

“CONNECTING THE DOTS” TO THE PROFESSORIATE: MIDLIFE WOMEN’S
CAREER TRANSITIONS AND STRATEGIES

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

Changing faculty characteristics in higher education include increasing numbers of new faculty with prior careers and women faculty. However, traditional adult development and career development theories may not account for the intersection of these two dimensions in examining faculty careers. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate. An adult transition model in conjunction with a contemporary career development model formed the conceptual framework and guided the study.

Participants comprised eight tenured or tenure-track women faculty, in adult education or related fields at four-year institutions, who self-identified as career changers to the professoriate while age 35 to 60 years. To prepare for data collection, I used phenomenology's Epoché process to investigate and bracket the essence of my experience as a woman midlife career changer aspiring to the professoriate. Data collection comprised two semi-structured interviews with each participant using a protocol of open-ended questions. Data analysis consisted of phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis.

Using terms like "connecting the dots," participants described their midlife career transitions to the professoriate as the culmination of prior life, education, and work experiences. They generally identified a career transition process influenced by midlife age with differing beginnings and endings and the following shared steps: prior

experience, a doctoral program, an interim higher education position for some, and ultimately, tenure-track professor.

Furthermore, participants described career transition challenges, supports, and strategies to manage the process. Specifically, participants experienced process-related challenges such as finding a first tenure-track position, required relocation, and tenure and promotion. In addition, they experienced relationship- and role-related challenges such as impacted relationships, endless explaining of the professoriate to non-academics, and expert to novice transition. Overall, prevalent politics remained challenging throughout the career transition process. Career transition supports were relational; advisors and mentors provided professional support, while God and church provided personal support. Last, as strategies to manage midlife career transition to the professoriate, participants created community, applied prior career experience and skills, and practiced productivity. These findings have implications for theory, higher education policy and practice, and transition-related practice.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents—in memory of Frances Marie Cherrstrom and in honor of M. John Cherrstrom. While reflecting for this dedication, I realized my parents were adult educators although they never used the term. I am proud to continue their legacy.

After a long battle with Alzheimer's disease, my mother passed away before I defended this dissertation. She was a strong and smart woman who excelled at school and enjoyed lifelong learning. She earned a master's degree in mathematics, unusual for a woman born in the early 1900s. After teaching primary school, she was a civilian instructor in the Air Force, where she met my father. By the time I pursued my doctorate, Mom could not comprehend my career transition aspirations; however, in her own way, she provided love, encouragement, and support.

While I pursued my doctorate, my father devotedly cared for my mother. He is a smart and talented man who did not particularly like school, but has passionately pursued informal learning throughout his life. He served in the Air Force as an electronics instructor, wooed Mom and eventually celebrated 62 years of marriage, had a successful career in industry, raised two children, and enjoyed two grandsons. While Dad may not understand why I pursued the professoriate, his family's happiness is always a priority. Thank you, Dad, for providing Mom with great care and me with love, encouragement, and support during this journey.

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Third, I thank this study's participants. You are busy, accomplished women who generously shared your time and experiences "connecting the dots," as termed by a participant, to the professoriate as women midlife career changers. This phenomenological study includes your voices, and you inspire my midlife career transition to the professoriate.

Fourth, I thank my new Texas A&M friends. Thanks to my friends and colleagues at the Center for Teaching Excellence and in the Dean's office of the College of Education and Human Development. I especially thank Dr. Debra Fowler for interesting work and many fun times and Dr. Carolyn Sandoval for sharing her office and introducing me to qualitative research. Thank you to soon-to-be-Drs. Glenn Forister and Michelle Johnson for being my first doctoral student friends and the latter for answering numerous questions about Texas A&M. A special thanks to Dr. Jill Zarestky, my weekly writing partner, constant encourager, and friend.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Faculty are the pivotal resource around which the process and outcomes of postsecondary education revolve. They often determine curriculum content, student performance standards, and the quality of students' preparation for careers. Faculty members perform research and development work upon which this nation's technological and economic advancement depends. Through their public service activities, they make valuable contributions to society. For these reasons, it is essential to understand who they are; what they do; and whether, how, and why they are changing. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013, Introduction, para. 1)

To understand how and why faculty are changing, this chapter highlights the record-breaking numbers of students and faculty and discusses two changing faculty characteristics—the increasing numbers of new faculty with prior careers and women faculty. The chapter continues with the problem statement, the study's purpose and research questions, definitions of terms, and the study's significance to the field.

Background to the Problem

Record-breaking undergraduate and graduate enrollments in higher education institutions are influencing an increased demand for faculty. According to The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2012b), which is Congressionally mandated to collect, analyze, and publish American education statistics, undergraduate enrollment in

U.S. higher education institutions increased by 36% from 13.2 million students in fall 2000 to 18 million students in fall 2010. By 2021, NCES projects undergraduate enrollment will further increase by 13% to 20.3 million students (Aud et al., 2013). Similarly, graduate enrollment in U.S. higher education institutions increased by 32% from 2.2 million students in fall 2000 to 2.9 million students in fall 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b). By 2021, NCES projects graduate enrollment will further increase by 21% to 3.5 million students (Aud et al., 2013).

These increased undergraduate and graduate student enrollments in higher education institutions are influencing record-breaking numbers of faculty. In 20 years, the number of faculty increased by 45% from 826,252 in fall 1991 to 1.5 million faculty in fall 2011 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b). In addition to record-breaking numbers, faculty characteristics are changing, including increasing numbers of new faculty with prior careers and women faculty.

Increasing Numbers of New Faculty With Prior Careers

Based on NCES's (2004) last National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, the number of new faculty with prior careers is increasing. This trend mirrors American society as adults live longer, work longer, and change careers more frequently than in the past. Specifically, adults are living longer as evidenced by increasing life expectancy from 47 years in 1900 to 68 years in 1950 to 79 years in 2009 (National Center for Health, 2012). Midlife Americans, ages 35 to 60, number over 103 million and represent 34% of the total population (United States Census Bureau, 2011). Adults are working longer in their careers, delaying retirement by choice or because of economic

necessity, such as rebuilding retirement funds lost in the stock-market collapse and continued access to employer-supplemented health insurance (Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, 2013; Franklin, 2013). The percentage of workers who expect to work longer and retire after age 65 has increased over the past 20 years, from 11% in 1991 to nearly 20% in 2000 and 33% in 2010 (Franklin, 2013).

In addition to living and working longer, adults are changing careers more frequently in search of greater meaning or use of skills, to achieve a dream or pursue new interests, or in response to a layoff or other job loss (Mullins, 2009). Career changers are not just changing jobs, moving from one employer to another, but changing careers, leaving an established occupation for a different one. Although the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics does not track career changes, one longitudinal study indicated younger baby boomers, born between 1957 and 1964, changed jobs 11 times on average from ages 18 to 44 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). We can reasonably conclude some of these job changes were career changes.

In higher education institutions, the percentage of *newer* faculty (defined as 10 years or less) with previous employment only outside of higher education, thus potential career changers, is greater than *mid-career* faculty (defined as 11 to 20 years) and *most experienced* faculty (defined as more than 20 years; National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). For example, in doctoral institutions (see Figure 1), such potential career changing men faculty increased from 6% of most experienced (20+ years) to 12% of mid-career (11-20 years) to 20% of newer faculty (<10 years). In contrast, potential career changing women faculty increased from 4.4% of most experienced to 6.7% of

mid-career to 19.5% of newer faculty. This increase in potential career changing women faculty merits further study.

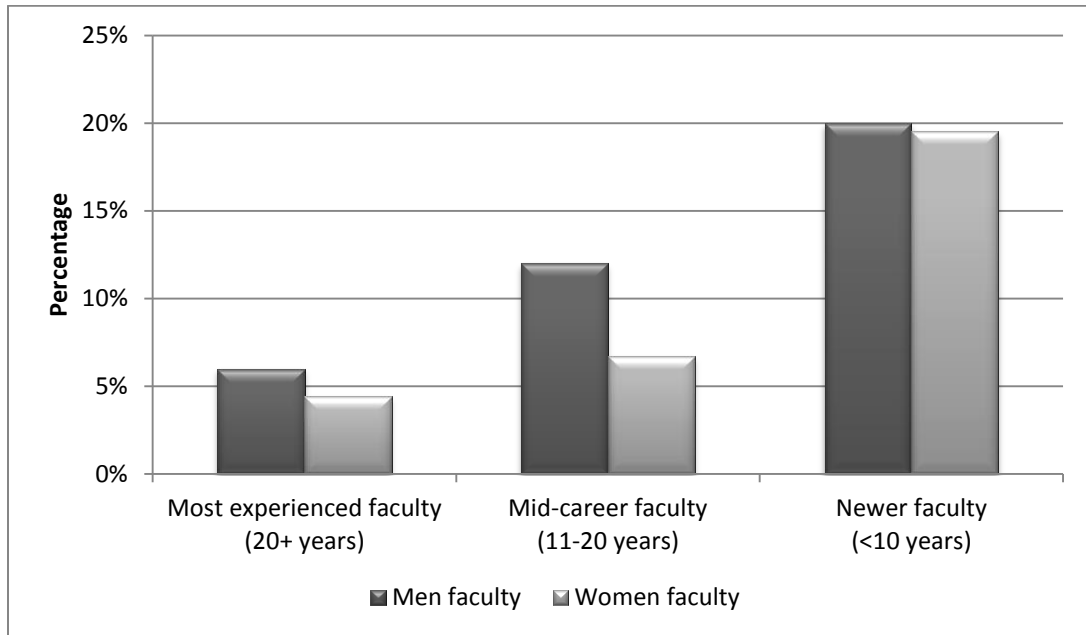


Figure 1. Percent of new faculty in doctoral institutions with previous employment only outside of higher education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004)

According to Crane, O’Hern, and Lawler (2009), higher education institutions seek midlife career changers with their depth and variety of experience to replace retiring faculty members and meet professional schools’ accreditation requirements, most commonly in the applied fields of education, human services, business, and management. When hired, such institutions often treat midlife career changers the same as traditional new faculty. As the authors discussed, this practice raises several questions about the experience of midlife career changing new faculty:

What might we need to consider regarding their various career paths to the professoriate? In what ways do second career professionals transitioning to the academy have similar or different issues, concerns and challenges as someone direct from a traditional doctoral program? How might their years of experience in their profession positively influence or inhibit their transition to new work roles, organizational cultures, and career challenges? Do their transitions pose challenges that may go unnoticed? Do we make assumptions about their ability to make a successful transition? (Crane et al., 2009, p. 24)

Traditional adult development and career development theories may not answer these questions or issues related to increasing numbers of women faculty.

Increasing Numbers of Women Faculty

Women and men contribute to the record-breaking numbers of faculty in higher education institutions. Although men faculty continue to outnumber women faculty, the gap is narrowing. From 1992 to 2009, men decreased from 62% to 53% of faculty while women increased from 38% to 47% of faculty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b). Despite the narrowing gap, women continue to experience the professoriate differently than men, as evidenced by fewer numbers of women instructional faculty; lower percentages of assistant, associate, full, and tenured women professors; and women faculty's lower average salaries (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a; 2012c; 2012d). According to August and Waltman (2004), for women faculty, "the academic lifestyle is no longer perceived to be as attractive or as prestigious as it once

was. . . . To the extent that an academic life is not seen as a viable choice, the supply of faculty will necessarily be curtailed” (p. 178).

According to NCES (2012a), fewer women (44%) than men (56%) were instructional faculty in fall 2011. In the study, instructional faculty excluded graduate students and comprised assistant, associate, and full professors; instructors; lecturers; and assistant, adjunct, and interim faculty. At the higher professorial ranks, the percentage of women decreased as rank increased. Specifically, women represented 49% of assistant professors, but only 42% of associate and 29% of full professors (see Figure 2). In contrast, the number of women faculty exceeded men in the lower faculty ranks of lecturers (54%) and instructors (56%). In addition, of the 49% tenured full-time instructional faculty, 41% of women compared to 54% of men were tenured faculty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012d).

Last, women full-time instructional faculty averaged lower nine-month contract salaries than men (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012c). For all occupations, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), women averaged 81% of men’s full-time wage and salary workers. Similarly, women full-time instructional faculty on nine-month contracts in degree granting institutions averaged 82% of men’s salaries in the last four academic years surveyed (1999-2000, 2005-2006, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012; see Figure 3). Furthermore, the gendered salary disparity increased from associate to full professor rank (the only academic ranks reported by gender). For example, women associate professor salaries averaged 93% of men associate professor salaries, but women full professor salaries averaged 86% to 88% of men full professor salaries.

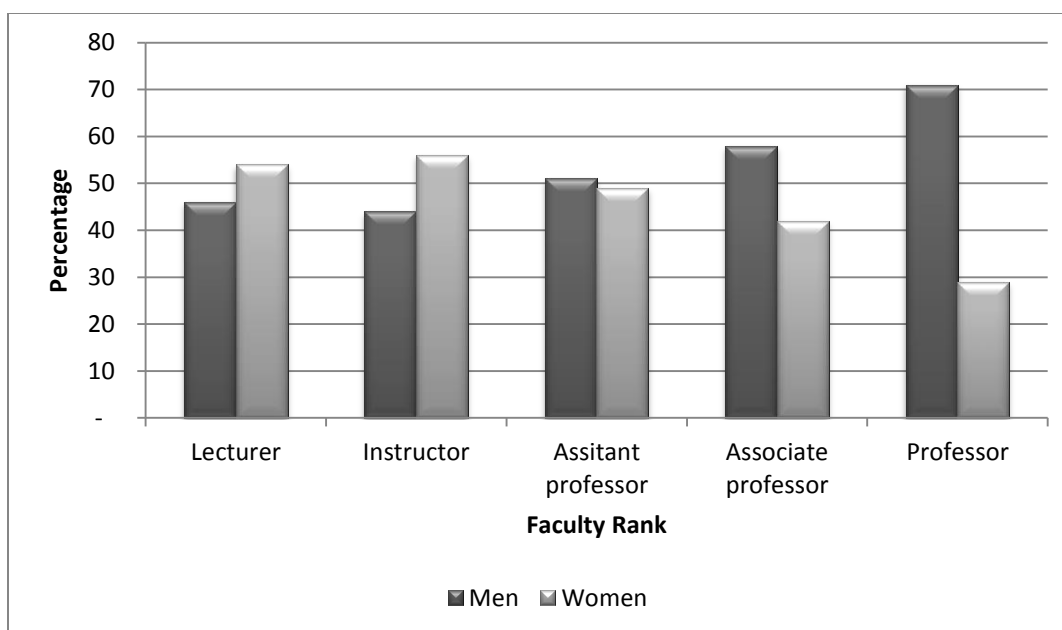


Figure 2. Percentage of full-time instructional faculty in degree granting institutions by academic rank and gender in fall 2011 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a)

Compared to all degree granting institutions, women faculty in doctoral institutions earned less average pay than men faculty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012c). Specifically, women full-time instructional faculty on nine-month contracts in degree granting institutions averaged 78% to 79% of men faculty during the four academic years studied. Similar to all degree granting institutions, women associate professor salaries at doctoral institutions averaged 93% of men associate professor salaries. Higher than all degree granting institutions, women professor salaries at doctoral institutions averaged 96% to 97% of men professor salaries. In addition, professors earn average lower salaries in women-dominated fields compared to men-dominated fields. For example, according to Higher Ed Jobs (2014), education professors earn an average salary of \$89,335 compared to \$123,103 for engineering

professors. Similarly, associate and assistant education professors respectively earn an average salary of \$69,444 and \$58,986 compared to \$93,768 and \$81,592 for engineering professors.

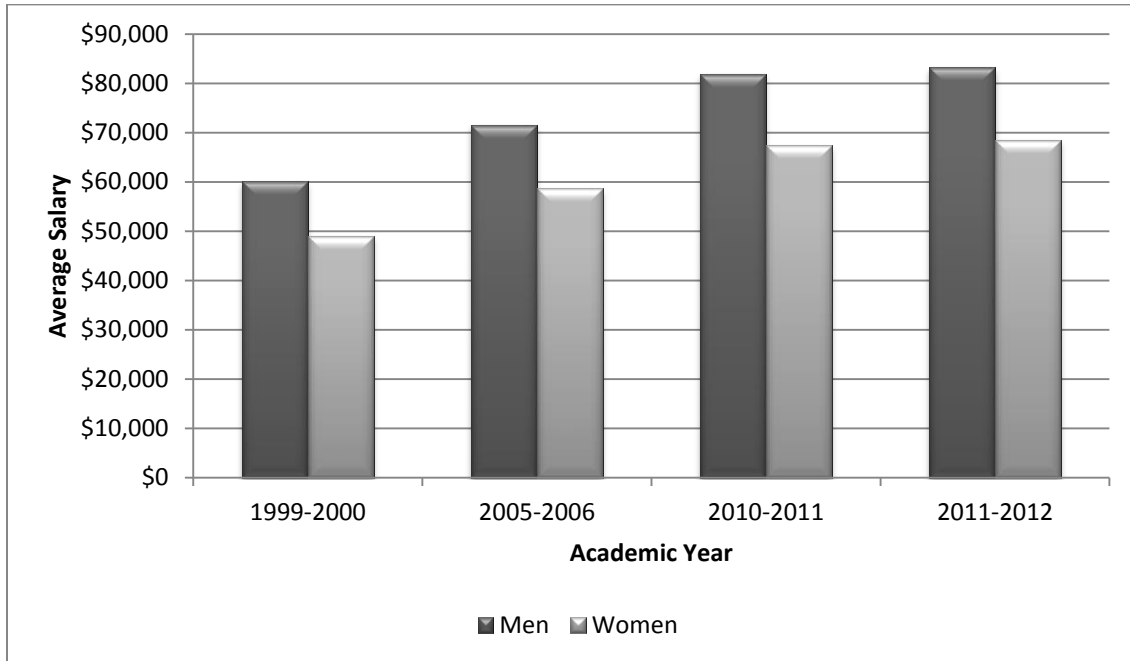


Figure 3. Average salary of full-time instructional faculty on 9-month contracts in degree granting institutions by academic gender for selected years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012c)

Furthermore, women faculty of color are underrepresented. In fall 2011, women of color comprised 9% of all instructional faculty (see Figure 4; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a). Similar to all women, the percentage of women instructional faculty of color decreased as professorial rank increased from 12% of assistant to 8% of associate to 4% of full professors. At the highest professorial rank, in fall 2011, women comprised 29% of full professors, including women of color who

comprised 4% of full professors. Within women of color, Asian/Pacific Islander women comprised 1.7%, Black women comprised 1.4%, Hispanic women comprised 1%, and American Indian/Alaska Native women and women of two or more races comprised less than 1% of full professors. The percentages for all women faculty of color decreased as the professorial rank increased.

