount of discussion were the differences between learning for first and new career and reasons for choosing learning.



One of the concepts that emerged from the interviews was the differences between learning for first and new career. More people in the interviews viewed the training for a new career more positively than learning for their initial career. The call center manager believed this was an accurate assessment and offered this as the basis for his feelings:

People are more involved in their learning process. Plus, they have experience to compare to. I found from the employee surveys that people who have more experience rate the call center new hire classes more favorably than do those without much experience.

Again, one of Knowles' (1970) assumption of the adult learner is evident in the call center manager's remarks; this is the role of learners' experience (pp. 43-44).

Knowles' (1970) assumption of orientation to learning also surfaced as a topic of discussion at the technical school focus group. One participant compared higher learning to a business organizational structure of a silo where the span of control is from top to bottom, and contrasted it to her learning organization that gives the student more control of the learning. She said:

I think another difference with college and what we do is that college learning is like the silo and here we train them to apply it.

Another person interjected a possible reason for the improved perception:

Learning delivery systems are different now than when they initially went to school. I think a lot of people have a more positive attitude toward learning now because teaching has improved.

Another difference between learning experiences of learning for a first career and learning for career change was brought up in the technical school focus group, and was related to problem solving. In real life, problems are not structured (Sternberg, 1990, p. 37). Many interview participants felt that learning did not prepare them for real-life problem solving and the same complaint was registered by the supervising nursing teacher when she said:

Our adult learners are used to being told what to do. I don't think people learn how to solve problems in school or the workplace. Our program is not totally self-paced or self-directed, but we try and a lot of learners have a problem with that.

The interview participants listed several reasons for both choosing learning to initiate change and their particular learning organization. At the adult education focus group, possible reasons for choosing learning were discussed. For example, the professor of this group said that many people think people choose a particular learning organization based on price. However, price is a relative thing. It involves the value that people get for their money. For example, the professor went on to point out that although the price of tuition for adult-tailored programs at the University of Phoenix and Southern Nazarene University

seem high to many, the students in these programs consider them a good value because of their efficiency and because of what they are learning. He also went on to say that more than half of the students at the University of Phoenix are being reimbursed for their tuition by their companies, and that this indicates that the companies are satisfied with this training. Another person speculated that many people may be attracted to learning because of flexible on-line courses.

### Retirement

Several of the focus group members were amazed by the thoughts of the Late Baby Boomers on retirement that were contrary to preconceived notions. As the professor of the adult education focus group put it, "We have to rethink the concept of retirement". Many focus group participants could hardly believe that only one person indicated they wanted to retire as soon as possible. One person responded to these findings by stating:

I bet more people who have to work because of the lack of retirement funds would be in the retire as soon as possible category if they could.

At each focus group session, participants were surprised that so many of the survey respondents indicated they did not want to retire at all. Each group concluded the notion of always wanting to work was understandable for

someone who has changed to a New Discovery career since it is still "fresh", or for those who recently changed careers and are still in the "honeymoon phase" of the new career. A person at the adult education focus group stated, "People have connected themselves with what they do" suggesting that some individuals feel they lose their identity without work. The call center manager stated:

I see a lot of retirement age people around who are in the New Discovery mode and they are semi-retired. They say they are busier now than they ever were. I know a lot of guys who do consultant work only when they want to and make a lot of money.

The professor shared a similar story of his brother who retired early in one career and started anew in another, totally different career.

However, the fact that so many of the interview participants feel they have to stay in the workforce longer than retirement age because of the lack of retirement funds was no surprise to one participant:

I think money is a big motivator. A lot of people are beginning to realize they have a lot more years in the workplace so they'd better be sure they're in the right career.

### Application

Each of the three focus groups indicated at least one way in which to apply the findings that were shared. At the

industry focus group, the project manager said this of the findings:

I think you can take what you've discovered and use it to help determine what motivates workers and use it to create motivators to stay with the company.

A person at the adult education focus group stated:

I think a lot of administrators would like to hear the reasons people are choosing these learning organizations.

At the technical school focus group, the participants were very concerned that one of the of the five members of the "technical school" group indicated that he is changing careers for extrinsic reasons. Specifically, this person said that he is changing careers to nursing because of the money. This one finding sparked a 10 minute conversation. Based on the following comments, it was obvious the passion this group felt about the nursing profession, and the obligation they have as educators to ensure the profession maintains its integrity. For example:

You bring up an interesting point in regard to the nursing profession because they were charged with the responsibility of the instructors to be the guardians of the profession. It becomes an ethics question when you know someone is entering the profession just for the money. It presents another set of challenges for the instructor to let that person pass or not. It goes back to what motivated the change because they can go to the Internet and see that you can go into nursing and see the opportunity for employment. I hope that nursing is more than employment. It is about caring for people.

To the previous comments someone responded:

This is interesting because there are tests out there that measure ethical thinking and integrity. Maybe we should do something like that. Well, what would our legal people say about that?

However, another responded that "I bet that person gets tired of it and quits".

At the end of the technical school focus group session, the participants were asked if they had any final comments.

The supervisor of the group stated:

This is very interesting for us. I think we should start asking students why they are choosing nursing as a career. Could you send us your questions you asked?

Later the supervisor referred to the list of questions she requested as a "tool". She indicated she wanted to use the questions to determine who was entering their school for monetary reasons and who was entering for intrinsic reasons. She also indicated that she did not wish to "weed out" students who were motivated by money but, wanted to provide up-front counseling to ensure the students knew the commitment the nursing profession requires and wanted to help them to make the right decision.

#### Field Notes

Field notes were written by the researcher for 14 of the people in the interviews. These were written because 12 of the field notes contained information that related to the

intensity and impact of the interviews of the participants. Of the 12, 3 people cried or at least became teary eyed during the interview. One field note in regard to crying noted that:

He also became teary eyed as he discussed being a pot head in high school and about how his mother moved him from town to town.

One person thinks this study is doing a good thing by helping people make good first career decisions. She said:

I think what you're doing is a good thing. If you're trying to help people make the right decision in the first place, that's a good thing to do.

One person commented on how helpful the interview was to her personally, and it helped her focus on what she really wanted to do. This person, Trudy, also made a realization during the interview she had been pursuing the wrong career for the past 20 years. Toward the end of the interview, she said:

You know, until you asked me if I was really interested in science or if I was interested in it because they said I was interested in it, I really never thought about that before. I really wasn't interested in it. It's a hard reality to realize that I wasted 20 years in something I wasn't interested in!

Other general comments from the participants were made that indicated the findings were on track and a genuine interest in the study. Two people stated the study would make a great book. One person simply hoped she was helpful.

Three people commented on how interesting the study was. Two people thanked the interviewer for the opportunity to participate. One person volunteered for any future studies that might result. Three people asked to see the results of the study.

During the focus groups, the researcher noted three specific reactions. First, it was noted that in each of the three focus groups, it did not take long before the members were using the career path terminology of New Discovery, Old Dreams, and Consolation. In fact, after the industry focus group had ended one of the participants approached the researcher and asked his advise related to a situation with a couple that the participant knew. This participant told of a couple she knew who were having marital problems because the man wanted to pursue his Old Dreams career at the sake of his family. She asked, "At what point should someone abandon their Old Dream and settle for a Consolation career?" Of course the researcher could not answer such a question and advised the participant that the couple should find a solution with which the entire family could live.

Second, at each meeting there was a great deal of interest and discussion surrounding the study and findings. For example, at the technical school session, the researcher was scheduled for 1 hour to present the findings and obtain



reactions. After the hour long session was over, the researcher tried to leave for 20 minutes, but the participants kept asking questions and talking about the study. Actually, the conversation was still in full force as the researcher left their meeting. Another simple comment at the adult education focus group indicated that the reaction group was generating great discussion: "This is awesome."