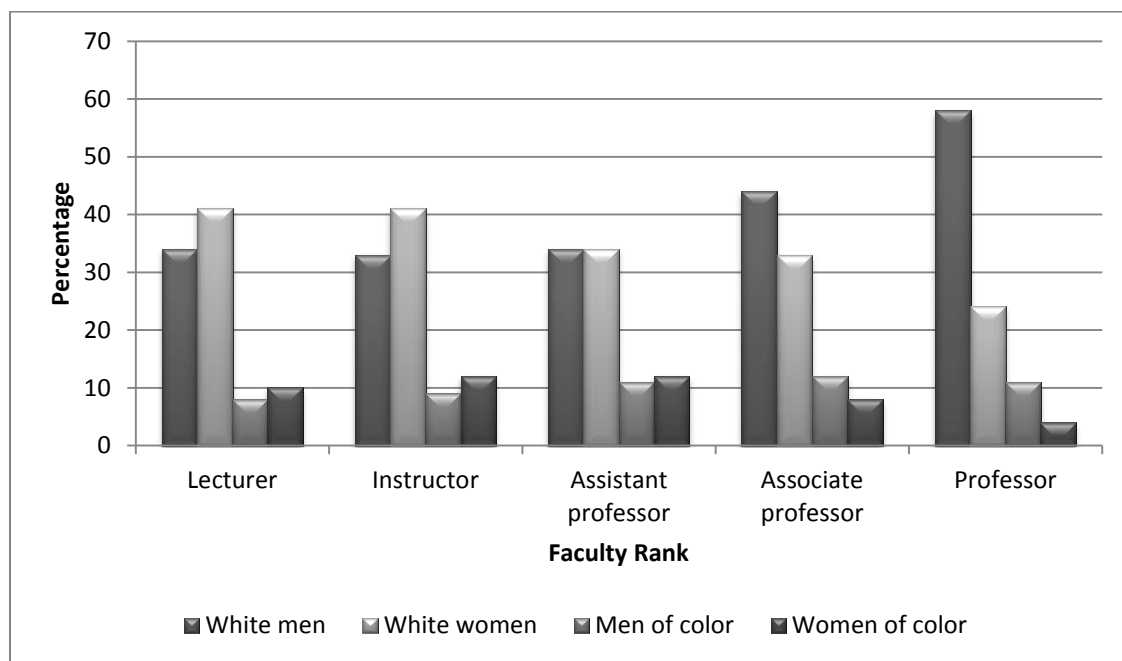


Figure 4. Percentage of full-time instructional faculty in degree granting institutions by academic rank, gender, and race/ethnicity in fall 2011 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a)

Last, the NCES (2013) asserted understanding how and why faculty are changing has implications and impacts. Similarly, Ryan, Healy, and Sullivan (2012) contended understanding faculty and their roles has implications and impacts for higher education's future, including effective teaching and innovative research resulting in economic

growth. Furthermore, Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) argued faculty quality, persistence, and performance contribute to student learning and skill development. Therefore, understanding higher education's changing faculty has implications for teaching, research, and service and merits further study because of the impact on our students, nation, and society.

Problem Statement

As stated in the background to the problem, record-breaking undergraduate and graduate enrollments in higher education institutions are influencing an increased demand for faculty, reflecting changing faculty characteristics. Two such changes include increasing numbers of new faculty with prior careers and women faculty. However, traditional adult development and career development theories may not account for the intersection of these two dimensions in examining faculty careers in higher education.

Traditional adult development and career development theories are linear and may not explain the multi-directional context of multiple careers (Baruch, 2004) and resulting career transitions in a lifetime. Additionally, much of the traditional adult development and career development theories studied White men and may not fully apply to people of color and women (Alfred, 2001; Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Ross-Gordon, 1999). Last, although the literature comprises studies of midlife career changers to primary and secondary teaching, we know little about midlife career changers to higher education, which has implications for theory, policy, and practice. To investigate the problem, a conceptual framework guided the study.

Conceptual Framework

This section describes the study's conceptual framework comprised of Schlossberg's adult transition model (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012) and Hansen's (1997, 2011) integrative life planning (ILP) model.

Schlossberg's Adult Transition Model

In 1981, Schlossberg introduced the adult transition model in a journal article published in *The Counseling Psychologist*. In 1984, she published the model and associated theory in the first edition of *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Theory with Practice* with subsequent editions in 1995 (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman) and 2006 (Schlossberg, Goodman, & Anderson). This study used the 4th edition, *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Schlossberg's Theory With Practice in a Diverse World*, published in 2012 (Anderson et al.).

In the most recent book, Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) stated, “although transitions represent a natural and necessary aspect of adult development, they are viewed as the times that are most distressing and challenging yet are unique in opportunities for growth and development” (pp. 55-56). Although the individuals and transitions may differ, the model provides a stable three-part framework to analyze and understand adult transitions (see Figure 5 for the first two model parts): (a) approaching transitions, (b) potential resources, and outside this study's scope due to a counseling focus, (c) a process for strengthening resources.

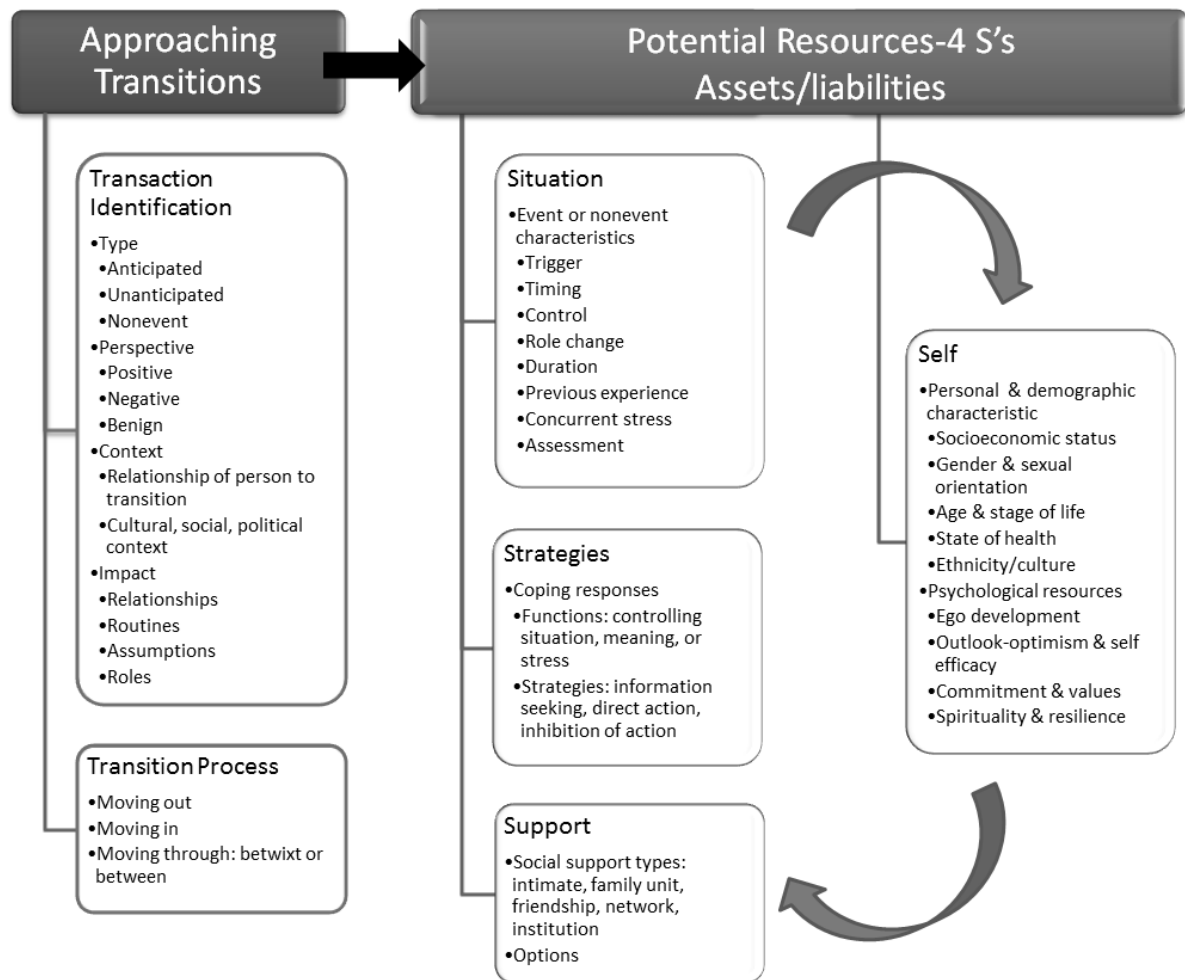


Figure 5. Approaching transitions and potential resources from Schlossberg's adult transition model (Anderson et al., 2012)

Continuing with the model's first phase, the transition process consists of three non-sequential stages: *moving in*, *moving through*, and *moving out* (Anderson et al., 2012). According to the authors, during *moving in*, "adults confront issues such as how to balance their activities with other parts of their lives and how to feel supported and challenged during their new journey" (p. 57). For example, a midlife career changer who decides to attend school faces the challenge of student socialization as they develop

new relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. Family and work responsibilities may continue, while the career changer faces the challenges of a new school, campus, teachers, peers, and school activities.

During *moving through*, career changers may search for new relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles while experiencing emptiness, confusion, hope, and renewal (Anderson et al., 2012). For example, a midlife career changer may struggle with balancing family, work, and school; her evolving student role; and how to finance school. Last, the authors described *moving out* “as ending one series of transitions and beginning to ask what comes next. . . . Changing jobs, moving, and returning to school are transitions in which adults mourn the loss of former goals, friends, and structure” (p. 57). A midlife career changer may end and separate from school and work while searching for and obtaining a new career, triggering disengagement from relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles.

The model’s second phase, *potential resources* during transition, comprises four variables referred to as the 4 S’s: (a) situation, (b) self, (c) support, and (d) strategies (Anderson et al., 2012). According to Anderson et al. (2012), the *situation* variable addresses the question, what is happening? Situation factors consist of the transition’s characteristics, including trigger, timing, control, role change, duration, prior experience with the same transition type, and assessment.

Continuing with the second phase, the *self* variable addresses the question, to whom is it happening (Anderson et al., 2012)? Self factors consist of personal demographics and psychological resources. Personal demographics comprise

socioeconomic status, gender and sexual orientation, age and life stage, health, and ethnicity and culture. Psychological resources comprise ego development, optimism and self-efficacy, commitment and values, and spirituality (related to, but distinct from, religion) and resilience. The *support* variable addresses the question, what help is available? Factors include social support types such as intimate, family unit, friendship, network, and institution.

The last variable, *strategies*, addresses the question, how does the person cope (Anderson et al., 2012)? According to the authors, strategies factors comprise coping responses divided into functions and strategies. Based on Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) work, *functions* refers to three coping responses, each with specific tactics: controlling the situation, meaning, or stress. For example, in *controlling the situation*, coping strategies or responses comprise negotiation, optimistic action, self-reliance versus advice seeking, and exercise of potency versus helpless resignation. *Controlling the meaning* includes strategies such as positive comparisons, selective ignoring, and rewards substitutions. *Controlling the stress* includes strategies such as emotional discharge, self-assertion, and passive forbearance. The model further comprises three coping modes, referred to by a *strategies* subcategory: information seeking, direct action, and action inhibition.

Last, for phase two, "the individual's ability to cope with transitions depends on the changing interaction of his or her assets and liabilities" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 91). According to the authors, asking questions related to the potential resources, or the 4 S's variables and factors, help identify a person's assets and liabilities. For example,

in studying a woman midlife career changer, pertinent questions include what triggered her career change? What was the timing and duration? Did she have any experience with this transition type? What were her personal and demographic characteristics? What was her outlook at the time? What social supports did she have? What were her coping responses? How did she control the situation, meaning, and stress? What strategies did she use? A midlife woman with many assets and few liabilities will likely experience career change differently than one with few assets and many liabilities.

As Anderson et al. (2012) emphasized, “people rarely are faced with only a single type of stressful transition; rather they more than likely face a variety of stressful events resonating through many life areas that intersect with the transition” (p. 92). Even positive transitions are stressful and require coping strategies. Whether a positive or negative transition, some people use the same strategies for every situation while others more effectively vary strategies based on the event. Last, in the adult transition process’s third phase, counselors work with individuals to assess and strengthen their strategies in navigating transitions and coping with stress. Since this study investigated midlife career changers, I used Schlossberg’s (Anderson et al., 2012) adult transition model in conjunction with a career development model, specifically Hansen’s (1997, 2011) integrative life planning model, which I describe next.

Hansen’s Integrative Life Planning Model

Developed since 1987, Hansen published a new career development model in *Integrative Life Planning: Critical Task for Career Development and Changing Life Patterns* in 1997. This study used the integrative life planning (ILP) model detailed in

the book and updated in a 2011 article, *Integrative Life Planning: A Holistic Approach*, published in the *Journal of Employment Counseling*. The ILP career development model's first part, *integrative*, emphasizes body, mind, and spirit integration; and the second part, *life planning*, recognizes life's multiple and interrelated aspects and adults' responsibility to plan their career development. According to Swanson and Holton III (2009), ILP "centrally addresses issues related to ethnicity, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and spirituality. . . . [The] framework draws upon psychology, sociology, economics, multiculturalism, and constructivism and takes a holistic approach by encouraging people to connect various aspects of life" (p. 106).

Hansen (1997, 2011) organized her ILP model into six critical tasks for career development and decision making (see Figure 6). The tasks are recursive rather than linear, supporting career development throughout the life span. In the first critical task, *finding work that needs doing in changing global contexts*, she encouraged people to "identify those issues . . . most relevant to their populations and communities . . . [and use ILP] to understand how these issues affect their choices and decisions about work" (1997, p. 19).

The original critical task two, *weaving our lives into a meaningful whole*, recognized changes in career development including "the importance of gender in careers and the differing career socialization of men and women for various life roles" (Hansen, 1997, p. 19). However, in 2011, after experiencing health challenges, Hansen updated critical task number two to *attending to our health: physical, mental, and emotional*. She later noted surprise in originally excluding wellbeing from the model

since physical, mental, and emotional health is central to life experience; thus, the absence of wellbeing can be debilitating.

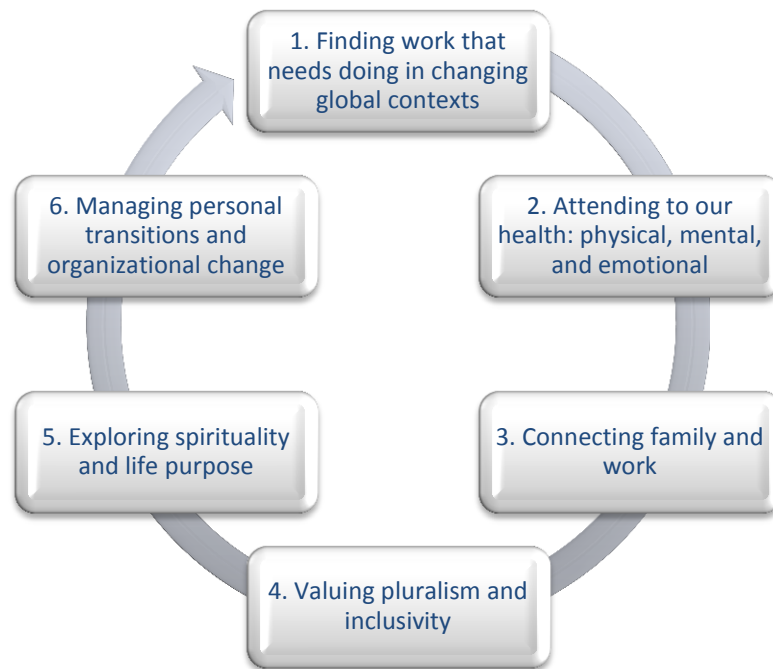


Figure 6. Hansen's (1997, 2011) integrative life planning model's six critical tasks

In critical task three, *connecting family and work*, Hansen (1997) encouraged mutual planning and partnership within the broadly defined family. She defined such partnerships as “relationships in which each partner treats the other with respect, is flexible when negotiating roles, and enables the other to choose roles and fulfill responsibilities that are congruent with his or her individual goals and the partners’ mutual goals” (p. 20).

In critical task four, *valuing pluralism and inclusivity*, Hansen (1997) recognized awareness and competence in all kinds of differences—racial, ethnic, class, religious, gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation—are essential to future success. Citing diverse cultures, she presented ILP as a tool for understanding diversity and acknowledged the difficulty in incorporating the valuing of pluralism and inclusivity into career development. ILP not only advocates understanding diversity but accepting, valuing, and celebrating such diversity.

In critical task five, *exploring spirituality and life purpose*, Hansen (1997) linked spirituality with meaning and purpose. Traditional career development approaches emphasize logic and rational approaches and, despite a central role in many cultures, seldom include spirituality. Based on her experience and research, Hansen broadly defined spirituality as “a yearning for a higher power, something larger than oneself, a need to give back to society, contribute one’s talents toward community improvement, and achieve a sense of connectedness with others” (p. 21).

Last, Hansen (1997) considered critical task six, *managing personal transitions and organizational change*, the most important. She predicted the field of transition counseling will be important for transitions throughout life, including students transitioning to the workplace, midlife career changes, and late-life planning. This last critical task encompasses personal transitions, influenced by Schlossberg’s (1984) earlier adult transition model; organizational changes, related to organization development; and global social change, in which she encourages individuals to be change agents.

Together, Schlossberg's (Anderson et al., 2012) adult transition model and Hansen's (2011) integrative life planning (ILP) model form this study's conceptual framework.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate; three research questions guided the study:

- What is the career transition process of women midlife career changers to the professoriate?
- What challenges and supports do midlife women experience during career transition to the professoriate?
- What strategies do midlife women use to manage career transition to the professoriate?

Definition of Terms

For consistency, clarity, and understanding, I define the following terms as used in this study:

- *Adult development*, along with adolescent development and child development, comprises the field of developmental psychology which studies “the behavior, thoughts, and emotions of individuals as they go through various parts of the life span” (Bjorklund & Bee, 2011, p. 4).
- *Career* is “the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life” (Hall, 2002, p. 12) and “the pattern of work-related experiences

that span the course of a person's life" (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2010, p. 21).

- *Career changers* are those who not only change jobs, moving from one employer to another, but change careers, leaving an established occupation for a different one.
- *Career development* is "the lifelong psychological and behavioral processes as well as contextual influences shaping one's career over the life span" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2008, p. 12). Similarly, *career development* is "an ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterized by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks" (Greenhaus et al., 2010, p. 12).
- *Midlife* is ages 35 to 60. The literature offers various definitions of midlife, including specific age ranges and physiological changes; however, most human development textbooks define midlife as beginning at age 35, 40, or 45 and ending at 60 or 65 (see chapter two).
- *Professoriate* refers to higher education professors as a group.
- *Transition* is "any event or nonevent that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 39).

Having defined terms, I next discuss the significance of the study.

Significance of the Study

This study of women midlife career changers to the professoriate has potential significance for theory, policy, and practice. For theory, the study may expand the adult

development and career development literature with its focus on midlife, women, and transitions, generally and in the context of higher education. In addition, this study expands the limited literature on expert to novice transition and specifically expands the limited literature on prior career expert to new career novice and subsequent journey to new career expert, generally and in the context of higher education.

For policy, this study has potential significance for higher education institution admissions, advising, and professional development of women midlife career changing students. In addition, the study may have significance for policy related to searching for and hiring women midlife career changers to the professoriate and their subsequent faculty development and tenure and promotion.

Regarding practice, this study has potential significance for adult educators with women midlife career changers in classrooms and training rooms. In addition, this study has practice significance for women midlife career changers as students and faculty. For such students, significance may include marketing, recruiting, admissions, advising, programming, and preparation as future faculty. For such faculty, significance may include employment; faculty development; career satisfaction and retention; performance in research, teaching, and service; and tenure and promotion.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate. This introductory chapter provided the background to the problem, problem statement, conceptual framework, research purpose and questions, definition of terms, and significance of the study.

Upcoming chapters comprise the literature review, research design, findings, and discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

As discussed in chapter one, record-breaking undergraduate and graduate enrollments in higher education institutions are influencing higher faculty demand, reflecting changing faculty characteristics and altering higher education's landscape. Two such changes include increasing numbers of new faculty with prior careers and women faculty. Traditional adult development and career development theories may not account for the intersection of these two dimensions in examining faculty careers in higher education. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate.

According to Newman (1995), midlife career changers are a fast growing population, experiencing significant issues not always encountered by younger career changers. First, midlife career changers face common transition issues more acutely, such as fear of failure and the unknown as well as loss of job security and colleagues. Second, they suffer issues unique to midlife career change, such as loss of career identity and decreased income. Furthermore, potential employers may resist hiring midlife career changers due to their age, perceived lack of mobility, and associated new employee costs with limited remaining work years.

Mature career changers, however, have much to offer employers. Newman (1995) identified specific assets, such as "demonstrated responsibility, stability, valuable life experiences, demonstrated interpersonal skills, and motivation" (p. 65). Compared

to younger workers, employers see older workers as steadier, more patient and likely to stay with a job, and equally willing to learn new job skills. Furthermore, employers particularly value mature workers' life-management experiences, such as raising a family, moving and relocating, and dealing with challenging family members, coworkers, and issues such as illness and death. Last, Bird (1992) found mature workers possess several positive characteristics, such as a stronger work ethic, higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and less drug and alcohol use.

This chapter discusses the three bodies of literature situating the study: (a) adult development, (b) career development, and (c) expert to novice career transition. In a parallel structure, the first two sections discuss traditional development, women's development, and transitions. Due to relative newness in the literature, the third section discusses four novice to expert models and four studies of prior career experts to new teaching career novices.

Adult Development

Developmental psychology studies "the behavior, thoughts, and emotions of individuals as they go through various parts of the life span . . . [and] includes child development, adolescent development, and adult development" (Bjorklund & Bee, 2011, p. 4). As Reeves (1999) described, development is a process and "movement from potentiality to actuality occurs over time and in the direction of growth and progress" (p. 20). This section discusses the adult development literature with a focus on midlife development: (a) traditional adult development, (b) women's development, and (c) adult transitions.

What is midlife? The terms *middle-age*, *middle years*, and *middle adulthood* commonly denote a stage between young and older adulthood and *midlife* refers to the life span's middle point and period (Sands & Richardson, 1986). The literature offers various midlife definitions, including specific age ranges and physiological changes; however, most human development textbooks define midlife as beginning at age 35, 40, or 45 and ending at 60 or 65. Yet others believe the individual ultimately defines middle age. Specific to women, Lippert (1997) concluded “‘when’ and ‘what’ defines midlife seems to be quite complex for today's women” (p. 16). For example, according to Sands and Richardson, some researchers believe midlife begins earlier for women, as early as age 30. According to McQuaide (1998), menopause, heart disease, the empty nest, and depression do not define women's midlife; although challenging, most women enjoy midlife. Traditional adult development provides a starting point for understanding midlife career changers.

Traditional Adult Development

According to Reeves (1999), traditional stage and phase theories provide stability and predictability and are among the “most enduring and influential in the adult development literature. . . . [and the] theories promulgated by Erikson and Levinson have probably had the greatest impact on the field of adult education” (pp. 20-21). However, some question stages, phases, and ages as development indicators (Butler, 2005; Neugarten & Datan, 1973). Therefore, this section discusses (a) Erikson's (1963, 1970) theory of psychosocial development, (b) Levinson's (1986) theory of adult

development, (c) Neugarten and Datan's (1973) sociological perspectives on the life cycle, and (d) Kegan's (1982, 1994) adult cognitive development theory.

Erikson and Levinson's stage and phase adult development theories discussed here, and Super's career development theory discussed later, can be useful in predicting challenges, explaining experiences, and planning solutions, but have limitations (Werner & DeSimone, 2009). For example, such theories generalize and do not address each individual's uniqueness. In addition, some criticize chronological age as the criterion for when stages begin and end. For example, according to Butler (2005), "in this era of the flexible life course, an individual's chronological age . . . reveals little about the person's capabilities, state of health, level of active engagement, or future potential" (p. 63). Furthermore, since traditional theories were usually based on research of White, middle-class men, some question development stages' relevance to non-White populations (Sneed, Schwartz, & Cross Jr., 2006) and women (Butler, 2005). Despite such criticisms and questions, stage and phase theories are useful in providing a foundation for adult development (Merriam, 2005).

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is one of the most influential stage theories in the literature (Reeves, 1999; Sneed et al., 2006). Beginning in the 1950s, Erikson (1963, 1970) posited personality develops through a series of life stages and his theory of psychosocial development explained the impact of social experience across the lifespan. He used the term *ego identity* to describe a conscious sense of self that changes and develops through daily experiences and new information. Erikson identified eight life

stages—infancy, early childhood, preschool, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and maturity (see Table 1). Furthermore, during each stage, individuals experience a conflict between two polarities of a psychosocial issue acting as a trigger for personal development.

Table 1. Erikson’s (1963, 1970) stages and polarities of psychosocial issues

Life Stage	Polarities of Psychosocial Issue		
Infancy	Trust	vs.	Mistrust
Early childhood	Autonomy	vs.	Shame and doubt
Preschool	Initiative	vs.	Guilt
School age	Industry	vs.	Inferiority
Adolescence	Identity	vs.	Role confusion
Young adulthood	Intimacy	vs.	Isolation
Middle adulthood	Generativity	vs.	Stagnation
Maturity	Ego integrity	vs.	Despair

For example, in the seventh stage, *middle adulthood*, individuals experience a conflict and resulting crisis between *generativity*, giving oneself to others, and *stagnation*, manifested in self-absorption (Erikson, 1963, 1970). Erikson explained, when individuals adeptly manage a stage and the resulting conflict resulting from the stage, they transition and attain ego strength or ego quality. Conversely, if individuals poorly manage a stage and conflict, they experience inadequacy. By the 1980s, according to Waterman (1982), “Erikson’s construct of identity ha[d] become the

principal tool for understanding the development of personality from adolescence to adulthood” (p. 341). Therefore, understanding Erikson’s theory is important in understanding traditional adult development, despite critiques of being general and focused on stages, White middle-class men, and adolescence to adulthood transition.

Levinson’s theory of adult development. While Erikson (1963, 1970) emphasized stages, adolescence, and the transition to adulthood, Levinson (1986) focused on age-linked adult transitions. He viewed his theory as expanding Erikson’s focus within the person to include the person’s interaction with society (Reeves, 1999). Levinson’s (1986) studies of men, and later women, led to a new development theory based on the life course and life cycle as well as individual life structure. The *life course* is “one of the most important yet least examined terms in the human sciences. It is a descriptive term . . . and refers to the concrete character of a life in its evolution from beginning to end” (p. 3). For the *life cycle*, Levinson used the year’s four seasons—spring, summer, fall, and winter—as a metaphor for a person’s life, stressing no season is more important than another; each season is individually important and as part of the whole. He noted, “Change goes on within each season, and a transition is required for the shift from one to the next” (p. 4). Together, the life course and life cycle provide a framework for adult development.

According to Levinson (1986), the *individual life structure* is the “the underlying pattern or design of a person’s life at a given time . . . and the primary components of a life structure are the person’s *relationships* with various others in the external world” (p. 6). With regards to personality aspects and the external world, the individual life

structure distinctly evolves, requiring adults to examine relationships and their evolution over time. The individual life structure sequentially develops, consisting of 11 age-based, alternating structure-changing and structure-building stages (see Table 2). During the structure-changing transitional stages, the existing life structure ends but a new life structure is possible; during the structure-building developmental stages, adults form a life structure and develop (Levinson, 1986; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). Nine of the 11 individual life structure's stages address adulthood, including four midlife stages: midlife transitions, entry life structure for middle adulthood, age 50 transition, and culminating life structure for middle adulthood.

Studying middle-age men, Levinson and associates (1978) concluded midlife adults reappraise the past, modify their life structures, and differentiate themselves from others. During the midlife structure-changing transitional stages, individuals confront, modify, and rebalance four polarities to enhance the life structure: (a) young versus old, (b) destruction versus creation, (c) masculinity versus femininity, and (d) attachment versus separateness. According to Gothard (1996), *young versus old* is the most important polarity, and finding balance at midlife is especially challenging. For example, midlife working adults may still feel young, but increasingly aware of younger workers pressing for advancement. Midlife adults must reconcile the positive and negative aspects of still being young, such as enthusiasm versus impetuosity, and getting older, such as experience versus less energy. Last, bodily decline reminds midlife adults of their mortality, prompting a powerful need for life meaning and a sense of wasted time and unfulfilled goals.

Table 2. Levinson's (1986; Levinson et al., 1978) theory of adult development sages

Structure-	Stage	Age Range	Description
Building	Pre-adulthood	Birth to 17 years	Childhood and adolescence
Changing	Early adult transition	17 to 22 years	Developmental bridge from pre-adulthood
Building	Entry life structure for early adulthood	22 to 28 years	Building and maintaining initial adult living
Changing	Age 30 transition	28 to 33 years	Reappraise/modify entry structure & create basis for next life structure
Building	Culminating life structure for early adulthood	33 to 40 years	Completing this era & realizing youthful aspirations
Changing	Midlife transition	40 to 45 years	Terminate early adulthood & initiate middle adulthood
Building	Entry life structure for middle adulthood	45 to 50 years	Initial basis for life in a new era
Changing	Age 50 transition	50 to 55 years	Opportunity to modify/improve the entry life structure
Building	Culminating life structure for middle adulthood	55 to 60 years	Conclude this era
Changing	Late adult transition	60 to 65 years	Separates and links middle & late adulthood
Building	Late adulthood	65 years and more	Come to terms with one's own life

The second polarity, *destruction versus creation*, includes destructive and creative feelings. According to Gothard (1996), midlife adults are personally and globally more aware of destructive experiences and their capacity to destroy and be

destroyed. At the same time, midlife adults desire to be more creative and reach their full potential, while they still have time. Continuing, all human life contains elements of the third polarity, *masculinity versus femininity*. Early in life, men and women tend to conform to cultural and social expectations about gender; however, in midlife, men and women integrate the other gender elements in an attempt to become whole. Last, *attachment versus separateness* refers to involvement with the world, such as workers and work activities, versus separate involvement in individual imagination, fantasy, or play. As stated, individuals confront, modify, and re-balance the four polarities during structure-changing transitional periods to enhance the life structure. Levinson's (1986) emphasis on age-based stages, adults, and their interaction with society expanded the traditional literature, but did not consider the effects of roles and changing roles, time dimensions, and life dimensions.

Neugarten and Datan's sociological perspectives on the life cycle. In contrast to Erikson and Levinson, Neugarten and Datan (1973) studied the socio-historical context and sociological environment's effect on men and women's lives. Rather than studying a person, they studied a person's roles within the social system. As they explained, the life cycle is "a succession of roles and changing roles and role constellations, and a certain order and predictability of behavior occurs over time as individuals move through a given succession of roles" (p. 55).

According to the sociological perspective, three time dimensions provide life cycle viewing points: (a) life time or chronological age, (b) historical time, and (c) social time. Neugarten and Datan (1973) questioned Erickson and Levinson's life stage

or chronological age as an indicator, contending individual differences emerge during development. They believed historical time more influentially shapes the social system, creating changing age norms, in turn shaping the individual life cycle. Furthermore, social time underlies society's age norms and most influentially impacts the life cycle through social expectations. Neugarten and Datan further explained, "there is a time when [a person] is expected to go to work, to marry, a time to raise children, a time to retire, even a time to grow sick and to die" (p. 59). Timing affects self-concept and self-esteem as individuals compare cultural and societal time expectations to their own timing, using terms such as *being late*, *early*, or *on time* for life events.

Neugarten (1968a) described midlife as an important turning point, praising middle-age introspection and believing midlife is less about chronological age and more about a "heightened sensitivity to one's position within a complex social environment; and that reassessment of the self is a prevailing theme" (p. 93). Neugarten and Paterson (1957) found midlife individuals perceived middle age as one of four life periods— young adulthood, maturity, middle age, and old age. Individuals transition from one period to the next along five underlying life dimensions—career line, health and physical vigor, the family cycle, psychological attributes, and social responsibilities. However, despite Neugarten's rejection of chronological age as a useful adult development concept, Cole (1995) contended society remains interested in aging, and the life course and life span remain prevalent in the study of aging. Offering another perspective, Kegan (1982, 1994) focused on cognitive development.

Kegan's adult cognitive development theory. Kegan (1982, 1994) developed an adult cognitive development theory comprised of five stages or orders of mind (see Table 3): impulsive, instrumental, socialized, self-authorizing, and self-transforming. Each order of mind represents developing complexity in ways of thinking and meaning making, and the object/subject relationship is central to understanding such orders of mind. *Object*, or the content of one's knowing, refers to aspects of experiences we are aware of, take responsibility for, and use to problem solve. *Subject*, or the structure of one's knowing, refers to aspects of experiences we are unaware of and, therefore, cannot take responsibility for nor use to problem solve. Each stage or order of mind is a plateau, and developing from one to the next occurs when we take what we were once subject to and make it object.

According to Kegan (1982, 1994), individuals typically move through the first two stages or orders of mind in adolescence. In post adolescence, individuals typically develop to the third stage or order of mind, the *socialized mind*, in which the object or content of one's knowing includes needs, interests, and desires. As such, identity is subject to living and working in relation to others and socio-cultural expected roles. At varying ages, individuals may develop to the fourth stage or order of mind, the *self-authoring mind*, in which one is less influenced by self in relation to others and roles and can formulate or self-author one's own identity. Last, few individuals reach the fifth stage or order of mind, the *self-transforming mind*, Kegan's highest level of adult cognitive development. If reached, individuals are typically over 40 years of age and

able to step back from self-authorship to simultaneously compare and contrast multiple ideologies.

Table 3. Kegan's (1982, 1994) five orders of mind

Order of Mind	Typical Ages	Object Content of one's knowing	Subject Structure of one's knowing	Underlying meaning- making structure
First: Impulsive mind	2 to 6 years old	Our reflexes	Our impulses and perceptions	Single point
Second: Instrumental mind	6 years old through adolescence	Our impulses and perceptions	Our needs, interests, and desires	Categories
Third: Socialized mind	Post- adolescence	Our needs, interests, and desires	Our interpersonal relationships and commonality	Across categories
Fourth: Self-authoring mind	If achieved, Variable	Our interpersonal relationships and commonality	Our identity, self- authorship, and ideology	Systematic
Fifth: Self- transforming mind	Seldom achieved, >40 years old	Our identity, self- authorship, and ideology	Dialectic between ideologies— morals, principles, truths	System of systems

As discussed, traditional adult development theories primarily studied men, prompting the question of whether these theories apply to women. This question warrants a discussion of women's development to investigate midlife career transitions reflective of women's lives.

Contemporary Women's Development

Despite many similarities, women and men are different. For example, according to Ross-Gordon (1999), women have different behavior, interests, and attitudes than men, reflected in our social structures and norms. These differences manifest themselves across cultures, and culture influences the behaviors, interests, and attitudes deemed appropriate for men and women.

In a literature review, Caffarella and Olson (1993) identified four themes capturing women's unique development: (a) relationships are central to women's self-concept, (b) roles (e.g., spouse, partner, mother, and worker) interplay and are important, (c) women's norms include role discontinuity and change rather than linear pathways, and (d) women's experiences are diverse. According to Ross-Gordon (1999), these themes illustrate the differences between women and men by underscoring women's connection over separation in contrast to men's autonomy portrayed in traditional adult development theories. Lippert (1997) questioned whether traditional adult development theories apply to women and can keep pace with women's rapidly changing and expanding roles. Similarly, Gergen (1990) concluded psychological theories of midlife and older women are restricted, negative, and scarce. For example, traditional theories "cannot do justice to babies born to mothers of 40, grandmothers enrolled in graduate school, and women with multiple careers and relational histories" (p. 486).