Lastly, some of the focus group participants commented on how helpful the findings presentations were in understanding themselves. In fact, at the adult education focus group one of the participants thanked the researcher for presenting the findings and stated:

This is really hitting home for me. Thank you for sharing because now I understand things more clearly. This has really helped.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of the Study

When Late Baby Boomers developed their first career, the idea was that a student's career choice developed from school into a single career that would last until retirement. This notion of one career is quickly becoming outmoded because of changing socioeconomic factors. Many jobs are becoming obsolete because of technology, and often the lost jobs are not being replaced. Because of a lack of replacement jobs, global unemployment is higher now than during the Great Depression. Also, many companies are downsizing, and there is a growing trend toward using a part-time specialized workforce. Finally, people are living longer, the traditional retirement age is increasing, and the age for Social Security benefits is creeping upward which may force many people to have multiple careers before retirement or to stay in the workforce longer than anticipated.

Stage theories do not always adequately describe working patterns of adults (Lemme, 2002, p. 312). Adults have the potential to change at any point in life by the

increasingly divergent career paths and timetables that typify contemporary adulthood (Sterns, Matheson, & Schwartz, 1990). Super (1984) also suggested that the order of stages are not fixed and that individuals may actually progress through the sequence more than once, recycling through the stages at transition points (Lemme, 2002, p. 312). The idea of one "right" career is no longer the paradigm for the adult American worker (p. 312). Accepted models of adult development suggest change is intrinsically motivated to satisfy stage needs. Individuals do develop in stages, but many adults will be changing careers because of extrinsic reasons, and constant upheaval will challenge present life cycle theories.

The concept of adult learning is relatively new in the schema of existing theories; therefore, much more knowledge can still be learned to advance the collective knowledge of adult learning. Although andragogy has contributed to the understanding of adults as learners, it has done little to expand the understanding of the learning process (Pratt, 1993, p. 21). Also, little is known about how people engage and manage their self-directed learning, how the issues of power and control interact with self-directed learning in formal settings, what real-life self-directed learning looks like in practice, and how situations interact with the

personal side of self-directed learners (Merriam, 2001, pp. 10-11). Changing times and new careers are likely for many Late Baby Boomers, and whatever change they face, adult learning is sure to be the stimulus. However, exactly how adult learning will adapt to meet these changing times is yet to be seen.

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of Baby Boomers born from 1955 to 1964 who have initiated career change. This was done by discovering why the Late Baby Boomers of this study are changing careers, determining how they are going about making those changes, ascertaining the characteristics of their successful career transformation, and determining if they are doing anything differently now than when they initially prepared for their career.

This was a descriptive study. The population consisted of individuals born between 1955 and 1964 who were living in the Tulsa, Oklahoma, metropolitan area. This qualitative research project employed one-on-one interviews which were conducted with a sample of 25 Late Baby Boomers who were initiating career change through formal learning in public higher education, private higher education, community college, technical school, and private commercial learning

organizations. The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data.

### Summary of Findings

As children, many of the participants had a notion of what they wanted to be when they grew up. However, very few of them attained their childhood goal with either their first career or subsequent career choices. As high school students, very few had any form of formal career development training. However, many of the participants did receive informal career development training based out of the home. The overall perception was that career development training in high school was not adequate to prepare them for the real-life work world. During the process of settling on an initial career, most often a potential career was ruled out because the participant simply disliked the occupation. When a first career was finally chosen, many participants said that they "fell into it," meaning that little thought or preparation went into the career decision. Many other participants chose their first career because of family influence. One thing that the participants had in common is that they received some sort of training to perform their first career. Training was both formal and informal, but most often the participants received on-the-job training to prepare for their first career. Whatever the mode of

learning, over half of the participants had negative perceptions of the learning experience in learning for their first career.

This participants in this study were initiating a career change at mid-life. Just over half (56%) of the participants changed careers for internal reasons and just under half (44%) changed for external reasons. Internal reasons for initiating career change were because they felt they would enjoy the new line of work, they felt their new career would be self-fulfilling, and they felt they could help people in their new career. Monetary issues such as the desire for more money, job benefits, and job security made up the bulk of the external factors that contributed to career change. Socioeconomic factors such as corporate downsizing, lay-offs, and restructuring also heavily influenced career change. When changing careers, the participants put a great deal of thought into their decision-making process. As they moved from one career to another, three distinct career paths emerged from the data. They either discovered a new more desirable career along the way, went back to their old dream to do what they always wanted to do, or settled upon a career to finish out their working life.

The Late Baby Boomers in this study have selected formal learning as a means with which to initiate career change. They are choosing formal learning organizations on the basis of monetary concerns, to become prepared for their new career, and for internal reasons such as self-fulfilment. They selected their learning organizations because they are convenient, they are recommended, they are reasonably priced, they have a good reputation, and they can be completed quickly. Most of the participants are pleased with their current learning organization, but participants from community college and private commercial learning organizations had as many negative comments as positive comments. Participants tended to like the programs that were based in real world settings and disliked those that were based in theoretical settings.

There are distinct differences in the ways the participants learned for their initial career and in the learning they received for their new career. Many of the participants are simultaneously engaged in both formal and informal self-directed learning activities to enhance their career change learning. They are searching for things and specifically targeting needs to help them achieve their goals.

Career development training was a passionate topic for the participants of this study. Almost everyone had specific ideas on how current career development training programs should be run in high school. They felt that students should explore career options in real-life settings, have choices, and be encouraged to do what they want. The programs should educate students to be prepared for the real world, use effective assessment tools, educate the counselors, include everyone, involve the parents, and teach business morals and ethics.

The participants also had specific thoughts on retirement. Most will have to work longer than anticipated because of the lack of retirement funds, some never want to retire, others are undecided on retirement, and a very few want to retire as soon as possible.

The findings of this study were conceptualized around three areas: preparation, transformation, and reflection. These findings led to the following conclusions which are grouped in the same conceptual areas.

#### Preparation

Individuals who receive positive career development training may be more likely to survive socioeconomic and mid-life crisis.

Many people allowed themselves to "fall into" a career because of inadequate career development training.



Late Baby Boomers do not follow traditional career change development theories.

During their formative youth, girls had to overcome unfair stereotypes from both formal career development training initiatives and from family members.

Many women are attending formal learning for career change to correct past wrongs such as gender career role stereotypes.

The participants of this study exemplified what life cycle theorists said in the past about individuals changing in their 40s.

On-the-job training can be perceived as negative because of the stress associated with learning this way.

Adults in the process of career change are returning to formal education to seek certification to validate prior learning experiences.

Individuals want formal learning that is real-world based to prepare them for the real world.

Insufficient career development training in high school can have negative consequences for individuals in adulthood. Those who receive effective, positive career development are more likely to survive socioeconomic and mid-life crisis because they are more likely to be better educated and psychologically equipped to handle change. On the other hand, individuals who are not ready to handle either internal or external change are more susceptible to mid-life crisis and having to settle for a Consolation career.

The Late Baby Boomers of this study received very little formal career development training in high school.

What little they did receive was not viewed positively by most of the participants. Most of the career development training they received was informal in the form of social career development training administered in the home. Those few who did receive positive career development training had more stable career paths and changed careers because of the intrinsic reasons described by the adult development theorists. In fact, those with poor or no career development training were more susceptible to socioeconomic factors and settled for careers they did not necessarily want. They also stated in the interviews that they will have to work past traditional retirement age just to have money on which to live.

Participants of this study stated that one of the main reasons they chose their first career was because they "fell into it". "Fell into it" translates to "I had nothing better to do or no real plan so I may as well work here". Thus, their career began. Having no plan or direction limits the choices one has. Although the family was also a strong influence on the participants of this study, with no direction of their own, family influence also left certain individuals with little career choice.