Sands and Richardson (1986) concluded women have unique experiences, thus applying traditional theories to women is problematic. For example, midlife women reflect and "reassess earlier priorities and move toward a definition of self that is based

on inner needs rather than external criteria. Stereotypically ‘masculine’ strivings for achievement and ‘feminine’ concerns with affiliation are reintegrated” (p. 38). Such reflection involves reassessing (a) interpersonal relationships, (b) one’s physical being, and (c) work and achievement.

To evaluate their interpersonal relationships, midlife women focus on quality rather than quantity. According to Sands and Richardson (1986), women evaluate the positive and negative aspects of spousal and partner relationships, the changing relationships with growing or grown children and aging parents, and friendships based on internal preferences rather than external pressures. Regarding physical being, “mid-life women lead healthy, vigorous lives and maintain or even increase their attractiveness. Moreover, many women come to realize that attractiveness has more to do with how they feel about themselves than with external appearance” (p. 39). They assess their capacity to bear children and resulting feelings of loss or relief at menopause.

Last, midlife women reassess work and achievement. According to Sands and Richardson (1986), some women experience intimacy and nurturing needs and choose not to work, if possible. In contrast, other midlife women experience increased ambition and achievement need and seek work. In addition, as children grow, midlife mothers may have more time and energy to devote to work. As midlife women reassess work and achievement, they may return to college, participate in training, pursue a new activity, change jobs, or develop a new career.

Similarly, Peck (1986) believed traditional adult development did not apply to women. She noted psychologists studying adult women traditionally had two choices: “attempt to apply models of adulthood that are androcentric, inflexible and inappropriate, or . . . derive new models that more clearly reflect women’s adulthood” (p. 277). Therefore, she studied women’s experiences in the literature and created an alternative model of women’s adult self-definition encompassing three layers: (a) social-historical dimension, (b) sphere of influence, and (c) self-definition. Beginning with the model’s flexible outer layer, a woman lives her life within a *social-historical dimension* consisting of socio-historical context, chronological time, and psychological aging. For example, Peck described the 1950s as a less flexible social-historical dimension compared to the more flexible late 1960s and early 1970s when the women’s movement and economic conditions provided more opportunities for women. Thus, the social-historical dimension comprises the social, emotional, and political context.

The flexible and elastic middle layer, *sphere of influence*, encompasses a woman’s bi-directional relationships, defined by Peck (1986) as the ways a woman influences others and they influence her. These bi-directional relationships include affective relationships with spouse/lover, children, family, and friends; her relationship with productive efforts such as work; and identification with particular groups. *Flexible* refers to the sphere of influence’s ability to expand and contract to accommodate and restrict new relationships and her ability to redistribute emotional involvement to receive needed support and affirmation. *Elastic* refers to relationships’ ability to respond to women’s changing needs, motivations, and self-definition. Such elastic relationships

“provide the woman with a strong sense of information about her personality, competence, and ability to function in the world” (p. 280), but inelastic relationships can lead to self-doubt and failure to meet social or cultural expectations.

The center layer, *self-definition*, depends on and emerges through the middle layer’s sphere of influence surrounded by the outer layer’s social-historical time (Peck, 1986). According to Peck, self-definition is “a construct that is unique for each woman according to her motivations, personality characteristics, personal circumstance, and so forth” (p. 280). Peck based this model on a literature review rather than empirical study, and the model does not specifically address midlife women.

Last, just as we must be cautious about applying traditional men-based theories and models to women, we must be cautious in applying women-based theories and models to all women. Although midlife women have much in common, they are heterogeneous (Mott, 1998). Furthermore, according to Ross-Gordon (1999), social context impacts women and men’s gendered experiences:

It is important to note, just as early adult developmental research has been flawed by overreliance on male samples and understanding of men’s life experiences to generate supposedly universal theory, contemporary research based on women’s lives can be compromised by claims to universality for all women. Awareness of the impact of social context tells us that whereas the power of gender as a social category will lead to some commonalities of experience among women or men, other individual and social context variables will mediate against universal patterns. (p. 33)

Traditional adult development and women development theories provide a foundation for understanding, but do not universally apply to all individuals. Individuals are unique and, based on their life experiences, will experience adult transitions in unique ways.

Adult Transitions

Merriam (2005) summarized adult life in terms of alternating periods of maintenance and stability with change and transition:

The life events that punctuate our life span involve making changes in some aspect of our lives—our values, perspectives, behaviors, roles, or activities. . . .

The transition process involves letting go of the past, experimenting with strategies and behaviors to accommodate the new, and, finally, feeling comfortable with the changes one has adopted in terms of identity, values, behaviors, or social roles. (p. 7)

Highlighting the importance of social or life events and resulting transitions as human behavior determinants, Reeves (1999) identified two best-known transition theories: Bridges' (1991) three-phased conceptualization of transition and Schlossberg's (Anderson et al., 2012) adult transition model.

Bridges (1991) viewed life transitions as catalysts for adult development, including a psychological process through which one manages a new situation. His three-phased conceptualization of transition comprised an (a) ending, (b) the neutral zone, and (c) new beginning. In the first phase, *ending*, one must let go of something to begin the transition process. For example, one might let go of an assumption,

relationship, role, routine, or view. After letting go, one enters the transition process's core and middle phase, *the neutral zone*, ceasing to use old habits and behaviors that no longer work in favor of better-adaptive ones. After letting go and spending time in the neutral zone, one proceeds to the last phase, *new beginnings*, consciously choosing new ways of being and doing, possibly leading to revitalization and innovation. Depending on the person and transition, these phases may overlap. Although Bridge's conceptualization describes phases or a process, this study required an expanded framework to identify a transitions process and related challenges, supports, *and* strategies.

As discussed in chapter one, this study used the most recent version of Schlossberg's transition model (Anderson et al., 2012). The model provides a three-part framework to analyze and understand individuals' transitions: (a) approaching transitions, (b) potential resources, and (c) a process of strengthening resources based on counseling. Criticisms of the model include its general focus on all transitions, focused application to counseling, and limited use in the literature. A search for studies using the model as a framework yielded 20 studies in the last 10 years, primarily examining student transition in a higher education context. Three studies focused on the workplace: Beacom (2013) presented an executive coaching model related to maternity leave, DiVittis (2010) studied executive coaching for the onboarding of senior leaders, and Schmitt (2013) identified newly hired nurses' perceived needs and coping resources. Despite limited use, the first two model parts (see Figure 5 in chapter one) provide a framework for analysis. Since this study investigated career transitions and strategies,

the career development literature, together with the adult development literature and Schlossberg's adult transition model, enhanced the understanding of women's midlife career transition to the professoriate.

Career Development

Adult development and career development converged during the previous century's latter half, especially in the area of adult transitions (Hansen, 2001). For example, the concepts of career and career development broadened to cover the life span and embraced context and multiple roles. According to Hall (2002), *career* now includes "the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life" (p. 12). Similarly, according to Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godshalk (2010), *career* is "the pattern of work-related experiences that span the course of a person's life" (p. 21). Due to this expanded career definition, they described *career development* as "an ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterized by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks" (p. 12). This section discusses (a) traditional career development, (b) women's career development, and (c) career transitions.

Traditional Career Development

According to Leung (2008), Holland and Super developed two of the most-established and recognized career development theories. Therefore, this section discusses Holland's career selection trait theory and Super's life span/life space career

development theory, including Murphy and Burck's addition to Super's five career development stages.

Holland's career selection trait theory. In 1958, Holland (1984) first published his career selection trait theory, believing one's vocational interests influence career and work environment choices. Based on research of college-bound high school and college students, he defined six vocational interests: (a) social, (b) investigative, (c) realistic, (d) enterprising, (e) artistic, and (f) conventional, abbreviated as SIREAC. Bjorklund and Bee (2011) contended such vocational interests reflect an individual's attitudes, competencies, and values and can be determined using tests:

These tests all ask you to tell whether you like, dislike, or are indifferent to a long list of school subjects, activities, amusements, situations, types of people, and jobs. Your answers are converted into six scores, one for each type. The top three scores determine your vocational interest type. (p. 205)

Holland (1984) believed people do their best work and experience greater job satisfaction when their vocational interests and jobs align. Each vocational interest type represents unique preferences, dislikes, and traits. For example, according to Bjorklund and Bee (2011), *social* vocational interest types are people helpers, preferring to "work with people informing, enlightening, helping, training, developing or curing them. [They] dislike machinery and physical exertion" (p. 206). Social vocational traits include cooperative, understanding, helpful, tactful, sociable, and ethical. In contrast, *investigative* vocational interest types are abstract problem solvers, preferring to "work on their own, observing, learning, investigating, [and] solving problems, frequently in a

scientifically related area. [They] dislike repetitive activities and working with people” (p. 206). Investigative vocational traits include analytical, independent, curious, and precise. *Realistic* vocational interest types are technically and athletically inclined people, *enterprising* types are people influencers, *artistic* types are idea creators, and *conventional* types are data and detail people.

Helms (1996) concluded the career selection trait theory is well-researched and findings generally support Holland’s belief that vocational interests influence career and work environment choices. However, according to Bjorklund and Bee (2011), some question the theory’s application to adults, since Holland researched college-bound high school and college students. Others, according to Bjorklund and Bee as well as Swartz (1992), criticized the theory for leading to greater job satisfaction but not predicting job achievement or longevity. This study’s midlife participants may have participated in prior trait-based career selection based on Holland’s work. While Holland’s traditional career development theory focused on traits, Super’s life span/life space career development theory focused on change.

Super’s life span/life space career development theory. According to Bjorklund and Bee (2011), Super’s life span/life space theory is the best known theory in vocational psychology, confirming careers develop in stages and adding career decisions are not isolated from life. As Erikson (1963, 1970) and Levinson (1986) posited life develops in stages, Super (1980) posited careers develop in stages. According to Swanson and Holton (2009), Super’s theory shifted the historical paradigm from

vocation to career and from career choice to a career development process over the life span.

Based on life experiences, self-concepts change over time, leading to lifelong career development. Super (1963) defined *self-concept* as “a picture of the self in some role, situation, or position, performing some set of functions, or in some web of relationships” (p. 16). According to Swanson and Holton III (2009), we develop self-concept by objectively comparing ourselves to others and subjectively focusing on our uniqueness; based on our self-concept, we identify appropriate occupations and career goals.

Super (1980) concluded people tend to play nine major roles throughout their lives: child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, spouse or partner, homemaker, parent, or pensioner. Some roles begin early in life, played one at a time, for example, the child role. Other roles begin later in life, played simultaneously, for example, a woman midlife career changer who is a mother, wife or partner, daughter, worker, and student. The combinations of various roles at various times throughout the life span constitute a career.

Furthermore, Super (1980) posited the nine major life roles play out on four theatres: home, school, work, and community; each role usually plays in one theatre but may play less congruently in multiple theatres. Ideally, the roles we play complement each other, reflecting and providing opportunities for us to express our values (Swanson & Holton III, 2009). Life can be stressful when roles conflict and do not reflect or provide opportunities for us to express our values. For example, a midlife career

changer may have a paper due for school, but simultaneously face a looming work deadline and children or aging parents needing assistance for daily tasks and healthcare.

According to Super (1980), the “simultaneous combination of life roles we play constitutes the lifestyle; their sequential combination structures the life space and constitutes the life cycle” (p. 288). We define our life structure by the salience we attach to our life roles. Super’s life space acknowledges people differ in the importance they attach to various life aspects, including work. In other words, two people will experience and value the same job differently because of their different life roles and experiences within those roles.

To describe the career development process over the life span, Super (1980) used five career development stages with associated developmental tasks: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement (see Table 4). During middle adulthood, for example, the *maintenance* stage focuses on staying in the current occupational field by updating and innovatively applying new skills. An alternative is to remain in the occupational field without updating and applying new skills leading to stagnation.

Table 4. Super's (1980) five stages of career development (Swanson & Holton III, 2009) with Murphy and Burck's (1976) added renewal stage

Stage	Life Period	Age	Tasks
Growth	Childhood	4 to 13 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a beginning sense of self • Develop a basic understanding of the work world
Exploration	Adolescence	14 to 24 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for the future • Form occupational preferences • Implement an occupational choice
Establishment	Early adulthood	25 to 35 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stabilize after the occupational choice • Consolidate as a dependable producer with a positive reputation • Advance to a position of higher pay and responsibility
Renewal (added later)	Early middle adulthood	35 to 45 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine, restate, and accept values and self-concept • Adjust to present situation or change job and/or life style
Maintenance	Late middle adulthood	45 to 65 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold in current occupational field and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update skills ○ Innovate by applying new skills • Alternative: Change occupational fields by recycling to exploration and establishment stages • Alternative: Remain in current occupational field and stagnate in work rather than update and innovate
Disengagement	Late adulthood	65+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decelerate from work activities • Plan for retirement—physical, spiritual, and financial considerations • Live in retirement

Although stages are typically sequential, Super (1984) used *maxicycle* to refer to the series of career development stages, *recycle* to suggest people in transition may

return to prior stages, and *minicycle* to indicate a transition involving recycling through the stages. For example, some individuals return to exploratory tasks as they reevaluate their goals, abilities, and life career plans. A midlife career changer may recycle to the exploration stage to form a new occupational preference and implement a new occupational choice. Subsequently, the midlife career changer revisits the establishment stage to stabilize after the new career choice, consolidate as a dependable producer developing a positive reputation, and ultimately advance to a position of higher responsibility and pay.

Depending on the life stage and associated developmental tasks, roles increase or decrease in importance based on time and emotion. According to Super (1980), life roles “wax and wane in importance and in the quality of performance, theatres are entered and deserted. How this is done is a result of the interaction of personal and of situational variables” (p. 288). As roles change throughout our lives, we face many decision points: as we relinquish an old role, before and after taking on a new role, and as we adjust to a current role. For example, midlife career changers make decisions as they leave prior careers, before and after returning to school, before and after selecting a job within a new career, and as they adjust other roles to accommodate returning to the student role or work exploration stage.

Last, Murphy and Burck (1976) expanded on Super’s theory, adding a renewal stage in early middle adulthood, after early adulthood’s establishment stage and before late middle adulthood’s maintenance stage (see Table 4). According to Bejian and Salomone (1995), within the 1950s and 1960s’ social context of Super’s original theory,

changing a job or career after age 30 was infrequent, resulting in one job as a lifetime career. Therefore, the “maintenance stage may be, in large measure, a description of career constancy within standard corporate structure at that time, rather than a singular, bona fide stage of adult career development” (p. 53).

Resulting in the added renewal stage in early middle adulthood, Murphy and Burck (1976) conducted a study to explore men’s adult development. Participants in their late 30s and early 40s reported, “decreased positive self-concept, questioning of the meaning of life, examination of personal values, broad dissatisfaction with life, and, finally, stock-taking” (p. 340). Furthermore, participants in their late 40s frequently reported “a revival in self-concept . . . along with an increased attentiveness to inner concerns and a reconciliation with one’s present life situation or a transfer of energy to more satisfying areas of life” (p. 340). In relation to midlife career changers, the renewal stage may include doubt and self-examination that can lead to renewed commitment to career issues (Bejian & Salomone, 1995). Individuals examine, restate, and accept their values and self-concept, choosing to adjust to present situations or change job and/or life style (Murphy & Burck, 1976). Although providing a foundation, traditional career development theories based on White men may not address women’s unique career development experiences.

Contemporary Women’s Career Development

Alfred (2001) questioned the appropriateness of traditional career development theories and models for women and people of color and urged alternative career development views: “The missing links in these grand theories are the voices and career

developmental experiences of those who are non-White males” (p. 123). Alfred found culture and identity influenced faculty women of color’s career development and proposed an internal career of psychological dimensions and external career of structural dimensions. The *internal career* represents the psychological dimensions, or personal contexts, as minority careers develop within majority institutions:

It is the personal construction and application of strategies, tools, and resources for managing the majority culture. The internal career is guided by the notion of personal agency originating from life structure: that is, the power within to choose the strategies, behaviors, and interactions to meet the expectations of the external career. (p. 123)

In contrast, the *external career* represents the experience’s structural dimensions, or organization contexts, including cultures, structures, and role expectations.

Bierema (1998) concluded women’s career development is complex, diverse, and, in the United States, (a) changing, (b) different, and (c) contextual. First, the workplace is *changing* and increasingly diverse in response to the information age, shifts in career life cycles, slight erosion of structural inequalities, and increasing demands for work-life balance. For example, the information age’s reliance on mental capability rather than physical strength is leveling the competitive playing field, and effective technology use is breaking down social and geographical barriers and providing greater worker flexibility. Today, instead of working entire lives for one employer, women and men are changing organizations and careers as career life cycles shift and become more fluid. Although there has been a slight erosion of structural inequalities, discrimination

and lack of equal access continue. Last, women's demand for work-life balance is increasing as they disproportionately struggle to fulfill work and life responsibilities.

Second, women's career development is *different* because of positionality and interrupted and alternative work arrangements. According to Johnson-Bailey and Tisdell (1998), race, gender, sexual orientation, and class influence social position, in turn influencing women's career development prospects and progress. As Mott (1998) noted, women experience more career interruptions and changes, and their career needs change across the lifespan.

Last, women's career development is *contextual*, including continuing patriarchal segregation and discrimination, despite increasing workforce diversity. According to Bierema (1998), "systemic discrimination is prevalent in a work system designed and controlled by white males. The organizational culture benefits men more readily than women and rewards behavior emulating the prevailing male-dominated leadership" (p. 97). However, workplace diversity is driving change and resulting in increasingly diverse employees and customers. In response to these challenges, Inman (1998) recommended women be aware of work context, take charge of their career development, and strategically plan careers. Today, such strategic planning likely includes multiple careers and transitions.

Career Transitions

As discussed in chapter one, adults are changing careers more frequently in search of greater meaning or use of skills, to achieve a dream or pursue new interests, or in response to a layoff or other job loss (Mullins, 2009). Career changers are not just

changing jobs, moving from one employer to another, but changing careers, leaving an established occupation for a different one. As a result, they experience and need to manage multiple careers and transitions.

Frost (2012) studied the lived experiences of midlife women's career transitions using a phenomenological research design and interviewing 15 women. She concluded women actively explore careers in midlife and found such career transitions often follow a personal goal reassessment or triggering event such as job loss or divorce.