Super (1984) stated that adults go through a series of career related stages throughout their lifetime. The stages

are growth, exploratory, establishment, maintenance, and decline. Other traditional career change models assume job availability and personal choice based on interests and abilities (Borgen, 1997). These models were introduced in a time when starting and ending career points were predictable. In reality, however, individuals are continually faced with uncertainty brought about by unemployment and volatile job situations (1997).

Parents of Baby Boomers are typically from the G. I. generation. The G. I. generation was known as "The Father Knows Best" generation in that the father was the breadwinner and mother stayed at home to raise the kids (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 264). It was the staunch anti-feminism of the G. I. generation which caused the Boomers to rebel and push for feminism in the turbulent 1960s (p. 264). As a result, Late Baby Boom girls were largely subjected to counselors and mentors who thought that the women's place was in the home or in the workforce as secretaries and school teachers. This counseling led to girls either taking careers they did not want or not taking careers outside of the home.

Much of the theoretical work describing adult development and career development were developed in the 1940s and 1950s. In the early 1980s, however, Daniel

Levinson (1997) completed a study comprised of 45 women and concluded that men and women were more alike than ever before (pp. 409-414). However, 17 (68%) of the 25 participants of this study were women, and out of the 17 women participants, nearly half (8) of them are moving into traditionally female professions of teaching and nursing. Perhaps it is much more difficult to break outmoded stereotypical modes than Levinson originally reported.

In 1997, Levinson studied women's mid-life transitions. The women in Levinson's study were the first generation in American history who took a non-traditional path in regard to women's roles as homemaker (p. 409). However, as old stereotypes are broken and women take their rightful place in society, the lives of women and men are becoming increasingly similar (p. 414). Levinson concluded that the mid-life transition differed slightly for women who took on traditional roles from non-traditional roles (p. 415).

Some gender-role based professions die hard, however. In this study, four of the five participants from public higher education were women and were learning to become school teachers. Their reasons for becoming teachers stemmed mainly from their family roles. They expressed a desire to pursue teaching so they could have the same schedule as their children and receive a pension at retirement.

The men and women in this study were quite similar in the age at which they initiated change, with just one year separating the genders. Gail Sheehy (1976), an icon of adult development theories, asserted that women enter into the mid-life transition earlier than men at around age 35 (p. 31). However, of the 17 women in this study, the average age at which the mid-life transition began was 41 which is one full year behind the men of this study who averaged age 40. This suggests the lives of women and men may be becoming increasingly similar as suggested by Levinson (1997, p. 414).

Life cycle theorists have indicated that the bulk of mid-life career change is due to intrinsic reasons. However, nearly half of the participants of this study were pressured to seek career change by reasons beyond their control. Therefore, life cycle theories may have to be re-examined and changed to reflect modern times. For example, the participants of this study are learning with the goal of changing careers. This contradicts Havinghurst's (1948/1972) contention that learning at this stage is limited to civic and social problems, and that the adult learner will be learning to fulfil their leisure time (p. 103).

Not all studies support the proposition that the life cycles proposed by the life cycle theorists will last

indefinitely, or that all people go through life cycles the same. People must live their own lives (Strauss & Howe, 1991, pp. 46-47). Life cycle theories do not take into account the lives of women who move in and out of career roles because of family roles or the effects of corporate restructuring (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1991, p. 248).

On-the-job training was one of the most frequently reported means for learning for a first career in this study. However, most of the participants indicated that on-the-job training was not a positive experience. Corporate trainers who participated in the focus groups suggested that there is a great deal of stress involved with on-the-job training because the recipients are unsure if the training is adequate to help them actually perform the job. Other reasons for stress are that those providing the training may have resentment toward their trainees because of perceived competition with those people, or the training may prevent them from completing their assigned tasks, or because they may view the training as some sort of punishment. Workplaces are also subject to cliques, and one worker may be a better trainer than another, making consistency an issue with on-the-job training (Billett, 2002, p. 29).

Without credentials, workplace experience and learning do not translate well to a resume. Non-traditional college

enrollment has been trending upward for some time (Foltz & Luzzo, 1998). Therefore, many adults are returning to formal learning organizations in mid-life to receive certification for workplace learning and experience they received throughout their career (Bronte, 1997). Workplace experience is increasingly becoming prized by formal learning institutions (Billett, 2002, p. 29). However, workplace experiences are not legitimate in their own right, but go a long way in augmenting formal learning (p. 29).

More than half of the participants indicated their initial learning experience was negative. They viewed their experience as negative because it was not "real-world" and did not adequately prepare them to perform the job. Most of the negative comments made throughout the interviews related to negative perceptions of training that was not perceived as real world. Since traditional higher education tends to be more theoretical, it may not adequately tap into what people need on a day to day basis. This may lead to higher enrollment for community college or technical school programs that are more practically based and which have programs that can be immediately applied in the real world.

Participants tended to like the programs that were real world and disliked those that were. The reason they favored real world learning is because of what Knowles (1970) termed

"orientation to learning" (p. 44). People want learning that will help them solve real-life problems. In the case of changing careers at mid-life, the problem is that they do not know how to perform their new career, so they learn to solve that problem. Learners in this situation do not want extraneous learning that does not directly link to the task at hand.

### Transformation

In light of the today's geopolitical and socioeconomic climate, the career and adult development theories that were developed or adopted in the midst of a spiritual awakening are no longer broad representations of today's world. \_\_

Participants of this study had low college attendance rates which is comparable with what the Baby Boom experts reported in the literature.

Career development for Late Baby Boomers can be conceptualized as falling into the areas of New Discovery, Old Dreams, or Consolation career paths.

Individuals changing careers for intrinsic reasons are more likely to be in the New Discovery and Old Dreams career paths than in the Consolation career path.

Even though people are pushed into career change by extrinsic reasons beyond their control, many pursue either an Old Dream or a New Discovery career rather than settle for a Consolation career.

Mid-life crisis from socioeconomic factors are almost as prevalent as traditional reasons for mid-life crisis.

Many Late Baby Boomers have overcome the limitations of their initial career development



training and are now in the New Discovery career path.

Adults in the process of career change want formal programs that apply adult learning principles.

Career development for Late Baby Boomers includes the concept of continuous training to keep up with the fast paced technological changes occurring today.

Many of the individuals of this study who received an associates degree or bachelors degree did so as non-traditional students. One possible reason that only 6 of the 25 participants earned a degree as traditional college students is likely related to the fact that the number of high school seniors entering college dropped from 62% to 33% from 1973 to 1980 (Jones, 1980, pp. 155-157); these are the years the Late Baby Boomers would have finished high school and entered college. What this indicates is that almost three-fourths of Late Baby Boomer high school students did not go on to college. As a result, their earning potential was limited because of low wages, high unemployment, and slow promotions due to a lack of education (Glassner, 1994, p. 17; Jones, 1980, p. 162; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 65).

A social moment is an era, typically lasting about a decade, when people perceive that historic events are radically altering their social environment (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 71). This perception is evident in many of the

participants of this study when they describe the reason for career change as a direct result of 9/11. The aftermath following the events of 9/11 had a dramatic, negative impact in the Tulsa, Oklahoma, area due to a strong airline-based economy. There are two types of social moments: secular crisis and spiritual awakenings (pp. 71-87). Social moments normally arrive in time intervals roughly separated by two phases of life, which are approximately 45 years apart, and alternate between secular crisis and spiritual awakenings (p. 87). The social moments cycle can be traced back for several centuries (pp. 87-96).

The social moments cycle is evident in recent times. In the early 1930s to 1945, the United States experienced The Great Depression and World War II which are examples of secular crisis. About 35 years later from 1967 to 1980 the nation experienced the Boom Awakening, an era of discovery and experimentation, which is an example of spiritual awakenings (Strauss & Howe, 1991, pp. 91-96). Now, approximately 35 years later, the country is back in the midst of another secular crisis which began with the Gulf War, and includes the events around the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack, the war with Iraq, and financial uncertainty.

All of the participants of this study have changed or are changing careers. As the interviews progressed, three

specific new career paths emerged from the data. A New Discovery career path is one in which a person discovers a more desirable path to take or discovers a path for the first time. Old Dreams career is one in which a person decides to pursue the career they wished they would have chosen in the first place. A Consolation career path is one in which a person pursues a career that is not their first choice. Some of the participants in this study discovered a new career to pursue, others went back to a career they wanted to choose as their first career but did not, and some chose to pursue a new career they did not necessarily want. During the focus group discussions, the participants quickly began using this career path terminology. All of the focus group participants who have changed careers immediately identified with one of these three career paths. This suggests that these three career paths adequately describe the way in which the career transition transpired for the participants of this study.

As adults approach mid-life, many seek to re-align their careers to satisfy an intrinsic need to perform more meaningful work (Levinson, 1978, p. 45). The career task is not to attain a certain position of prestige, but it is to attain a career that is interesting, flexible, and productive (Havinghurst, 1948/1972, p. 100). Levinson (1978) concluded from his study on men that they often changed when

their current career no longer fulfilled their dreams (p. 220). Other people change careers after reaching success in their first career which allows them to pursue old passions (Sheehy, 1976, p. 247).

Individuals in this study who had a choice in changing careers did not have to settle for a career they did not want. They had the opportunity to contemplate different careers before deciding upon which one to pursue. As these individuals lived their daily lives, many of them discovered a new career path along the way. Others decided to go back to a career they wished they had taken in the first place.

However, many of the participants of this study were not electing to change careers but were forced to because of socioeconomic conditions beyond their control. Not all the people who were forced to take a new career had to settle for one they did not necessarily want. Many of the participants who changed careers due to socioeconomic conditions beyond their control took advantage of the situation to pursue an Old Dreams or New Discovery career. However, there were only 14.3% of the participants in the Consolation career path who are changing careers for intrinsic reasons compared to 36.4% of the participants who are changing careers for extrinsic reasons.

The main emphasis of career development training when the Late Baby Boomers were in high school was the concept of differentiation and integration (Tiedeman, 1963, p. 36). Without differentiating between career likes and dislikes, the individual settles upon a first career. As the individual ages, the lack of choices as a youth changes to new discoveries in adulthood. Often, middle-age adults in transition discover new career possibilities they did not know existed. These new discoveries lead to new careers at mid-life. Sometimes the impetus for change is intrinsically driven while other times it is extrinsic in nature. Either way, adults find themselves on the New Discovery career path.

A "readiness to learn" with adults is a principle in which the adult learner sees education as a process to increase competence in order have the ability to achieve developmental tasks of social roles (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44). A developmental task for the participants of this study was to choose a new career. The fact that many of the participants had to settle upon a Consolation career may suggest a need for them to look at education as a means to increase their competence. Increased competence may give them the power to choose a career rather than having to settle for one.

Many individuals in this study who were affected by socioeconomic factors were forced into career change. Since they were not planning on career change for intrinsic reason, perhaps the change caught them off guard. Many of the participants who chose a Consolation career path did so for monetary reasons such as adequate compensation and benefits. Many socioeconomic factors may contribute to the participants choosing a Consolation career. For example, corporate downsizing is rampant in the United States which leads to lower wages and reduced benefits (Sonnenberg, 1997).

To fight off having to worry about the possibility of settling for a consolation career, many of the participants suggested that career development training at the junior high and high school level should mirror real life and teach students to be adaptable for inevitable change. This supports Toffler's idea that career development training should train students to be prepared for a diverse job market in the future (1970, pp. 272-273).

In this study, individuals in New Discovery career paths because of self-imposed intrinsic reasons did not want a traditional higher education. Adults as learners for career change want andragogical principals applied to their learning situations. Therefore, they seek out learning

programs that employ adult learning principles and that cater to adults by providing convenient hours and class schedules. Participants in this study stated they were looking for convenient programs that minimized conflicts with work and home schedules, provided real-world application, could be completed in a timely manner, was economical, and treated them like adults.

Few of the participants discussed learning being a continuous process. The sense the researcher got was that the participant's initial and recent learning experiences were merely means to an end, and not seen as something that had to be continually updated. Without continuing education and lifelong learning, employment possibilities diminish throughout one's lifetime (Hu & Toman, 1997, p. 38). Currently, few people understand the awesome implications of technology in the future. "Even fewer have a strategic view of reshaping and creating businesses to accommodate the effects of having longer lives, enhanced health, and superior performance" (Canton, 1999, p. 159). The best way to survive corporate reorganizations is to survive from within. Having transferable skills and the ability to quickly adjust to new situations can help people go into any field in which they choose (Glassner, 1994, pp. 46-47).

Adults view learning as a means to solve immediate real-life problems (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). However, real life also requires continuous learning to solve problems in the present as well as when they happen in the future. Learning will be a lifelong endeavor. Most likely, the bulk of continuous lifelong learning will be self-directed where one personally shapes the goals and purposes and takes ownership of the learning (Knowles, Houlton, & Swanson, 1998, p. 135). To become truly self-directed, many adults will have to break the mold of formal learning and learn how to learn. Learning how to learn involves the process of acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to learn in any circumstance that may arise (Smith, 1982, p. 19).

Having the skill of knowing how to learn and being self-directed can go a long way in solving life's inevitable problems. Perhaps if these skills were taught at a young age as part of career development training, adults may be better equipped to pursue an Old Dreams or a New Discovery career rather than having to settle for a Consolation career.

#### Reflection

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is related to career development.

Position on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs tends to increase with additional education.

Adults are purposively choosing self-directed learning activities to achieve specific goals.



Positive formal and informal support is essential for successful career development.

Many of the participants will have to work beyond traditional retirement age because of the lack of retirement funds.

Many in the New Discovery or Old Dreams career paths may not want to retire.

One of the primary missions of educating adults is to help individuals to satisfy their needs and achieve their goals (Knowles, 1970, pp. 22-27). Individuals need to achieve their self-identity through the development of their full potentialities by helping them mature. As adults mature and develop, they subsequently achieve the needs for which they are striving. The link between maturing and learning is often demonstrated through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Based on participant comments during the interviews, each person was categorized on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs both before and after they initiated their career change. Before they initiated change, 13 of the people were at the Safety Needs level, 9 people were at the Belonging Need level, and 3 people were at the Esteem Need level. After the participants initiated career change or as a catalyst to initiate career change, 12 people were at the Safety Need level, 4 at Belonging, 8 were on the Esteem Need level, and 1 person was at the Self-actualization level. Almost half (12) of the group moved up the hierarchy. Seven (28%) stayed

the same on the hierarchy; these were all at the Safety Need level. However, five (20%) of the participants actually went down the hierarchy. To classify where the participants fell within the Hierarchy of Needs, the researcher compared participant comments to definitions of each level.

Individuals in this study who indicated they received positive career development training in high school were higher on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs than those who received negative or no career development training. For example, more than half of the participants who received negative or no career development training were at the Safety needs level. These data may suggest that informal career development training fostered more movement up in Maslow's hierarchy than did the formal school-based career development training the participants received in high school.