Furthermore, midlife women sought intrinsic rewards, such as self-management and flexibility, over financial compensation and prestige. Last, during career transition, perceived barriers included low self-efficacy and lack of training.

In regard to career transition barriers, Motulsky (2010) studied the experiences of women at different stages of voluntary midlife career transitions, using a qualitative research design and interviewing 13 women. She found relationships assisted midlife women in overcoming barriers such as dysfunctional self-perceptions and reinforced negative beliefs, specifically identifying friends, colleagues, experts, and even deceased connections as significant influences. Midlife women with strong support and connections, especially if related to the career development process, experienced fewer barriers and more effectively dealt with such barriers.

Scheid (2005) studied two midlife career transitions, specifically exiting a Fortune 500 company and choosing a new career, using qualitative grounded theory and interviewing 13 participants. He concluded a new midlife career is a significant life-changing transition and found both transition types are irrational, intuitive, non-linear

processes influenced by unplanned events. Furthermore, leaving a large company and starting a new career required exiting former roles and entering new roles. Last, self-reflection is an important element during a midlife woman's career transition.

One contemporary perspective on career is the multiple career concept. Brousseau, Drive, Eneroth, and Larson (1996) suggested four career concepts: (a) linear, (b) expert, (c) spiral, and (d) transitory. Within and across different kinds of work, each career concept depicts a different career experience pattern with varying direction, movement frequency, and motivations. For example, the most traditional career concept, *linear*, depicts an upward job direction, over time, with increasing responsibility and authority, motivated by a desire for achievement and power. In contrast, *expert*, also a traditional career concept, depicts less upward movement, with occupational devotion focused on knowledge and skill building, motivated by a desire for competence and stability.

Continuing, Brousseau et al.'s (1996) third concept, *spiral*, depicts seven to ten-year movements across related jobs, specialties, or jobs, achieving competence before moving on, motivated by creativity and personal growth. Last, *transitory*, the most contemporary career concept, depicts three to five year movement across related or unrelated jobs or fields, motivated by variety and independence. The four career concepts may be used independently or combined to create hybrid career concepts and may address midlife women's career transition to the professoriate.

A second contemporary perspective on career is the boundaryless career. Jones and DeFillippi (1996) conducted a mixed method study of the film industry, analyzing

606 film credits and five, in-depth interviews. They found the new career landscape is based on networking careers and requires six interrelated competencies—*what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, *whom*, and *how* related to the considered industry. The first three competencies form an industry picture while the last three provide self-knowledge and skill to navigate the industry. Specifically, to form an industry picture, knowing *what* encompasses the industry's opportunities, threats, and requirements. Knowing *where* encompasses understanding the locations and boundaries for entering, training, and advancing. Knowing *when* encompasses understanding career timing and activity choices. To navigate the industry, knowing *why* encompasses the meaning, motives, and interests for pursuing a career. Knowing *whom* encompasses relationships with access to opportunities and resources. Last, knowing *how* encompasses the skills and talent for effective performance in assignments and responsibilities. The boundaryless career and six interrelated competencies may describe women midlife career changers' transitions and strategies.

Last, as discussed in chapter one, to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate, this study used Schlossberg's (Anderson et al., 2012) adult transition model in conjunction with Hansen's (1997, 2011) integrative life planning (ILP) model. Since the latter model is relatively new, potential criticisms include little use in the literature and its general nature. Perhaps because of the latter, however, Swanson and Holton III (2009) concluded ILP provides an inclusive and creative approach to life planning and postmodern approach to career development, including multiple careers. The ILP career

development model's first part, *integrative*, emphasizes body, mind, and spirit integration; and the second part, *life planning*, recognizes life's multiple and interrelated aspects and adults' responsibility to plan their career development. Hansen organized ILP into six critical tasks for career development and decision making: (a) finding work that needs doing in changing global contexts; (b) attending to our health: physical, mental, and emotional; (c) connecting family and work; (d) valuing pluralism and inclusivity; (e) exploring spirituality and life purpose; and (f) managing personal transition and organizational change. A potential criticism of the model is its limited use. A search for studies using this model as a framework yielded one study, which generally used the career development literature as a framework. Despite this criticism, as a contextual model, the framework includes a variety of work and life issues in making career development decisions.

At the intersection of adult and career development, midlife career changers experience many transitions as they develop in their lives and careers. Such transitions include prior career expert to new career novice and subsequent journey to new career expert. Therefore, this chapter's last section discusses the expert to novice literature.

Expert to Novice Career Transition

Studies of novice to expert development include diverse domains such as chess, computer programming, physics, medicine, and primary and secondary teaching (Benner, 1984; Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988; Gossman, 2008; Hedrick, 2005; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). However, we know little about career changers' transitions from prior career expert to new career novice and subsequent journey to new career expert,

generally and within the higher education context. Therefore, this section discusses novice to expert models and studies of prior career expert to new career novice.

Novice to Expert Models

First, in 1986, Dreyfus and Dreyfus published the five-stage model of adult skill acquisition: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert or expertise. As adults progress through the stages, they develop skills in perceiving situational elements or components, perspective, decision-making, and commitment to the learning experience. Table 5 describes and applies each novice to expertise stages to driving a car. As S. A. Dreyfus (2004) explained, a novice's perception of situational elements or components is without context but an expert's perception includes situational awareness. Similarly, a novice's decision-making is analytical but develops to an expert's intuitive decision-making. For example, a novice car driver learns about features and rules, such as speed and shifting gears, but does not understand context. An expert driver, however, assesses the driving context and intuitively decreases speed by releasing the accelerator, down shifting, or braking without calculating and comparing alternatives.

Using this five-stage model of adult skill acquisition, Benner (2004) reported three studies, conducted over 21 years, describing and interpreting nurses' skill acquisition and clinical judgment in education and practice:

These studies extend the understanding of the Dreyfus model to complex, underdetermined, and fast-paced practices. . . . Taken together, these studies demonstrate the usefulness of the Dreyfus model for understanding the learning needs and styles of learning at different levels of skill acquisition. (p. 188)

As predicted by the model, Benner found experience increased a nurse's grasp of clinical situations and guided actions and interactions.

Table 5. The five-stage model of adult skill acquisition (H. L. Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; S. E. Dreyfus, 2004)

Stage	Description	Car Driving Example
	The adult skill acquirer...	
1. Novice	Recognizes context-free features and rules provided by the instructor	Recognizes features such as speed and rules for shifting gears
2. Advanced beginner	Begins to understand the relevant context and notes additional features and aspects	Uses engine sounds and speed to determine when to shift (e.g. down shift when the engine is straining)
3. Competence	Devises a plan or chooses a perspective to deal with the overwhelming number of potential relevant aspects and procedures	Makes decisions upon exiting the freeway about accelerating, shifting, braking, and when to perform these functions, feeling relieved or shaken depending on the outcome
4. Proficiency	Replaces rules and principles with situational discriminations	Focuses on shifting or braking when approaching a curve too fast on a rainy day
5. Expertise	Uses a vast repertoire of situational discriminations to achieve the goal	Intuitively releases the accelerator, down shifts, or brakes without calculating and comparing alternatives

Using Benner's work as a framework, Meretoja, Isoaho, and Leino-Kilpi (2004) developed and tested the Nurse Competence Scale, an instrument to self-assess nurse competence in hospital work environments. The scale consists of 73 items, divided into categories based on Benner's novice to expert competency framework, a literature

review, and six expert groups. After piloting the instrument, a quantitative study of 498 nurses validated the instrument. The results indicated an overall high level of nurse competence, correlated with age and length of service.

As another example, Benjamin (2007) used Benner's framework to chronicle her leadership progression as a nursing school head participating in a leadership experience. Beginning with the novice stage, she discussed how her thinking patterns and behaviors changed and how she developed to the advanced beginner and competence stages. For example, as Benjamin developed to a competent leader, she viewed a situation as a whole with varying relevant parts and made more thoughtful and deliberate decisions with more theoretical justifications. However, because she did not use intuition for decision-making, Benjamin did not consider herself a proficient or expert leader.

Second, in 1989, Steffy reported the life cycle of the career teacher model, based on a literature review and systematic observation of teachers over time. Six developmental phases comprise the model, "propelled by the mechanisms of reflection and renewal or impeded by withdrawal" (p. 16): novice, apprentice, professional, expert, distinguished, and emeritus (Table 6).

The model's goal is to develop teachers' skills to progress through the first four phases to achieve expert. The final two phases, distinguished and emeritus, are reserved for gifted teachers and lifetime achievers. Steffy recognized the life cycle of career teacher model as an application of Mezirow's transformative learning theory:

As teachers progress throughout their careers, they can engage in transformational processes including critical reflection on practice, redefinitions

of assumptions and beliefs, and enhanced self worth. Or they can disengage from the work environment as a source and stimulation for new learning and begin the gradual decline into professional withdrawal. (p. 17)

She described the reflection-renewal-growth cycle as propelling teachers through the career life-cycle phases and a source of transformative learning and organization development.

Table 6. Steffy's (1989) six-phased life cycle of the career teacher model

Phase	Begins when
1. Novice	Pre-service students encounter practicum teacher education experiences and continues through student teaching
2. Apprentice	Teachers are independently responsible for instruction planning and delivery and continues until knowledge, pedagogy, and confidence integrate
3. Professional	Teachers grow in self-confidence as educators
4. Expert	Teachers achieve high standards, such as national certification
5. Distinguished	Gifted teachers exceed expectations
6. Emeritus	Teachers attain a lifetime of achievement in education

Based on Steffy's six-phased life cycle of the career teacher model, Compton (2010) created a survey to explore teacher voice in professional development.

Participants included teachers in a large, suburban school district, who prioritized 16 professional development options and answered questions to assess their developmental teaching phase. The top three professional development preferences for all phases

comprised opportunities to connect with other teachers, constructing new instruction methods, and receiving support for reflection. In addition to overall preferences, the findings indicated phase-specific options. For example, apprentice- and expert-phase teachers had an interest in learning about locating and selecting materials, but only apprentice-phase teachers preferred professional development in learning to communicate with parents. Professional-phase teachers requested little professional development, scoring lower than the reflection and growth seeking expert- and distinguished-phase teachers. These results speak to Crane et al.'s (2009) questions about midlife career changing new faculty's orientation and development experiences.

Third, in 2005, Hedrick identified a four-stage novice to expert continuum for staff development, based on her experience as an educator and staff developer: novice, apprentice, practitioner, and expert. Developing expertise is a continuum,

a journey with no final destination other than continually and gradually refining knowledge, understanding, and skills where both attitudes and habits of mind support ongoing growth. At each stage, one can look behind and see others who are not as far along. And everyone can look ahead on the continuum and see educators who are more advanced. (p. 33)

Although described as a continuum and looking behind or ahead, Hedrick posited learner development is rarely linear, since the new and uncomfortable may cause regression. Furthermore, each continuum stage has unique characteristics and professional development needs. Therefore, staff developers must identify participants' current stages and learning needs and plan according to their readiness, interest, and learning

styles. For example, one task is to design relevant, low-risk, and challenging, but not too challenging, learning experiences that lead learners to continuous improvement.

Last, in 2008, Gossman, a professor and faculty developer, integrated (a) conceptions-of-teaching, (b) Dreyfus and Dreyfus's (1986; S. E. Dreyfus, 2004) five-stage model of adult skill acquisition, and (c) Haigh's (2005) three Rs model of personal development into a teacher development strategy for higher education faculty and staff. Based on a literature review, Gossman compared various discussions of conceptions-in-teaching and summarized the findings as a continuum from the first stage, being teacher-focused and content-oriented, to the second stage, student-focused and learning-oriented. In the third stage, outside the continuum, skilled teachers recognize and apply appropriate methods to particular situations to achieve desired outcomes.

Continuing, Gossman (2008) integrated Dreyfus and Dreyfus's (1986; S. E. Dreyfus, 2004) five-stage model of adult skill acquisition, discussed above, and Haigh's (2005) three Rs model of personal development to support faculty's progression from novice to expert stages. Haigh's (2005) three Rs model of personal development comprises rules, reflection, and research related to teaching and describes a teacher's professional development journey through Dreyfus and Dreyfus's five novice to expert stages. Depending on the teacher's stage, rules, reflection, and research vary in prominence:

In order to learn, a novice needs to isolate the factors affecting teaching activities and to formulate a set of rules that apply and guide her or his work in that situation. As experience is gained, novices reflect upon their practice and refine

their rules and develop new ones. Finally, as proficiency and experience increase, an individual may engage in research into teaching. (p. 160)

In Gossman's integration, reflection is prominent throughout the five novice to expert stages, while rules and research are respectively prominent in early and late stages.

The models discussed in this section seek to explain the novice's development to expert, but do not address the transition from prior career expert to new career novice and subsequent journey to new career expert.

Studies of Prior Career Expert to New Career Novice

As discussed, the literature includes general and teaching-specific novice to expert models and perspectives. However, we know little about the transition from prior career expert to new career novice. Within the scholarship of teaching and learning, Benander (2009) reflected on experiential learning as one transitions from expert teacher to learner novice or from expert professor to novice student: "Moving from professor to student is a significant change in relationships of social power, but the change from expert to novice is more personally and emotionally affecting" (p. 38). For example, reflecting on the experience of becoming beginning music students, four faculty at a mid-western university felt "the challenge of feeling incompetent, the importance of praise, and the need for structured clarity in exercises" (p. 38). They believed reflecting on their experiences as novice musicians enhanced their expert discipline teaching.

Although we know little about the transition from prior career expert to new career novice, the literature offers insights into the journey from new career novice to new career expert. However, the literature focuses on career changers to primary and

secondary teaching, rather than the professoriate, as evidenced in the following four studies.

In the first study, Crow, Nevine, and Nager (1990) used a qualitative ethnographic study to discover the meaning of career change for those making the change. Based on interview, focus group, and document data from career changing graduate students to education and their adviser, the researchers found “all of the students indicated they were trading in the success measured by career-ladder advancement and financial gain for the rewards of a people-oriented career that promised greater personal satisfaction” (p. 197).

Crow et al. (1990) organized the data into a three-part career-changing framework: initiating influences, mediating experiences, and commitment. Rather than a linear model, with the past influencing the present influencing the future, they proposed a reciprocal relationship between the framework’s three parts:

(1) Factors that initiate the decision to teach influence the perception of the current experience; (2) mediating factors may affect the reinterpretation of past experiences to make sense of current experiences; (3) current experiences mediate the influence of the past on the extent of commitment to the new occupation; (4) past experiences may influence the commitment to the occupation without being mediated by current experiences; and (5) the extent of an individual’s commitment to the new occupation may have an effect on the reinterpretation of both past and current experiences. (p. 201)

The findings identified three groups of career changers: (a) the homecomers, (b) the converted, and (c) the unconverted (Crow, Nevine, & Nager, 1990). For *the homecomers*, “entering a teacher education program resemble[d] a psychological homecoming” (p. 204). Although these students were prior career experts, they always wanted to teach. Participants spoke of the stress of becoming a novice again, mediated by the joy of working with students.

In contrast to the homecomers, *the converted* considered teaching only after a pivotal event caused them to reconsider career plans. These participants identified two constraints in transitioning to a teaching career: “They were forced to play a novice role after having advanced in another occupation, and they experienced isolation as student teachers in contrast to the camaraderie they felt in previous occupations” (Crow et al., 1990, p. 208). One participant admitted the stress of again being a novice: “You give up a lot of security when you’ve had some kind of success in another field and you feel like you’ve achieved a certain level of competence or expertise” (p. 212). Participants reported using skills from previous occupations as a mediating force against career transition constraints.

Last, like the converted, *the unconverted* achieved success in prior career experts. However, unlike the homecomers and converted, the unconverted were “disenchanted with a teaching career, [were] not currently teaching, and appear[ed] unlikely to do so in the future” (Crow et al., 1990, p. 212).

In the second study, George and Maguire (1998) sought to illuminate the dilemmas mature trainee teachers experience, using a qualitative research design and

interviewing 11 women. Findings included sexism and ageism experiences, such as prior experiences viewed as a disadvantage, and age and maturity viewed as liabilities. For example, a participant stated her “prior knowledge and expertise gained outside education has been viewed as unwelcome by those in charge of my training” (p. 422). All participants experienced exclusion as college students on campus and school teachers in training. Similarly, women midlife career changers to the professoriate may feel othered as graduate students and new faculty.

Ironically, as the older women studied learning theories promoting the recognition and validation of students’ prior experience and knowledge, their prior experience and knowledge were neither recognized nor validated (George & Maquire, 1998). This lack of recognition and validation left participants feeling patronized, undervalued, and invisible:

Older teachers can exclude younger and less experienced colleagues; younger teachers can exclude older and less energetic or up-to-date colleagues. However, the older trainee teacher does not fit comfortably into either of these categories and threatens to disrupt this ageist population. (p. 423)

Even for the successful older women who secured teaching jobs during the study, “the costs are high and the road can be lonely” (p. 428).

In the third study, Mayotte (2003) conducted a case study of four women during novice teaching. She examined the second career teachers’ recognition of previously developed career competencies and their influences on teaching philosophy and classroom practices. The findings indicated support in connecting prior career expert

competencies to the current classroom aided career changers' adaptation to teaching. Such connections may be a transition strategy for midlife career changers.

Specifically, Mayotte used Arthur's (1994) boundaryless career as a framework to describe "the motivations, skills, and networks that interplay in career changes and that readily cross organizational and occupational boundaries" (p. 683). Arthur defined previously developed competencies as (a) know-why, (b) know-how, and (c) know-whom and, as discussed, later expanded by Jones and DeFillippi's (1996) to six competencies. According to Mayotte (2003), the *know-why* competencies refer to an individual's "career motivation, personal values and beliefs, identification experienced with the career organization, and the personal meaning attached to the career experience" (p. 683). The *know-how* competencies refer to an individual's accrued "skills, abilities, routines, and occupation-related knowledge" (p. 683). Last, the *know-whom* competencies refer to an individual's developed "network, mentoring relationships, and social contacts" (p. 683).

Mayotte (2003) posited career changers to teaching bring valuable experience and skills, including demonstrated competence, proven responsibility, and career success: "Previously developed competencies provide an important contribution to both the career switchers and the employing agency as the new employed professional transfers boundaryless benefits to a new setting" (p. 683). Although career changers bring maturity and prior career skills to teaching, they may not recognize or easily transfer such skills to the new teaching career. If the career changer "does not recognize the developed competencies as boundaryless benefits that are transferable to a new

position then the competencies are not especially helpful to either the career switcher or the new employer” (p. 683).