There was one individual in the study who attained a graduate degree and was also the only person who was at the Self-Actualized level on Maslow's pyramid. Over half of those who attained only a high school education, and exactly half of those who attained an associates degree were at the Safety level. Less than half of the people with a bachelors degree were at the Safety level. These trends indicate, the

higher level of education, the higher one is on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Each of the participants of this study who was forced into career change because of socioeconomic factors settled for a Consolation career and were at the Safety needs level. Many of them went down the hierarchy from Esteem or Belonging levels to the Safety level. This supports Borgen's contention (1997), that people forced into career transitions face long periods of uncertainty.

People who are higher on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs have achieved higher levels of maturity (Knowles, 1970, p. 25). A mature person, therefore, possesses the wisdom and mental ability to grow from life's problems. Individuals who are higher on Maslow's Hierarchy of needs are more likely to choose a New Discovery or Old Dreams career path. Individuals who received positive career development training and had positive learning experiences feel more empowered and are therefore less likely to settle on a career. In fact, even if the reason for career change was extrinsically motivated they can still control their own career destiny.

Most of the individuals who were at the Safety need level perceived their learning experiences as negative compared to those at the higher levels where everyone felt

their learning experiences were positive. This suggests that being forced into a situation can make an individual bitter or resentful, and someone who chooses to be in a situation feels empowered and desires to fulfill their inner needs.

Sharan Merriam (2001) stated that the field of adult education has yet to adequately describe the theory or model of adult learning (p. 3). Little is known about how people engage in and manage their self-directed learning, what real-life self-directed learning looks like in practice, and how situations interact with the personal side of self-directed learners (pp. 10-11). However, this study of 25 Late Baby Boomers indicates that adults are adopting adult learning principles. In addition to obtaining credentials through formal learning, adults are purposefully choosing self-directed learning activities to achieve specific life goals. Therefore, this study addresses how people engage in and manage self-directed learning, what it looks like in practice, and how situations interact with the personal side of self-directed learners.

People who receive positive support throughout their lives from family, friends, or mentors are more likely to have successful first and subsequent careers than those who receive negative support. Of the participants of this study who indicated they received negative support, half of them

settled on a Consolation career. On the other hand, most of those who received positive support are on the New Discovery and Old Dreams career paths. People who sense a high level of support are more motivated to follow-through with their change plans (August & Quintero, 2001; Higgins, 2001; Sterrett, 1999).

Baby Boom experts reported that Late Baby Boomers would lack adequate retirement funds because they experienced lower earnings than their Early Baby Boomer counterparts (Glassner, 1994, p. 17; Jones, 1980, p. 162). Additionally, Late Baby Boomers as a group have poor savings records which compounds the retirement hopes for those who wish to retire at or before traditional retirement age (Semke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 84, 90-91). Another contributing factor to the having to work past traditional retirement age is that the legislated age to receive Social Security benefits keeps creeping upward (Simon-Rusinowitz & Wilson, 1998). Nine (36%) of the 25 participants said that they would have to work past traditional retirement age because they felt they would not have adequate retirement funding. This scenario was the most prevalent of all retirement scenarios.

Eight (32%) of the participants indicated that they never want to retire. This supports a recent survey that reported that two-thirds of Baby Boomers indicated they did

not want to retire (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000, p. 89). Additionally, as Boomers age and begin to retire some will seek new socially significant roles and positions that reflect their acquired talents (Gordon & Shinagel, 2004, p. 54). The desire to keep working could be because the structure of the human brain and human emotions are geared toward continual learning and growth (Sullivan, 2003).

There is also a link between career path and retirement. Nearly two-thirds of the individuals in the New Discovery career path said they never wanted to retire. Those in a New Discovery career are likely willing to work at it longer than those who have been in the same career for several decades.

### Recommendations

#### Career Development Training

Students must be prepared for much more complicated demands than job preparation.

Career development training must include lifelong learning skills that will sustain learners through multiple careers.

Take the results of this study and develop a way to help people choose their initial career and to make the best career change decisions as adults.

In high school everyone should have some sort of formal career development training because it may lead to higher levels of education. Lower levels of education can lead to the need to work into retirement years because of the lack of retirement funds.

More parental involvement is needed during the career development years.

Approaches need to be developed that fully take into account the influence of geopolitical and socioeconomic factors on people's motivation and ability to make and implement career choices (Borgen, 1997). Career counseling models were developed when life transitions had more stable beginning and ending points. These "need to be revised to account for the current reality of continued career uncertainty caused by rapidly changing labor market opportunities" (Borgen, 1997).

Many jobs are becoming obsolete while simultaneously new jobs are being created. In fact, many careers did not exist until someone stepped in to it to fulfill a specific need (Toffler, 1970, p. 109). According to the trends in the labor market, many people entering the job market in 1970 could expect to change careers six or seven times in their lifetime (pp. 109-110). They should no longer think in terms of a single career but rather should think in terms of a serial career (pp. 109-110). Serial careers are becoming more prevalent for reasons such as jobs going away because of becoming obsolete and people looking for more fulfilling work (p. 114).

Deciding whether and what to learn is an important step. Success or failure of a learning project can depend on

deciding what to learn. Little help is available for adults to help them decide on this step (Tough, 1979, p. 63). Only one of the participants used formal career development training at mid-life to determine what new career path to take. Upon completion of his career development training process, this individual actually settled upon a Consolation career that was not recommended by his counselor. He chose a learning organization out of the phone book.

Many of the participants in this study who had formal career development training achieved higher levels of education. Higher levels of education can lead to higher earning potential which leads to larger retirement funds and reduces the chances of being without work for extended periods of time should that happen. Therefore, effective formal career development training is the foundation to a healthy career.

A common theme emerged from the 25 participants and the participants of the focus group sessions. Both groups suggested that involving parents should be an integral part of student career development.

#### Adult Development

Further study is needed on other age cohorts to determine how they are changing and if the patterns are similar.

The life cycle theories need to be expanded to include extrinsic reasons for change and crisis.



Age does not matter in that developmental tasks and crisis can happen at any age. For example, one woman in her 50s from a focus group session spoke of similar changes but initiated her change at a later age. Even though she is of the traditional Baby Boomer age, these issues still fit other generations. The specific group of Late Baby Boomers are facing the challenge of career change.

A modern version of life cycle theories is needed to accurately reflect the issues that adults face today. While the work of Erickson, Havighurst, and Levinson are still valid indicators of adult psychology, they currently represent only about half of the adults currently at mid-life.

### Career Path

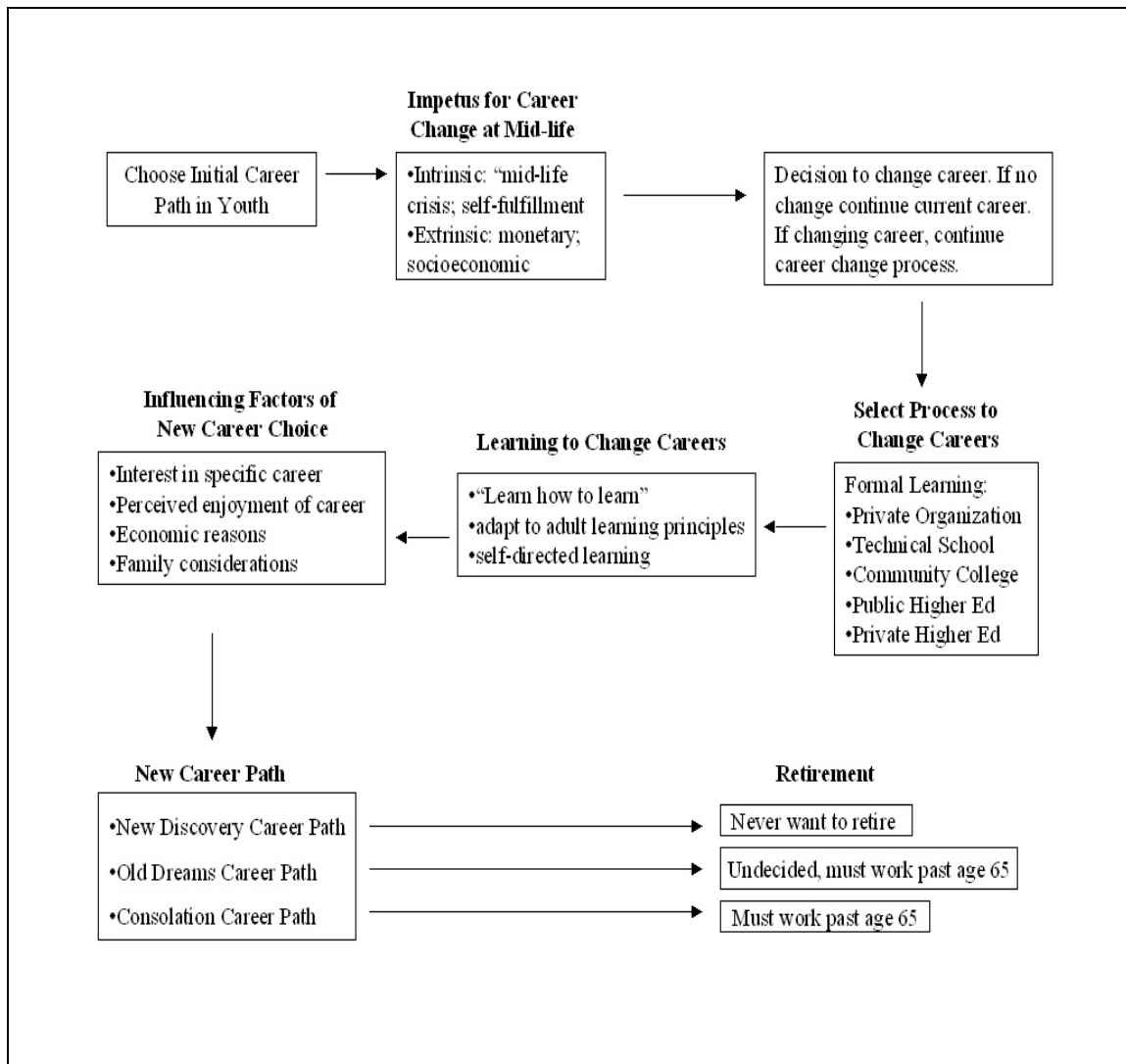
Develop a new model that accurately describes the career paths of adults.

A career path model based on currently acknowledged adult development thought is straight forward. At early adulthood an individual embarks on a career, works at their career until retirement, and then retires at retirement age. The only variation is that some people might change occupations at mid-life to solve their mid-life crisis or to become self-fulfilled (Levinson, 1978, p. 220; Sheehy, 1976, p. 31). However, for a growing number of people, this model is too simplistic and no longer describes adult career path

processes. A new career path model is needed that more accurately describes the modern adult.

To describe the individuals who does not work at one career until retirement, a new career path model is proposed. This modern career path model should contain the causes of career change, the process people go through to change careers, and the outputs of their career change effort. To describe the causes of career change the model should address why people are changing careers. It should address if they are changing for intrinsic reasons described by the adult development theorists, or if they are changing for financial or socioeconomic reasons. The process portion of the model might include how the individuals went about learning for a new career and what types of learning they obtained. Finally, the model should describe the end result of the career change process. For example, did they pursue a New Discovery, Old Dreams, or Consolation career path (see Figure 1). While the findings of this study support and illustrate this proposed model, further research is required on career change before any model can be accepted as part of accepted theory.

Figure 1: Proposed Adult Career Path Model



### Learning

To prepare individuals for their first career, adult education principals should be implemented.

Adults align with adult learning principles.

Although the bulk of the comments of the initial learning experience are related to Knowles' assumptions of

the adult learner they are not in alignment with, rather they are opposite of his six assumptions (Knowles, 1980, pp. 43-44; Knowles, 1998, p. 149). In other words, the participants of this study received predominantly pedagogical learning for their first career. For example, one of Knowles' assumptions is that adult learners have an orientation to learning in which real life problems occur that require immediate attention. However, the participants indicated that their learning for an initial career was not geared toward immediate application, and often they did not know how or where the learning fit into developing a career. Since the participants of this study indicated that they favored their learning experiences as adults more favorably than as children, it appears that adults as learners align with adult learning principles.

Traditional aged college students are still faced with the pedagogical model. Even the nursing teacher supervisor at the technical school admitted that they still employ pedagogical practices on both their high school and adult students. However, she indicated that most adults found the transition to andragogy difficult because of years of conditioning. Therefore, children and young adults should be exposed to andragogy at an earlier age.

In 1970, Alan Toffler noted that the trend in the United States was moving away from standardized education to de-standardized, individual ways of education (Toffler, 1970, pp. 272-273). Diversity in degrees, majors, and credits will be needed to satisfy the student of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century (pp. 272-273). By having this diversity, students will be better equipped to face unstable job markets and multiple careers.

### Women's Issues

Are young women graduating from high school today still faced with the same stereotypes as their mothers? What is needed is for someone to repeat this study in another 20 years to see if women from Generation X are faced with the same issues with which the women of the Late Baby Boom era were faced.

The enlightened spiritual awakenings of the turbulent 1960s brought about changes in women's roles. The cry of women's rights permeated all forms of media as the Baby Boom watched, listened, and took action. However, many of the female participants of this study are still dealing with gender issues. The fact that most of the learners in formal settings are women and over the age of 40 is a telling sign that women are still breaking free from old stereotypes. Most of the individuals in the Old Dreams career path are women, again suggesting that women are re-aligning their careers to be what they wanted to be in the first place. A

further study to find out if the children of Late Baby Boom parents have broken old stereotypical women's roles of career would provide even further insight into women's issues related to changing careers.

#### Implications for Business

Take the results of this study and develop a way to determine why employees are prone to leave and what motivates workers to stay with the company.

This recommendation was made at the industry and technical school focus groups. It was suggested that corporations could save a great deal of time and money if they could reduce turnover. They felt that if they knew what motivated people to change careers, they could use that information to try to motivate them to stay in the career they were in. To take this recommendation one step further, companies could use this data to develop an instrument to determine if potential employees were attempting to start the "right" career. The technical school wanted to develop a "tool" from the interview questions so they could determine the motivations of potential students entering their program. Such a tool could be used to help counsel incoming students. They did not want to use the tool to weed out potential students, but to provide counseling when needed to ensure they knew exactly what the nursing profession was all about.

### Satisfaction Survey

A study is needed to follow-up on individuals who changed careers to determine if they felt they made the right decision.

Teachers who changed careers did so for a variety of reasons and have varying levels of satisfaction with their career decisions (Chambers, 2002, p. 212). What is not known of the 25 participants of this study is whether or not they are satisfied with their decisions. Some people find that they made terrible mistakes in changing careers when it leads to financial ruin (Glassner, 1994, p. 58). Did change contribute to happiness, satisfaction, and well being (Tough, 1982, pp. 154-155)?

### Recommended High School Career Development Program

Students should explore potential careers.

Career development training should mirror real-life.

Include the strategy of incorporating choices into career development training.

Career development training should focus on education.

Teenagers should go through traditional assessment processes.

Involve parents in the process.

Educate teachers and counselors.

Involve all students in career development.

Before a career development training program is developed, consideration needs to be given to when in the life cycle qualities such as flexibility and autonomy are most influenced by intervention and how to make the greatest possible impact on developmental processes (Sonnenberg, 1997). The point of greatest impact is where career development training should begin. This recommendation is based on the participant's responses during the interviews and from the review of literature.