Findings also indicated career changers not viewed as novices because of their age and prior experiences may not receive needed support. According to Mayotte (2003), “despite the experience of positive influences of prior career expert on their current teaching, these teachers did note the need for support” (p. 691). Novice teachers can benefit from support in recognizing previously developed competencies and building on prior life and professional experiences. Mayotte used the analogy of stepping stones for the needed support in transitioning from a prior career expert to a new teaching career.

In the last study, Williams (2010) sought to understand how a career changer *became* a student teacher. Although career changers to teaching are not new, she found little literature about the experience. Therefore, using a qualitative research design and in-depth interviewing of one woman, Williams studied “the tensions inherent in being an *expert novice* in teacher education, and how one career change student perceived the processes of *brokering* and *reconciliation*” (p. 642),. She found career changers faced challenges and dilemmas as experienced and successful prior career experts and novice teacher educators. For example, despite prior career experience and expertise, the former human resources manager found being a novice teacher difficult and frustrating as she attempted to belong and feel confident as a student teacher. Furthermore, findings indicated the career changer as student needed to reconcile prior identities to develop a new professional identity.

Williams (2010) identified two crucial elements to the participant's learning: "social and academic support, and recognition by others that she brought to teaching valuable and relevant skills and experiences, gained in her prior career expert" (p. 646). Similar to Mayotte (2003), however, she cautioned educators and mentors not to assume a novice's competency level precludes the need for support and encouragement. The challenge for educators and mentors is "to recognize the diversity, complexity and richness of experience that career changers bring, and to help them build on these experiences in positive ways" (p. 646). Thus, midlife career changers warrant further study, generally and within the higher education context.

Summary

As discussed in chapter one, record-breaking undergraduate and graduate enrollments in higher education institutions are influencing higher faculty demand, reflecting changing faculty characteristics, and altering higher education's landscape. Two such changes include increasing numbers of new faculty with prior careers and women faculty. However, traditional adult development and career development theories may not account for the intersection of these two dimensions in examining faculty careers in higher education. The purpose of this study was to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate.

This chapter discussed the three bodies of literature situating the study: (a) adult development, (b) career development, and (c) expert to novice career transition. The adult and career development discussions comprised traditional development, women's development, and transitions. The expert to novice transition discussion included novice

to expert models and studies of prior career experts to new career novices. To investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate, the next chapter discusses the research design.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate; three research questions guided the study:

- What is the career transition process of women midlife career changers to the professoriate?
- What challenges and supports do midlife women experience during career transition to the professoriate?
- What strategies do midlife women use to manage career transition to the professoriate?

This chapter provides a description of and rationale for the research design, including methodology and methods. The methodology section discusses the research approach and design to achieve the purpose and answer the research questions. I used Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological procedures as a guide to discuss participants, my Epoché, data collection, and data analysis. Last, I discuss research evaluation using Creswell's (2013) five standards to assess this study's quality and identify validation strategies.

Methodology

The research paradigm informs the methodology, which in turn informs the research methods to achieve the study's purpose and answer the research questions. A

research paradigm embodies our beliefs, guides our actions (Guba, 1990), and shapes our identified issues and asked questions (Merriam, 1991). Research paradigms each focus on a specific purpose and include positivist, also known as empirical or analytical; interpretive, also known as constructivist; and critical (Merriam, 2009). For example, the purpose of positivist research is to predict, control, and generalize by asking questions focused on outcomes or products. In contrast, the purpose of interpretive research is to describe, understand, and interpret by asking questions focused on meaning. Last, the purpose of critical research is to change, emancipate, and empower by asking questions focused on social structure, freedom and oppression, or power and control. An interpretive research paradigm, with the purpose to describe and understand, guided this study to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate.

Qualitative research usually falls within the interpretive research paradigm. In contrast to quantitative researchers' interest in cause and effect, prediction, and distribution, Merriam (2009) stated, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Furthermore, four characteristics depict qualitative research: (a) a focus on meaning and understanding, (b) the researcher as primary instrument in collecting and analyzing data, (c) an inductive process, and (d) a richly descriptive product. As discussed above, this study sought to describe and understand the meaning constructed during midlife women's career transition to the professoriate. I was the primary research instrument collecting and

analyzing the data, inductively leading to findings, specifically categories or themes, resulting in rich, thick description.

Creswell (2013) identified five approaches to qualitative research—narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Based on this study's purpose, phenomenology was the best approach for four reasons. First, phenomenology focuses on understanding the essence of an experience, supporting the study's purpose. Second, phenomenology is best suited for describing the essence of a lived phenomenon, supporting the phenomenon of women's midlife career transition to the professoriate. Third, phenomenology draws from psychology and education disciplines, aligning with the study's conceptual framework of an adult transition model and career development model. Last, phenomenology's unit of analysis provides for the study of multiple individuals who share a common experience, supporting studying several women who share the experience of midlife career transition to the professoriate.

Creswell (2013) further identified two approaches to phenomenology: van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology and Moustakas' (1994) transcendental or descriptive phenomenology. *Hermeneutic* phenomenology focuses on interpreting the meaning of lived experiences. The researcher's biases and assumptions are part of the interpretive process. In contrast, *transcendental* phenomenology focuses less on interpreting and more on describing lived experiences. The researcher brackets, or puts aside, biases and assumptions so they do not impose on the study. Transcendental phenomenology's focus on describing lived experiences best supported

this study's purpose of investigating the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate and informed the methods.

Methods

Methods include the procedures used for participant identification, data collection, and data analysis, aligned with the study's purpose and research questions. According to Moustakas (1994), "every method relates back to the question, is developed solely to illuminate the question, and provides a portrayal of the phenomenon that is vital, rich, and layered in its textures and meanings" (p. 59). He identified seven methods to conduct a disciplined and systematic phenomenological study (see Table 7). In this section, I discuss each of the seven methods related to (a) research purpose and questions and the literature, (b) participants, (c) data collection, and (d) data analysis.

Research Purpose and Questions and the Literature

Moustakas' (1994) first method in conducting a disciplined and systematic phenomenological study is to discover a topic, or research purpose, and question(s) with (a) autobiographical meaning, (b) social meaning, and (c) significance. First, this study had autobiographical meaning, as I am a woman aspiring to a midlife career transition to the professoriate, which I discuss in my Epoché described in this chapter. Second, the study had social meaning, as discussed in chapter one, related to how and why faculty characteristics are changing; the implication for teaching, research, and service; and the impact on our students, nation, and society. Last, the study had significance because of potential implication for theory, policy, and practice, discussed in chapter five.

Moustakas' second method is to conduct a literature review, discussed in chapter two. A

discussion of the remaining methods in conducting a disciplined and systematic phenomenological study follows.

Table 7. Moustakas' (1994) seven methods in conducting a disciplined and systematic phenomenological study

Research Design	Moustakas' Phenomenological Method
Research purpose and question(s) and the literature	1. Discover a topic and question with autobiographical meaning, social meaning, and significance 2. Conduct a literature review
Participants	3. Construct criteria to identify participants 4. Provide participants with a. the study's purpose b. obtain informed consent c. insure confidentiality d. specify the researcher's and participants' responsibilities e. consistent with ethical research principles
Data collection	5. Develop an interview protocol 6. Conduct and record interviews focusing on a bracketed topic and question
Data analysis	7. Organize and analyze the data and develop individual, composite, and synthesized textural and structural descriptions

Participants

According to Moustakas (1994), "phenomenology is concerned with wholeness, with examining entities from many sides, angles, and perspectives until a unified vision of the essences of a phenomenon or experience is achieved" (p. 58). In this study, women provided perspectives about the essence of their midlife career transitions to the

professoriate. The third method in conducting a disciplined and systematic phenomenological study is to identify criteria for participants. Qualitative studies often use purposeful sampling to identify a sample from which much can be learned (Merriam, 2009); therefore, this study used three purposeful sampling strategies: (a) criterion, (b), convenience, and (c) snowball (Creswell, 2013).

In phenomenological research, criterion sampling ensures participants have experience with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). This study's inclusion criteria consisted of (a) women, (b) tenured or tenure-track faculty, (c) in adult education or related fields (e.g., human resource development, continuing education, lifelong learning), (d) at four-year institutions, (e) who self-identified as career changers to the professoriate, (f) while age 35 to 60 years.

I used convenience sampling to identify a potential participant pool using academic contacts and networks, specifically known professors and the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education's (AAACE) Commission of Professors of Adult Education's (CPAE) listserv. In addition, I used snowball sampling to expand the pool by asking professors to identify colleagues who might meet the inclusion criteria. Last, phenomenological studies typically include six or more (Morse, 1994) or 10 or fewer (Creswell, 2012) participants. Therefore, to reach saturation, I identified eight participants based on the inclusion criteria.

Moustakas' (1994) fourth method in conducting a disciplined and systematic phenomenological study is to provide participants "with instructions on the nature and purpose of the investigation, and developing an agreement that includes obtaining

informed consent, insuring confidentiality, and delineating the responsibilities of the primary researcher and research participant, consistent with ethical principles of research” (p. 103). To protect participants and comply with dissertation requirements, I submitted this study to the university’s federally-mandated Institutional Review Board (IRB) for compliance with laws and regulations governing human subjects research. The IRB process required stringent adherence to safe and ethical practices including, but not limited to, identifying and assessing participant risk, recruitment procedures, privacy and confidentiality, and informed consent. Recruitment procedures comprised a recruiting email (see Appendix A) and participant consent form (see Appendix B). While awaiting IRB approval, I completed my Epoché, discussed next, and after approval, recruited participants and proceeded with data collection.

My Epoché

Prior to collecting data, I completed the phenomenological Epoché process to investigate and bracket the essence of my experience as a woman midlife career changer to the professoriate. The Greek word *Epoché* means “to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). In a phenomenological study, the researcher is interested in and connected to the phenomenon; his or her thinking, reflections, and judgments are primary evidences of scientific investigation. According to Moustakas, because of my interest in and connection to the phenomenon, I had to bracket or put aside my personal experience to study the participants’ experiences:

The researcher following a transcendental phenomenological approach engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated (known as the Epoché process) in order to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies—to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated. (p. 22)

The Epoché process consisted of four tasks: (a) review, (b) reflective meditation, (c) release prejudgments, and (d) receptiveness (Moustakas, 1994). To begin, I reviewed my thoughts and feelings about my experience as a midlife woman changing careers and aspiring to the professoriate. Second, I repeatedly reflected through writing to identify my preconceptions and prejudgments. Third, based on my reflection, I strove to release prejudgments so I could freshly encounter the phenomenon. Last, the Epoché process led me to enhanced, albeit imperfect receptiveness, so I could better listen and hear the participants with less comparing, coloring, labeling, and judging.

This section describes my positionality as a midlife woman in the process of career transitioning to the professoriate. When writing *this* section (only), I had recently defended my dissertation proposal and submitted this study to the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). My career transition experience follows, including (a) researcher at time of study and transition beginning; (b) process to the professoriate;

(c) impact on relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles; (d) challenges, and (e) supports and strategies.

Researcher at time of study and transition beginning. I am a white, divorced, middle class woman with no children. At the beginning of my midlife career transition to the professoriate, I was a 40-something financial services executive, working 50 to 60 hours per week, with a national bank, living in beautiful San Diego, California. My team and I specialized in working with business clients with annual sales revenue from \$4 to 20 million. I was responsible for the greater San Diego area, managed a multi-million dollar line of business, and chaired the bank's local charitable foundation.

Today, I am a 50-something doctoral student at a large, southwest, research university, with a recent master's degree in adult education and human resource development and earlier MBA. I work part-time as a 20-hour per week graduate assistant, primarily as managing editor for a professional journal in my new field, and up to 10 hours per week as an instructional consultant intern at a center for teaching excellence.

How did this transition happen? As the result of a large, and somewhat anticipated, reduction-in-force or layoff, I retired from banking after 28 years in the financial services industry. Within my one career, however, I experienced numerous *job* transitions at five financial institutions, which, through a series of acquisitions and mergers, became one. I began my career during college on the west coast with a national bank. When approaching graduation, I received other job offers, but the bank provided interesting work and offered an incentive to stay and develop a career. In my

late 20s, however, I moved to a southwest statewide bank in response to deteriorating bank performance and the pursuit of love and later marriage. The statewide bank was eventually acquired by a midwest bank, further acquired by a southern bank, and finally acquired by the original west coast bank. I held various individual and leadership positions in several different lines of business—consumer banking, corporate banking, marketing, business development, private banking, treasury management, and business banking. In addition to bank mergers and acquisitions, and resulting job transitions, the bank relocated me twice—to the northwest and southern California. Therefore, by definition, I have experienced one *career*, my original career, but numerous jobs. The layoff resulting in early retirement ended my first financial services career and triggered my midlife career transition process to the professoriate.

Process to the professoriate. Upon reflection, my career transition process to the professoriate included (a) discovering adult education, (b) understanding my career transition context, (c) and connecting prior experiences with new learning.

Discovering adult education. As part of the layoff, I received a one-year severance package and executive outplacement services, which provided support in finding a new job. I vividly recall my executive outplacement counselor's pressure to "quickly snag" another banking job. I, however, wanted to reflect on my knowledge, skills, and experiences and explore a different path. Based on my interest in teaching, training, learning, organization change, adult development, and career development, I found something called *adult education* in a book about graduate schools while

browsing in a bookstore. Ultimately, I completed a master's degree in adult education and human resource development in 11 months at an east coast institution.

The beginning of my master's program had two humorous events. First, higher education had changed in the 10 years since my MBA. For example, I thought *blackboard* was something you write on with chalk; I soon learned *Blackboard* is a learning management system, something I had never heard of in the corporate world. Unbelievably, I lived on the west coast and completed courses on the east coast, through a combination of online and hybrid courses, Skype, and extended trips to New York City. Overall, this was an excellent learning experience—I enjoyed the courses, professors, students, and learning.

Looking back, two graduate school incidents planted the seed to pursue a doctoral degree. First, my master's adviser encouraged me to attend the AAACE conference in Cleveland during my second semester and suggested a co-facilitated concurrent session. I was amazed at the breadth of the adult education field and found myself thinking, "I might want to do this. I wonder if I could do this?" Second, my master's adviser mentioned, in passing, one of my comprehensive examination questions exhibited *doctoral*-level work. I was not exactly sure what that meant, but it was the first connection between doctoral-anything and me.

After graduation, instead of looking for a job, I found myself repeatedly researching doctoral programs. Eventually, I sold my San Diego house and moved all my worldly possessions to College Station to pursue a doctoral degree. People always ask me, "Why Texas?" First, Texas A&M University has a strong adult education and

human resource development program. Second, I had met two professors and several students at adult education conferences, sharing meals and attending some of their sessions. Third, I had some familiarity with Texas. While living in Albuquerque during my prior career, I had reported into Dallas and Houston, and West Texas associates had reported to me. Last, due to my age, I wanted to be a full-time student and part-time worker, and Texas offered a reasonable cost of living. During my first semester, I found part-time work as an hourly student intern and eventually secured an assistantship. My decisions and path thrust me into new experiences and context, discussed next.

Understanding my career transition context. To date, my career transition experience has been positive and negative. After over 25 years of enjoying banking work, the final two or three years were less satisfying, as the bank had become more concerned with short-term sales than long-term client service and financial performance. Despite lower satisfaction, I doubt I ever would have quit my job. Therefore, the layoff, though painful, was positive in motivating me to choose more fulfilling and interesting work. Negatively, however, I lost my identity, income, and, what I thought was, job security. The term *early retirement* softened the term *layoff*, and the severance package softened losing my livelihood. However, the experience was difficult and left me with no immediate income as true retirement was years away.

My career transition occurs within cultural, social, and political contexts. Culturally, career and job transitions were unheard of in my family. For example, my father, and recently my brother, not only retired from one career, but one employer with traditional retirement benefits. Socially, at times, handling other peoples' reactions to

my career transition was more challenging than my reaction. I felt pressured to secure another job and secure it quickly. Politically, the bank hired an executive outplacement firm to supposedly serve severed employees. However, the bank and firm measured success by new secured jobs; therefore, job counselors did everything they could to quickly place severed employees in new jobs. I, however, was unsure about continuing my banking career, seemingly unheard of prior to my arrival. Such uncertainty created conflict between the bank and outplacement firm's goal for severed employees and my goals and strategies to explore new learning, likely through graduate education, and a new career.

Connecting prior experience with new learning. I view learning as a lifelong endeavor and have always enjoyed learning in the classroom and on the job. For example, as a child, I liked school and always earned good grades. As an adult learner, I enjoyed and earned a MBA while working full-time, in addition to attending numerous professional and continuing education and other fun classes. As an adult educator, although I did not call myself that at the time, I enjoyed returning to my MBA program to guest lecture. Furthermore, I enjoyed being a banking school instructor and work trainer, and received positive feedback from students and participants. As a banking executive, some of my most enjoyable responsibilities included employee training and development, managing and leading teams, and educating business clients. Overall, I liked working and desired a new career less limited by age. Connecting these prior experiences led me to the professoriate. Pursuing the professoriate, however, impacted relationships, routines, and assumptions.

Impact on relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. In response to the career transition from financial services executive to doctoral student, relationships, routines, and assumptions changed. First, relationships changed. For example, I never saw most of my professional colleagues again. This is a very interesting phenomenon as surviving employees regroup and severed employees disappear to facilitate moving on. However, relationships with previously and recently severed employees grew stronger. Overall, family and close friends were supportive but confused. Eventually, I no longer had the resources to participate in the activities I used to enjoy with others, such as the theatre and traveling.

Routines also changed. For example, I went from working 60 hours a week and 24/7 Blackberry emails to . . . nothing. However, I solidified other routines, which moved from secondary to primary importance. For example, yoga classes provided a multiple-times-per-week enjoyable routine and support network. Similarly, choir practice and church created weekly routines, and two book clubs created monthly routines. Friday night at the neighbors and occasional beverages by their pool, became reliable and welcomed routines. Daily or weekly telephone calls from close friends provided ongoing support and routine. Eventually, as a graduate student, I developed new routines, encompassing classes, study, work, and a little bit of down time. I also started visiting my parents more frequently in order to give my father caregiving relief for my mother. Although my guest room had a revolving door in San Diego, fewer friends visited my college town located over 100 miles from a major airport.