Exploring potential careers is the concept of differentiation and integration, the locus of career development training (Tiedeman, 1963. p.36). According to the study participants and the focus group participants, quality exploration is not happening. Some of the participants described "career day" where people from different careers come in and talk to the students. The problem with this approach is that the students do not get a picture of the person in context. It becomes an abstract talk where the strongest career day speaker is likely to influence the career the students will like most. Students should be taken to the workplace so they could explore the job first-hand to create a more accurate experience.

"This may well result in an earlier intervention, with younger children, with career issues not necessarily



addressed explicitly or directly, but rather in form of a focus on life-skills, with flexibility and autonomy as the developmental goals" (Sonnenberg, 1997). The rapid obsolescence of knowledge and extension of the life span make it clear that skills learned in youth are not likely to remain relevant as people age (Toffler, 1970, p. 407). Education must then provide lifelong educational provisions for lifelong learning (p. 407). Children still attend traditionally organized classes that do not mirror real-life rapidly changing organizations (pp. 408-109). Schools of the future should adapt to an ebb and flow type of environment that has students temporarily working on tasks with one group, then changing to work with another group to mimic organizational structure (pp. 408-409). Adult workers are expected to take on many roles at work and to work on a variety of teams with a variety of people; schools should be no different (pp. 408-409).

Today's curriculum should look beyond the traditional courses and add curriculum to match what they will face as adults through each life cycle (Toffler, 1970, pp. 410-412). Students must be able to adapt and change both in school and in real life. Just learning math and English will not accomplish this goal. Choice and diversity is the key. If society fails to do this, society in the future will have no

one to solve society's problems (pp. 410-412). "Students must learn how to discard old ideal, how and when to replace them. They must, in short, learn how to learn" (Toffler, 1970, p. 414). By enhancing human adaptability a powerful new dimension can be added to education. "Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who can't read; he will be the man who has not learned how to learn" (Toffler, 1970, p. 414).

Just as many careers now exist for the Late Baby Boomer that did not exist 20 years ago, 20 years from now will exist many careers not available to the student developing a career today. To help the children adapt more successfully to rapid change, they must be made aware of the advancement and possibilities of tomorrow and enhance their sense of the future (Toffler, 1970, p. 423).

The main motivation behind the recommendation to include the strategy of incorporating choices into career development training was the fact that so many of the study participants chose a first career they did not necessarily want. Many chose their first career by default; this can be viewed as the "I just fell into it" mentality. Others were influenced by family members to take a career, and that career was not what they really wanted either. However, they had no career choice of their own so they said, "Why not?"

This career is as good as any other". This recommendation sounded more like sound advice based on experience. The message the participants wanted to communicate to students today is, "You have a choice, don't settle on a career you might regret taking."

Educational systems are merely producing workers to survive in the world (Toffler, 1970, p. 399). To thrive and avoid future shock, educational systems must be created that meet the objectives for the future rather than for the past (p. 399). Education must train individuals to cope both in today's society as well as tomorrow's (p. 403). Those who administer career development training must not only understand the now they must also understand the future to cope with change. The participants of this study who went straight to college felt ill prepared for the course work. Others felt that teens spend more time making money than focusing on education.

In the context of traditional career assessments, the participants were saying that career development training is much more than assessment testing; it should also include analyzing the results and explaining to the students exactly what they mean. Too many times counselors would administer the assessment and provide the results to the student. The student was left to interpret their meaning, and often they

did not understand what the results meant. Other times counselors would "label" the student based on the results of assessment, and the student would not identify with the assessment which caused a disconnect between counselor and student. One participant described her experience with assessment testing. She stated her test results indicated she had high hand-eye coordination and her recommended career was an auto mechanic. She did not want to become an auto mechanic and dismissed the test results.

Co-operation between the guidance function and parents, other teachers, and student, as well as cultural and recreational resources is needed. A more holistic approach and broader responsibility for this aspect of development are required (Sonnenberg, 1997). While involving the parents does sound like a noble cause, some of the female participants of the study indicated that their parents were their major influence and that they steered them into stereotypical women's roles. However, positive parental partnerships with student and teacher could lead to healthy, positive career decisions. Participants also recommended further education for counselors and stated that career development should be available for all students, and not just for the college bound or wealthy.

Since the Baby Boomers have graduated high school, recent literature on career development training suggest that little progress has been made from the 1980s to early 1990s. Educational reform in the 1980s focused on educational proficiencies, but did little for the non-college bound student (Smith & Rojewski, 1993). As a result, reports indicate that students still lack the skills to transition into the workplace due to little to no career guidance (Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1990; Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991). Additionally, secondary school systems failed to prepare students for self-sufficiency and adulthood (Hoye & Drier, 1999). As a result, youths struggle in their transition from school to work (Smith & Rojewski, 1993). However, in 1994 an act was signed into law intending to focus attention on the importance of assisting students in the transition from school to work .

The School to Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) was signed in 1994 by president Clinton. The STWOA provided money for states and local communities to build school-to-work programs to prepare young people for high-skill, high-wage jobs or further education (Granello & Sears, 1999). School-to-work was a synthesis of all career development initiatives that had gone before. It was not a new program,

but a system-wide change based on lessons learned from the past (Hoye & Drier, 1999; Hughes, Bailey, & Karp, 2002). It does not compete with traditional career development training, but is a framework for schools to increase academic achievement for all students, regardless of wealth or social status (Granello & Sears, 1999; Hoye & Drier, 1999).

The goal of school-to-work was to teach students broad transferable skills that will be useful in a variety of work settings, not to use the education system to train for one specific skill (Granello & Sears, 1999; Hughes, Bailey, & Karp, 2002). However, students still define their career interests and goals, and learn job readiness skills that employers value (Hughes, Bailey, & Karp, 2002). Another underlying philosophy of school-to-work was the notion that all students can benefit from more knowledge about career options and skills required for different jobs, as well as rigorous study (Visher, Bhandari, & Medrich, 2004). In summary, the STWOA emphasized: involvement by school counselors, career exploration, involvement of all students, finding interests and goals, focusing on real-world experiences, multiple settings and disciplines, career exploration, and contextual working and learning (Granello & Sears, 1999).

Reports indicate many benefits of the school-to-work programs. School-to-work helped schools "systemize, enrich, and expand their career exploration programs" (Visher, Bhandari, & Medrich, 2004, p. 136). By expanding career exploration programs, schools improved the prospects of a wider, more diverse group of students by increasing the likelihood they will graduate and go onto college (2004). Some studies show that school-to-work graduates are more likely to be hired and earn higher wages than comparable groups (Hughes, Bailey, & Karp, 2002). Employers report that when they hired school-to-work former students, they recognized less training, greater ability to work in teams, and better work ethics than other new-hires (2002). Therefore, employers participate because they see benefits for the student and for their own business (2002). Workplace learning helped students make better decisions about their career goals which led to less time wasted by changing majors (Granello & Sears, 1999).

The STWOA has also received much criticism. Critics charge that school-to-work takes the interests of students and makes them subservient to the interests of employers (Caputo, 2003). Similarly, since it places a greater emphasis on the world of work and workplace competencies it ignores academics (Miller, 2001). A program based on

workplace competencies does not have objective measures in place, therefore are subject to subjective measurement (2001). Many feel that school-to-work closes the door to students who want to pursue a four-year degree, even though proponents of school-to-work maintain that college should always be an option (Granello & Sears, 1999). Some critics site that school-to-work has not improved academic achievement on standardized scores (Miller, 2001), and that the watered down curriculum has lowered academic standards (Granello & Sears, 1999).