Assumptions changed. I assumed I would retire from the bank in my 60s, not be forced into early retirement. I assumed I would have one career and one employer. I assumed people who work hard, and achieve and exceed goals, will not be laid off. I assumed the unemployed could find jobs if they tried harder. I assumed I would not be *me* without my career identity. All of these assumptions were wrong.

Roles changed. For example, my role changed from banking executive to unemployed. My role as always being able to pay my fair share, or even extra, changed. I could no longer host a meal, event, or trip or make charitable contributions without consternation. To this day, at some level, I view myself as not really working. Despite two student jobs and working 30 hours a week, I frequently refer to a future time “when I work again.” Early on, I referenced my low student wages, but stopped this practice realizing I am fortunate to have work and income. These changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles presented and led to career transition challenges and even some supports.

Career transition challenges. I experienced several career transitions challenges, primarily related to (a) deciding to transition, (b) student work adjustments, and (c) personal impacts.

Deciding to transition. Although I experienced several obstacles in transitioning from financial services executive to doctoral student, two stand out as most significant. First, the financial ramifications were, and continue to be, huge. I am losing four to five major income years. In addition, I find it difficult to live on a student’s monthly stipend, and there is no employment guarantee at the end of this journey. Fortunately, I have two

interesting part-time jobs, supportive managers, occasional travel scholarships that assist with conference travel, and family and friends who assist along way. I learned two valuable lessons. First, one of my greatest fears had been losing my job and income, but when it happened, I found myself freed from this fear. Second, after providing emotional and financial support to others over the years, I learned to accept such support from others.

Second, I did not think I could be a professor. For example, although I enjoy reading, I viewed myself as a very poor writer. As a good math student and accounting major, I identified as a *numbers person* as opposed to *writer*. Fortunately, professors provided positive writing feedback, and my original doctoral advisor recommended I take a writing course my first summer. That writing course, and subsequently being asked to volunteer as a graduate student writing consultant, changed my life. Through POWER (Goodson, 2013)—Promoting Outstanding Writing for Excellence in Research, I executed effective writing disciplines to boost my writing quantity and quality, leading to increased writing productivity and satisfaction as well less guilt and more joy when not writing. Writing changed from a rain cloud over my head to a manageable and satisfying practice.

Student work adjustments. In the work place, I surprisingly did not experience much difficulty in moving from the corner office to the student desk, eased, I think, by the interim year studying for a master's degree. As a student intern, I did real work, frequently surprised by the amount of responsibility. Although clearly a student, I felt I was able to learn and contribute to the team's mission and achieve goals. As a graduate

assistant, however, I felt more like a student and less like a worker and struggled to add value. Later, after studying adult development from novice to expert, I questioned the reverse experience—prior career expert to new career novice.

Perhaps my most difficult professional challenge was fitting in. On the one hand, I am a student and belong with the students. However, I am older than most students and have greater professional and personal experience. On the other hand, I am closer in age to my managers and many staff peers, but do not have the same resources to do things. In addition, higher education has a hierarchical system of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. For example, I work on the dean's floor and every month they celebrate birthdays, specifically administrator, faculty, and staff's birthdays, excluding students. As a former manager, I understand and live with the parameters even while sitting alone in my office hearing the singing, laughter, and camaraderie. However, I find it very awkward and appear anti-social or anti-team when friendly staff members, who view me as a peer, stop by my desk and invite me to join the party, which I am not allowed to attend. My solution is to leave work 10 minutes early once a month and avoid the situation.

Personal impacts. Life as a midlife, full-time doctoral student can be lonely. I did not know anyone at my university and found it challenging to make friends because of being an older student. I also find it difficult to explain my new life, as many people do not understand adult student life or the professoriate. During this transition, the mother I knew and loved has disappeared into Alzheimer's disease. I especially mourn this loss because she is the one person who would have thought it was fabulous I am

becoming a professor. My father, who provides her care, is supportive and happy for me as long as I am happy, but does not understand this career transition. To meet these challenges, I benefit from numerous supports and developed helpful strategies along the way.

Career transition supports and strategies. Unconsciously, I included career transition supports and strategies throughout this Epoché. Here I attempt to summarize those discussed along the way and elaborate.

As mentioned, while family members and many friends were concerned about my loss of livelihood, my inner circle—parents and close friends—were generally supportive and optimistic about my future. Other career transition supports included an employer-provided severance package and executive outplacement services, my master's adviser's conference encouragement and exam feedback, professors' writing encouragement, meaningful student intern employment, an interesting and developmental graduate assistantship, and conference travel scholarships. In addition, two events provided career transition support.

First, I vividly recall a conversation with a former colleague and friend, himself a career changer. He encouraged me to “not let the bank hit me in the back on the way out the door” and pursue my dream career. In addition, he advised taking a few months off to regroup, since decisions made after such regrouping would be different and sounder than quick decisions made under stress. Interestingly, as the result of his career change, he considered entering the professoriate, but chose a different path. No longer a bank

fan, he referred to laid-off associates as “the lucky ones” and was thrilled I was leaving the bank.

Second, in my graduate assistantship, primarily working on an academic journal, I earned a promotion from editorial assistant to managing editor. I earned numerous promotions in my prior career, but this was the first promotion in my new career. I also viewed the change as the editor-in-chief’s belief in my ability and recognition of my contribution. Although this promotion did not include a raise, I felt validated and eagerly updated my curriculum vita and email signature line.

Identifying career transition strategies seems premature, since my midlife career transition to the professoriate is incomplete. However, a few strategies have served me well. First, I embraced the freedom to choose a different career and identified one that leverages my prior experiences and brings great satisfaction. Second, I committed to being a full-time student and secured a graduate assistantship in order to maximize professoriate assimilation and campus time. Third, I adjusted my lifestyle to live on what I earn. Fourth, I implemented POWER principles to boost writing quantity and quality (Goodson, 2013). Fifth, I found friends who understand this journey and meet with them to write, commiserate, and celebrate. Sixth, I took courses in, and chose a dissertation topic spanning adult education and human resource development to maximize future employment opportunities. Last, in this study, I will interview eight women who did exactly what I want to do—career transition to the professoriate.

In this Epoché, I described my positionality as a midlife woman in the process of career transitioning to the professoriate. My career transition experience included (a)

researcher at time of study and transition beginning; (b) process to the professoriate; (c) impact on relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles; (d) challenges, and (e) supports and strategies. Throughout this study, I continued to reflect, write, and bracket my experience in order to be open to participants' experiences of midlife career transition to the professoriate. As I conclude this section, I return to current time and continue with data collection.

Data Collection

In phenomenological studies, data collection typically consists of a long interview or multiple interviews. Therefore, Moustakas' (1994) fifth and sixth methods in conducting a disciplined and systematic phenomenological study are to develop an interview protocol as well as conduct and record interviews focusing on a bracketed topic and question:

The phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions. Although the primary researchers may in advance develop a series of questions aimed at evoking a comprehensive account of the person's experience of the phenomenon, these are varied, altered, or not used at all when the participant shares the fully story of his or her experience of the bracketed question. (p. 114)

Therefore, using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C), I conducted two interviews with each participant. For the first interview, the protocol consisted of thanking participants, stating the study's purpose and research questions, and asking demographic and open-ended questions to investigate the phenomenon

(Merriam, 2009). The demographic questions focused on three periods, specifically time of study and the beginning and endings of midlife career transition to the professoriate. The open-ended questions began with “Tell me about your career transitions over the life span.” Influenced by the study’s purpose, research questions, conceptual model, and literature review, additional open-ended questions broadly asked about the career transition process and related impacts, challenges, supports, strategies, and expert to novice transition. The last question asked, “What would you like me to know about your career transition experience to the professoriate that I have not asked you?”

For the second interview, the first protocol question asked, “Based on your review of the first interview’s transcription, what changes or clarification would you like to make? Next, I asked unanswered or unclearly answered questions from the first interview. Last, I asked, “What else you would like to share about your career transition(s) to the professoriate?” and thanked participants.

As mentioned, I used the semi-structured interview to conduct two interviews with each participant. The initial interview was in-person, at the participant’s recommended location, and lasted one-and-a-quarter to two-and-a-half hours. I recorded the interviews to ensure accuracy, transcribed the interviews verbatim, and provided transcripts to the participants for member checking or accuracy review. The second interview was in-person, via Skype, or by telephone and lasted 25 minutes to two hours. Similarly, I recorded and transcribed the interviews, provided participants the opportunity to member check the transcripts, and ultimately used all the verbatim transcriptions for data analysis.

Data Analysis

According to Moustakas (1994), “phenomenology is committed to descriptions of experiences, not explanations or analyses. . . . Descriptions keep a phenomenon alive, illuminate its presence, accentuate its underlying meanings, enable the phenomenon to linger, retain its spirit, as near to its actual nature as possible” (p. 59). Therefore, the last method in conducting a disciplined and systematic phenomenological study is to organize and analyze the data and develop individual, composite, and synthesized textural (the *what*) and structural (the *how*) descriptions. This study used Moustakas’ methods of phenomenological analysis comprising three steps (a) phenomenological reduction, (b) imaginative variation, and (c) synthesis (see Figure 7). A detailed description of each step follows.

Step one: Phenomenological reduction. After reviewing the data for overall understanding by reading the participant interview transcriptions, data analysis began with phenomenological reduction. According to Moustakas (1994), the researcher describes in textural language “just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object but also the internal act of consciousness, the experience as such, the rhythm and relationship between phenomenon [and researcher or participant]” (p. 90). Phenomenological reduction comprises (a) bracketing, (b) horizontalization, (c) delimiting to invariant horizons, and (d) clustering the invariant constituents into themes, resulting in (e) individual textural descriptions (see Figure 7 for an overview and Table 8 for application to this study).

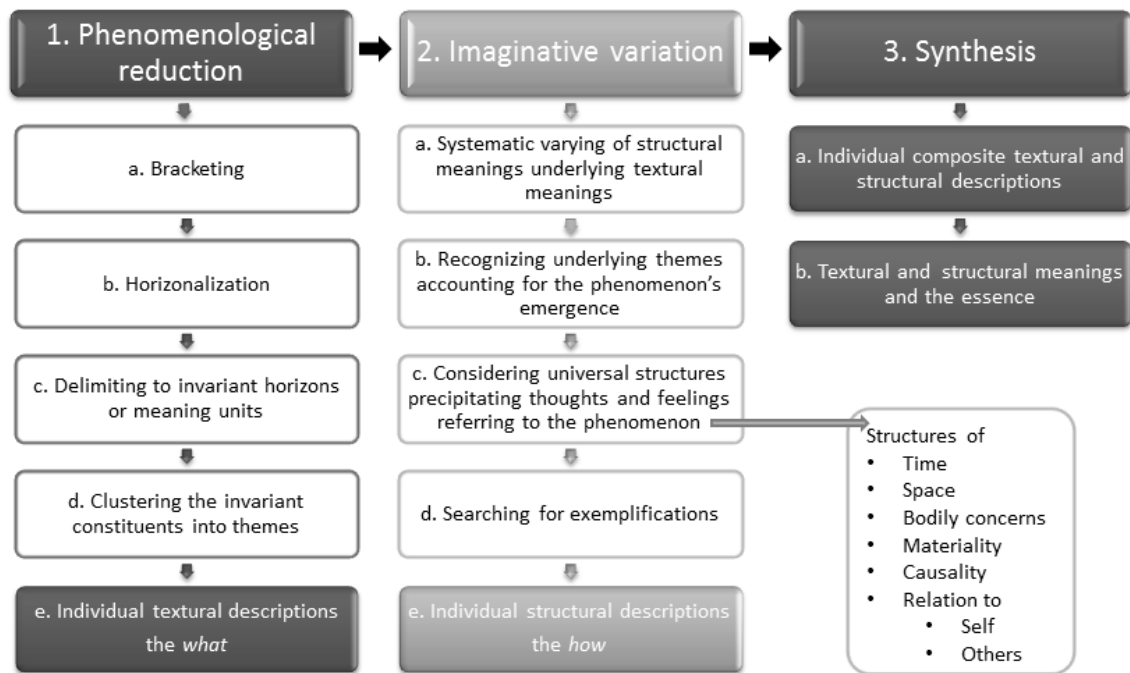


Figure 7. Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological analysis methods

In the first phenomenological reduction task, *bracketing*, the researcher puts everything aside to focus solely on the research purpose and questions (Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, using the Epoché process and ongoing reflection and writing, I strove to put aside *my* experience to study *the participants'* experiences of midlife career transition to the professoriate. After striving to bracket my experience, I turned to participant experiences.

Table 8. Moustakas' phenomenological analysis methods applied to this study

	Phenomenological Analysis Method	Applied to This Study
Reduction	Bracketing	Used the Epoché process to bracket the essence of my experience as a midlife woman aspiring to the professoriate
	Horizontalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uploaded transcribed participant interviews into data analysis software • Read each participant statement
	Delimiting to invariant horizons or meaning units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created or assigned a single or multiple codes to significant statements • Resulted in 124 codes from the data
	Clustering the invariant constituents into themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially clustered codes into categories • After further analysis, divided and consolidated several categories
	Individual textural descriptions (the <i>what</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept mapped each participant's career transition process • Focused on what-related codes with data from four or more participants • Copied and pasted the resulting codes' data into Word and further reflected • Created an Excel spreadsheet of participant demographic and process-related data • Wrote about the <i>what</i> of each participant's experience
Imaginative variation	Systematic varying of structural meanings underlying textural meaning	Identified the phenomenon's common structures using coding and categorizing described above
	Recognizing underlying themes accounting for the phenomenon's emergence	Analyzed remaining categories as described above
	Considering universal structures precipitating thoughts and feelings referring to the phenomenon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered the universal structures (i.e., time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self and others) • Also considered the underlying categories that emerged from the data
	Searching for exemplifications	Identified salient participant quotations
	Individual structural descriptions (the <i>how</i>)	Synthesized the <i>how</i> -related categories and examples into individual structural descriptions
Synthesis	Individual composite textural and structural descriptions	Used the concept maps, Excel spreadsheet, and writing to describe each participant's midlife career transition to the professoriate
	Textural and structural meanings and the essence	Synthesized the meaning and the essence, the <i>what</i> and the <i>how</i> , and presented

According to Moustakas (1994), in the next task, *horizontalization*, every participant statement begins with equal value. To prepare for this task, I uploaded 341 single-spaced pages of transcribed participant interviews into ATLAS.ti, qualitative analysis software, to house and facilitate my later data coding and categorizing. Beginning with the first interview, I carefully read each participant statement. For this study, a statement comprised a participant thought and ranged from a single phrase, sentence, or paragraph to several short paragraphs.

In the third task, *delimiting to invariant* (unchanging) *horizons* or meaning units (Moustakas, 1994), I used the software to highlight each participant statement and created or assigned a single code or multiple codes to significant statements even if repetitive or overlapping. I did not begin with a pre-set list of codes; rather, 124 codes resulted from the data (e.g., church, family, friends, God, parents, religion, spouse).

The phenomenological reduction process continued with *clustering the invariant constituents into themes* or categories by identifying related codes (Moustakas, 1994). Inspired by the research questions, conceptual framework, and the literature, I clustered codes into categories (e.g., advice, age or time, challenges, impacts, relationships, roles). After further analysis, however, I divided and consolidated several categories ultimately resulting in 15 categories presented in the next chapter.

Last, to further illuminate *the what* of the experience, I synthesized the invariant constituents and themes into *individual textural descriptions* (Moustakas, 1994). For this task, I first concept mapped each participant's midlife career transition process to the professoriate. Next, I focused on *what*-related categories and analyzed each code

with specific attention to codes with statements from four or more participants. Using the qualitative analysis software, I pulled all the participant statements related to a specific code or group of related codes, copied and pasted them into Word, and reflected on the data. Third, I created a detailed Excel spreadsheet of participant demographic data at the beginning and ending of the midlife career transition process and time of study. I expanded the spreadsheet with data about specific steps throughout the career transition process (e.g., prior educational and work experience, first awareness of the adult education or related field, doctoral programs). Last, I wrote about the *what* of each participant's experience.

Step two: Imaginative variation. Data analysis continued with imaginative variation, understanding there is no single road to truth “but that countless possibilities emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and meanings of an experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). Imaginative variation comprised (a) systematic varying of the structural meanings underlying the textural meaning, (b) recognizing the underlying themes accounting for the phenomenon's emergence, (c) considering the universal structure precipitating thoughts and feelings referring to the phenomenon, and (d) searching for exemplifications, resulting in (e) individual structural descriptions (see Figure 7 and Table 8).

In imaginative variation's first task, *systematic varying of the structural meanings underlying the textural meaning*, I identified the phenomenon's common structures (Moustakas, 1994) using coding and categorizing as described above. In task

two, I *recognized the underlying themes accounting for the phenomenon's emergence* (Moustakas, 1994) by analyzing the *how*-related categories as described above.

In the third task, *considering the universal structure precipitating thoughts and feelings referring to the phenomenon*, I considered Moustakas' prescribed universal structures comprised of time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, and relation to self and other as well as the underlying themes that emerged from the data.

In the fourth task, *searching for exemplifications*, I identified salient participant quotations to illustrate the invariant structural themes, feature the participant voices, and provide rich, thick description. Last, to illuminate the *how* of the experience, I synthesized the categories and examples into individual structural descriptions.

Step three: Synthesis. The final data analysis step was phenomenological synthesis in which the researcher integrates the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a comprehensive statement of the essence(s) of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Synthesis comprised two tasks: individual composite textural and structural descriptions as well as textural and structural meaning and the essence (see Figure 7 and Table 8).

In the first task, I synthesized a composite textural and structural description, using the concept maps and Excel spreadsheet and writing about each participant's midlife career transition to the professoriate (Moustakas, 1994). Ultimately, in the last task, I synthesized the textural meaning and essence (*the what*) and the structural meaning and the essence (*the how*) presented in the next chapter. This final synthesis is phenomenological research's goal, depicting the combined essence of the participants'

midlife career transition to the professoriate. Finally, in the last section, I discuss standards to assess phenomenological research quality and identify this study's validation strategies.