School-to-work began in Oklahoma with a mixture of limitations and possibilities. Already having a reputation for opposing federal training programs, then Governor Keating had doubts about the program when STWOA was initially signed in 1994 (West, 1996). Keating and Democratic lawmakers debated over where the responsibility for school-to-work would lie. Oklahoma Democratic lawmakers argued that it belonged with the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education (1996). School-to-work initiatives faltered because of a lack of leadership and communication (Schott & High, 1996). However, Keating maintained that such a move gave school-to-work a narrow focus and promoted "the European model where my 16-year-old son is a 'soon to be' riveter (West, 1996)." Critics of



school-to-work agreed that it maintained a narrowly focused academic base that trains for one specific job (Zehr, 1998).

In spite of the limitations within Oklahoma's version of school-to-work, the program also had many capabilities. Keating warned against recreating the European model, but also countered that the program should include both the business and private-industry groups to focus on business needs (West, 1996). A primary example of a broad based approach to school-to-work was the CREATE program initiated in Central Oklahoma (Schott & High, 1996). CREATE was a consortium made up of technical schools, community colleges, and higher education. The program was community based that included parents, educators, and businesses. Curriculum was highly diversified including both training and education that focused on academics to help students succeed in future careers. CREATE was for all students and stressed the importance of career planning (1996).

Many other school-to-work programs in Oklahoma focused on a broad based approach. Other models included school-based programs that linked with work-based learning (Osgood, 1998). Additionally, programs matched industry-based mentors and internship programs with students and provided training for both the teachers and mentors (Hellen & Hunter, 1994; Zehr, 1998). School-to-work developed academic skills

through high standards, and linked learning with work (1994). Equally important in school-to-work programs in Oklahoma was the model that included parents.

Many feel that school-to-work should not be abandoned so quickly (Hoye & Drier, 1999). Not enough time has passed to effectively evaluate the effectiveness of school-to-work through research. However, early indications indicate positive results for students, teachers, and employers (Hughes, Bailey, & Karp, 2002). Future research is needed to examine the academic and career paths of the school-to-work graduates as they mature into young adulthood, enter the job market, and from their own families (Caputo, 2003). The analysis of the school-to-work processes should be reconsidered to compliment empirical, sociological, and psychological observations already made in this field (Tchibozo, 2002).

The literature review for this study regarding career development training is an historical look from the 1960s through the early 1980s. This time period represents the years the participants of this study were attending junior high and high school and would have received their career development training. The participants of this study were highly critical of their career development training. The majority of them felt it was non-existent, or ineffective at

best. When the Late Baby Boomer was beginning their first career, the concept of school-to-work was more than a decade away. Current research on school-to-work point to the future of a school-to-work program in the recommendations they make for future programs.

The purpose of including this brief review of the school-to-work initiative is to demonstrate the parallels between the recommendations made by the participants of this study and the literature on the STWOA. School-to-work attempted to resurrect career awareness and career opportunity development, but fell short of the mark. However, this study on Late Baby Boomers changing careers supports school-to-work. When laid side-by-side, the recommendations made by the participants of this study exactly matches the literature on school-to-work. For example, following are the recommendations made by the participants of this study along with sources from the school-to-work literature:

- Students should explore potential careers (Granello & Sears, 1999).
- Career development training should mirror real-life (Granello & Sears, 1999; Hoye & Drier, 1999).
- Include the strategy of incorporating choices into career development training (Granello & Sears, 1999).
- Career development training should focus on education (Granello & Sears, 1999).

- Teenagers should go through traditional assessment processes (Granello & Sears, 1999; Hughes, Bailey, & Karp, 2002; Visher, Bhandari, & Medrich, 2004).
- Involve parents in the process (Hoye & Drier, 1999; Visher, Bhandari, & Medrich, 2004).
- Educate teachers and counselors (Granello & Sears, 1999; Hoye & Drier, 1999).
- Involve all students in career development (Granello & Sears, 1999; Visher, Bhandari, & Medrich, 2004).

In addition to the recommendations made by the participants of this study, the research on school-to-work make several recommendations to move the initiative forward. On a broad basis "schools need to be able to engage, inspire, and advance students with every kind of interest and ability, including those not highly motivated by academic study" (Visher, Bhandari, & Medrich, 2004, p. 138). Before considering the next initiative, educators should not move to the next idea without making connections to the past (Hoye & Drier, 1999). Schools should look to bridge the disconnect between school and the community. School-to-work should tie learning in the classroom with multiple work experiences and reinforce the notion of lifelong learning (Granello & Sears, 1999; Hoye & Drier, 1999). When involving employers from the community at every level, the learning must be placed in context (Hoye & Drier, 1999). Finally, whatever the next initiative may look like, the optimal

strategy is to implement a stage approach to school-to-work (Tchibozo, 2002).

#### Related Study

Further study is needed on what happens to people who do not change careers.

Life stage theorists write about the crisis people go through and solve before they pass from one stage to the next. The people of this study are solving their crisis by learning and transforming their lives through career change. However, people who do not solve their crisis are susceptible to psychological and even physical damage (Bridges, 1992, p. 129-130; Levinson, 1997, p. 375). What is not known is what will happen to people who do not change careers who should be changing careers.

#### Final Commentary

At the conclusion of one of the focus group sessions a participant made this observation, "Adaptation is what we all do. We've been conditioned that way. We're born to win, conditioned to lose. It's all adaptation. It's what we've done all our lives." She was commenting on the 25 people of this study who were wise enough to recognize a season of change, and who were brave enough to take control of their lives by adapting to their situation. However, those who are unable or unwilling to adopt to this new order will suffer

from breakdown. "This breakdown is future shock" (Toffler, 1970, p. 322).

Participants of this study are adapting. They are changing careers and transforming their lives through learning. However, the question remains, "How many people are there who are not adapting?" Those who do not change may find themselves in a state of "career shock". Career shock can happen in one of two ways. First, career shock happens when individuals find that their present career has been transferred out of state, been replaced by automation, been sent overseas, been replaced by contract employees, or has been downsized off of the organizational chart, and this has caught the worker unprepared to adapt. Secondly, career shock can happen when individuals realize that their current career no longer defines who they are, when people decide they cannot face one more day on that job, when they discover a new career path they can take, or when they wonder what might have happened if they had pursued their childhood dream career. The key is adaptation. Just as the 25 participants in this study have adapted to change and avoided career shock, others can follow a similar pattern.

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APPENDIX A

**Oklahoma State University  
Institutional Review Board**

**Protocol Expires: 11/23/2004**

Date: Monday, November 24, 2003

IRB Application No ED0457

Proposal Title: Late Baby Boomers Pursuing Second Careers Through Formal Learning

Principal Investigator(s):

Chris A Woodard  
12404 #. 77th St. N.  
Owasso, OK 74055

Gary J Conti  
206 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and  
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

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Dear PI :

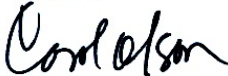
Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact me in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, colson@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Chris A. Woodard

Candidate for the Degree of

EdD

Thesis: Career Shock: A Study of Late Baby Boomers Pursuing Career Change through Formal Learning

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Owasso High School, Owasso, Oklahoma in May 1978; received Bachelor of Science degree in Management of Human Resources from Oklahoma Wesleyan University, Bartlesville, Oklahoma in May 1995; received Masters of Science degree in Occupational and Adult Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 2001. Completed the requirements for the EdD with a major in Occupational and Adult Education at Oklahoma State University in May 2005.

Experience: Seven years experience designing, developing, and delivering technical and soft-skill training. In addition to training the job duties include quality assurance and performance improvement initiatives. From 1991 to 1998 worked in supervision within the Customer Services at American Electric Power (PSO).

Professional Memberships: American Society of Training and Development, Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association, Gideons International.