Quality Standards and Validation Strategies

Creswell (2013) used the term *validation* to emphasize a quality research process and recommended researchers disclose their validation strategies. Therefore, this section (a) discusses five standards to assess phenomenological research quality and (b) identifies this study's validation strategies for qualitative research.

Creswell (2013) developed five standards to assess phenomenological research quality. The first standard asks if the author conveys “an understanding of the philosophical tenet of phenomenology” (p. 260). This chapter discussed phenomenology as the best research design to achieve the study's purpose and answer the research questions. The second standard asks if the author identifies “a clear ‘phenomenon’ to study that is articulated in a concise way” (p. 260). This study's purpose concisely articulated the phenomenon of women's midlife career transition to the professoriate. The third standard asks if the author uses phenomenological data analysis procedures. This chapter detailed Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological data analysis methods, specifically reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. The fourth standard asks if the author conveys the overall essence of the participants, describing their experience and context. This chapter detailed the data collection and analysis methods to achieve this standard and chapters four and five respectively present and discuss the resulting findings. The last standard asks if the author is reflexive

throughout the study. This chapter discussed the Epoché process, which I reflected on throughout the study with continued writing. Ultimately, my experience and reflections evolved during this study due to participant interaction and doctoral program advancement. Last, I returned to these standards throughout the study to ensure research quality.

In addition to quality standards, Creswell (2013) recommended using at least two validation strategies for qualitative research. Therefore, I used the following validation strategies: (a) clarifying researcher bias, (b) member checking, (c) peer review or debriefing, and (d) rich, thick description. Phenomenology's Epoché process addressed the first validation strategy, *clarifying researcher bias*, so the reader knows my perspective and positionality.

In the second validation strategy, *member checking*, each participant had two opportunities to verify the accuracy of her transcribed interviews. After the first interview, I provided a transcription to each participant, asking her to review for accuracy. Participants' reviews ranged from no response, to a Word file with modest track changes, to full reflective review, prompting follow-up discussion in the second interview. After the second interview, I provided both transcriptions to each participant, asking them to review for accuracy and contact me with edits. I received no final responses.

The third validation strategy, *peer review or debriefing*, provided external research process verification (Creswell, 2013). Two adult educators and qualitative researchers, one a graduate and the other a soon-to-be graduate of an adult education

doctoral program, acted as peer reviewers and asked questions about this study's data methods and findings. The first reviewer and I met for two hours, primarily to review data analysis procedures especially the code list, transcription coding, and clustered codes. First, the reviewer randomly selected a participant, I opened the corresponding transcription in the qualitative analysis software, and we viewed and discussed participant statements, induced codes, and coding. Second, I pulled all participant statements associated with specific codes and we reviewed. Last, we reviewed the induced code list and clustered categories. This meeting helped me reflect more deeply on *how* the participants experienced career transition. The second reviewer and I briefly met three times to review and discuss findings. During these meetings, I shared graphical depictions and talked about the study's major findings. The reviewer challenged me to articulate why these specific findings and how the findings logically related to each other. These meetings helped me to better articulate this study, and the graphical depictions and relationships between findings evolved and solidified. In addition to peer review, my dissertation committee reviewed and debriefed this study during the proposal and dissertation defense process.

Last, as a fourth validation strategy, I provided *rich, thick description* so readers can determine if the findings can be transferred and, if so, transfer the information to other settings. Specifically, phenomenology's synthesized composite textural and structural descriptions provide readers with information about meanings and the essence for potential transfer. The next chapter features participant voices about their

experiences of midlife career transition to the professoriate. Having addressed standards and validation strategies, I conclude this chapter on research design.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of and rationale for the research design, including the methodology and methods. The methodology section discussed and provided rationale for an interpretive research design and qualitative study to achieve the study's purpose and answer the research questions. In the methods section, I used Moustakas' (1984) phenomenological methods as a guide to discuss participants, my Epoché, data collection, and data analysis. Last, I discussed the evaluation of research using Creswell's (2013) five standards to assess quality and identified this study's validation strategies for qualitative research. Based on this research design, I present the study's findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate. Three research questions guided the study: (a) What is the career transition process of women midlife career changers to the professoriate? (b) What challenges and supports do midlife women experience during career transition to the professoriate? and (c) What strategies do midlife women use to manage career transition to the professoriate?

This chapter begins with descriptions of participants at time of study and the beginnings and endings of their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. Adult education is a small field, and readers might easily identify participants based on data such as demographic information, prior education and work experience, current rank and role, research interests, etc. Therefore, I aggregated participant information to provide context, but protect anonymity and confidentiality. After descriptions of participants, the chapter continues with the findings organized by the research questions. I used Moustakas' (1984) phenomenological methods to depict the essence of the women participants' midlife career transition to the professoriate—the textural description (*the what*) reflected in a career transition process and the structural description (*the how*) reflected in related challenges, supports, and strategies.

Participants at Time of Study, Age and Career Transition, Beginnings and Endings

This section describes (a) participants at time of study, (b) their thoughts on age and career transition, and (c) their career transition beginnings and endings.

Participants at Time of Study

The eight participants matched the study's inclusion criteria, consisting of (a) women, (b) tenured or tenure-track faculty, (c) in adult education or related fields, (d) at four-year institutions, (e) who self-identify as career changers to the professoriate, (f) while age 35 to 60 years.

To provide additional context, I alphabetized the participant pseudonyms to denote their relative progress in career transitioning to the professoriate. At time of study, participants evenly divided between tenure-track (see Table 9; Anna, Barbara, Christine, and Debra) and tenured (Elizabeth, Frances, Gail, and Hannah) professors. They comprised four assistant professors, three associate professors, and one full professor, affiliated with six doctoral- and one masters-granting institution, four in the South, three in the Midwest, and one in the Northeast.

Participants comprised six white women and two women of color. At time of study, their ages spanned from 40s through 60s, with two participants 40-44 years, two 45-49 years, one 50-54 years, two 60-64 years, and one 65-69 years. All participants self-identified as middle class, five partnered in heterosexual marriages and four mothers, including one grandmother. Findings related to their thoughts and feelings on age and career transitions follow.

Table 9. Participant tenure status at time of study and career transition beginnings and endings

Participant	Tenure Status at Time of Study	Career Transition	
		Beginning	End
Anna	Tenure-track	First clinical faculty positions	Career transition continues
Barbara	Tenure-track	Prior to entering doctoral program	Tenure-track assistant professor position
Christine	Tenure-track	During a doctoral-level qualitative research course	Second tenure-track assistant professor position
Debra	Tenure-track	First tenure-track faculty position	Tenure-track assistant professor position
Elizabeth	Tenured	End of program	Tenured associate professor positions
Frances	Tenured	Doctoral student orientation	Tenured associate professor position
Gail	Tenured	End of program	Tenured associate professor position
Hannah	Tenured	Doctoral student orientation	Tenure-track assistant professor position

Age and Career Transitions

Half the participants mentioned age in describing their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. For example, as a doctoral student considering the professoriate, Hannah asked her advisor if being a middle-age woman would negatively influence becoming a professor:

[My advisor] thought about that briefly and said, “As to being a woman, that’s not an issue anymore because the professoriate is more and more women. . . .

That’s not going to be a barrier in any way. As far as your age . . . you’ll have roughly 20 years in your career, and I don’t see age being a problem. . . .

Typically, professors move around anyway, and there is no retirement age.

Some, like [a well-known older professor], just keep on going. What they care about is what do you bring? What do you offer? What will you contribute to this program? How well do you write? How much have you published?

As a tenure-track professor, Barbara felt “late to the game . . . trying to figure out this new career thing [in midlife].” With laughter, she admitted needing bifocals:

I was sitting here trying to read something the other day. Oh, goodness, I’m too old to be trying to read this. I need bifocals, which I really do, but I don’t have time to go get them, so I’m squinting, and I have this headache. I’m too old to be doing this reading.

However, in addition to a challenge, Barbara acknowledged age and associated work experience as benefits that increase her credibility with students and colleagues.

After feeling established and successful in prior careers, Debra joked, “It’s very interesting being a newbie at 40.” On a serious note, she acknowledged career changes and trajectories differ in midlife and thinking about such differences during her transition to the professoriate:

Because as a midterm, a mid-life career changer, I’m not in this for 30 years, I don’t think. That’s a different thing, when you change careers like this and start

at the bottom at 40 or 45 or 50. The timeframe you're going to be in that role is a very different trajectory than when you were 25 or may have started your first career. I think knowing that is also part of the transition, because then you have to decide. When I was trying to decide if [the professoriate] was right for me, and I was right for it, I didn't have 40, 30 years left in my career, so it has to be worth it. Is all this worth it, the good, the bad, and the ugly? I think about things differently at this stage of my life than I would of as a younger woman.

Last, Christine wished she had known she was capable of transitioning to the professoriate and made the transition earlier in life:

I wish I had done it earlier. I wish I thought I could have done it earlier. I wish I had more time left. Maybe that's just it. I'm getting old, and I don't feel like I can do as much as I used to. I'm still having health issues, too. . . . So lately, I've thought about that a lot. I wish very much I had done it earlier or known I could do it earlier.

Furthermore, she advised, "[women midlife career changers] watch out for themselves, because it is hard to make it in this field, especially if you have a strike against you, being older." Despite such age concerns, all participants pursued midlife career transition to the professoriate.

Career Transition Beginnings and Endings

All participants began career transitions to the professoriate in their 30s or 40s, specifically one 30-34 years, two 35-39 years, and five 40-44 years. At that time, six participants self-identified as middle socio-economic status and two as working or lower

socio-economic status. Half the participants were single and half married, the latter all mothers, including one grandmother.

Career transition to the professoriate began as early as before doctoral programs and as late as first post-doctoral program positions (see Figure 8). For example, three participants entered doctoral programs interested in being professors or became interested early in programs. Specifically, Barbara recalled learning about research, teaching, and service from a master's professor and entered graduate school considering the professoriate. Frances, however, identified her love of teaching and doctoral student socialization as the transition beginning. Similarly, Hannah decided to pursue the professoriate during her doctoral program orientation:

I don't know at what moment I said to myself, "I want to be a professor." I think it was pretty early [in my doctoral program]. I don't know that I went thinking, "This is what I want to do." I think I went thinking, "There are lots of possibilities here. With a doctorate in a field as eclectic and broad as this, there are lots of things that I could do." But I remember they had a retreat for all the new students, a weekend retreat. I think it was there I said to [my advisor] basically, "What is [the professoriate]?"

In contrast, the other five participants did not plan to pursue the professoriate until completing a portion or all of their doctoral programs. For example, Christine remembered the precise moment she decided to be a professor:

It was in the qualitative research course. I know the night. . . . I can't remember exactly what we were discussing, but it was just this kind of epiphany. . . . We

were talking about possible studies we could do, and I just had so many possibilities flooding my mind. I thought to myself, “I could spend a lifetime doing this.” . . . Then suddenly, somehow in the conversation, I looked at [the professor] and said, “I want your job!”

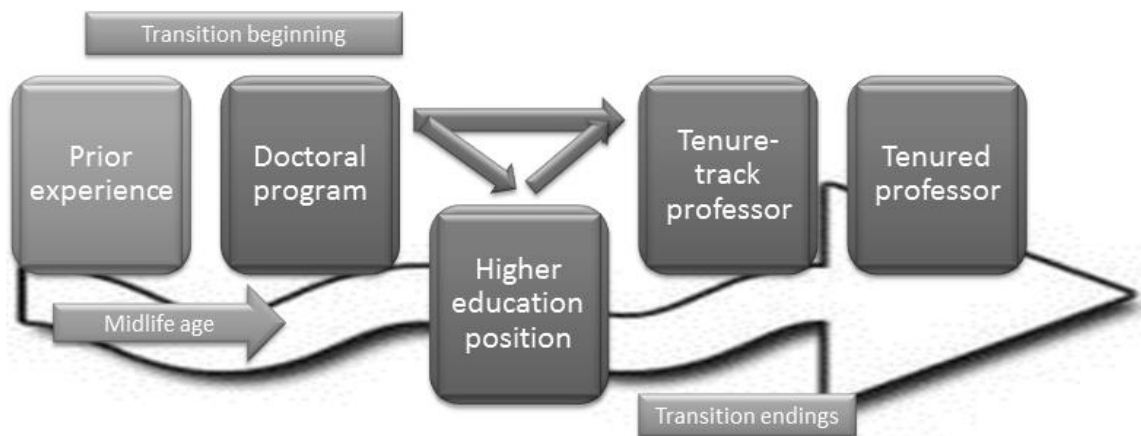


Figure 8. Midlife women’s career transition process to the professoriate.

The other four participants identified faculty positions, toward or at the end of doctoral programs, as their transition beginnings. For example, encouraged by her committee chair, Anna unexpectedly and successfully pursued a local clinical professor opportunity. Similarly, Debra discovered a local tenure-track assistant professor position requiring no family move. Elizabeth purposefully and successfully pursued what she and her husband perceived as a more stable faculty position to balance his entrepreneurial job. Last, Gail responded to an adult education professor’s email and successfully pursued a tenure-track assistant professor position.

In addition to varying career transition beginnings, participants had varying endings, ranging from first tenure-track position to no ending (see Figure 8). Specifically, seven participants reported completing their career transition in midlife, two 35-39 years, one 40-44 years, two 45-49 years, and two 55-59 years. In addition to advancing age, two demographic characteristics changed during the transitions; the two participants who identified as lower or working socio-economic status moved to middle socio-economic status, and an additional participant married. Three career transitions ended with first tenure-track assistant professor positions, and a fourth career transition ended with a second tenure-track assistant professor position in a more favorable political climate. The three remaining career transitions ended when participants made tenure as associate professors. In contrast, Anna believed her career transition continues: “Symbolically, I don’t have anything on my walls in my office. . . . I’m still working through phases of that transition.” The career transition process reflects these varying beginnings and endings.

Career Transition Process to the Professoriate

Participants had difficulty articulating a clear career transition process to the professoriate. Using terms like “connecting the dots,” “all the points along the way were inputs,” “winding road,” and “curvy path,” they described their midlife career transitions to the professoriate as the culmination of prior life, education, and work experiences.

Generally, however, they experienced a career transition process influenced by midlife age, with differing beginnings and endings, comprising specific steps (see Figure 8). This section describes each step in the midlife career transition process to the

professoriate: (a) prior experience, (b) doctoral program, (c) an interim higher education position for some, and (d) tenure-track professor. In addition, I include participants' reflections looking back on their career transitions to the professoriate.

Prior Experience

The participants brought a wide variety of prior educational and work experiences to the career transition process to the professoriate. For example, undergraduate degrees included business, English, economics, psychology, and sociology, and graduate degrees included adult education, business, education, English, human resource development, and religion or spirituality.

Prior work experience represented business, nonprofit, and education sectors. Specifically, prior business roles included accountant, administrative assistant, assembly line worker, banker, business or educational consultant, network administrator, project manager, restaurant manager, retailer, special events coordinator, and translator or interpreter. Prior nonprofit roles included AmeriCorps volunteer, civil rights advocate, counselor, Peace Corps volunteer, and religious nun. All participants had prior work experience in education or training, such as domestic or International English teacher, English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, primary and secondary teachers, or computer and human resource development trainers. Prior to pursuing doctoral programs, five participants worked in higher education as a student advisor, minister, or tutor, or associate director or director of an on-campus center or institute.

Participants discovered the adult education field at different times and in different ways and contexts. For example, in an education context, Elizabeth first heard

of adult education during undergraduate study, outside the United States, but did not identify with the field: “When I went to college, the term [*adult education*] was always there; I just didn’t associate it with myself.” In contrast, Hannah first heard of adult education from an unidentified man at a continuing professional education conference and immediately identified with the field:

I wish I could remember the man’s name. I have no idea who he was, but he gave a talk on adult learning. I have no idea who he was, and I never saw him again once I was active in the field. . . . He did a session on adult learning, and it really peaked my interest. “I am an adult educator, that’s what I’m doing. [My work] fits into a much broader [*adult education*] scheme.” I had no idea. He was the one, the mystery man.

Somewhere in the middle, Gail discovered adult education as a literacy volunteer: “I still hadn’t thought about adult education as a field. I just knew I enjoyed the one-on-one tutoring I was doing, but . . . that’s what sparked my interest in taking adult education courses.”

Other participants first heard of adult education in a work context. For example, Debra recollected a prior career: “I knew that I liked teaching adults. But as an academic field, I didn’t know it was actually an academic discipline until I was being recruited into the program.” In a prior career, Barbara’s manager differentiated child and adult education:

The woman who owned the company had dual master’s degrees, one in curriculum and instruction and the other in IT, and had her own [approach to]

training, “We do this, we do that . . . and we never do this.” She was very cognizant of how training for adults should be structured. I can’t tag it to any particular theorist. For her, teaching adults is different, and this is what we do. Despite different times, ways, and contexts, most participants immediately identified as adult educators upon learning of the field and all ultimately pursued doctoral degrees.

Doctoral Program

All participants pursued doctoral degrees in adult education or closely-related fields as part of their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. However, their motivations for pursuing such a degree varied. Five participants worked in higher education at the time. Specifically, one participant aspired to advance in her mid-level administrator career, while another administrator decided to take advantage of the university’s tuition benefit to continue a relative’s professorial legacy. A student minister decided to pursue a doctoral degree while on sabbatical. An unanswered question about developing students’ critical thinking compelled a part-time instructor to pursue a doctoral degree. Last, in the restroom, a professor from another university recruited an on-campus training specialist.

Three participants worked outside higher education. Specifically, a professor recruited one participant in a restaurant; she was unemployed at the time due to a spousal move. Another participant, a counselor at the time, wanted to understand more about how to affect personal change:

In the language I know now, [counselees] have to have a transformational learning experience in which they can really see that this behavior, this way of

living their life, is destructive, and there are other ways of living, other options available to them, that are more life giving. So I was very intrigued by how one person can facilitate that kind of learning in another. I didn't know the words *transformational learning* or know the term.

The third participant, a nonprofit consultant, wanted to increase credibility with her clients.

Pursuing a doctoral degree triggered career transitions for some, but not all participants. Specifically, four participants left prior careers before, or early in, doctoral programs, becoming full-time students with graduate assistantships. In addition, the aforementioned unemployed participant had a graduate assistantship. The other three participants continued their prior careers during most or all of graduate school, and two of the three had fellowships. Doctoral programs were an important step in the career transition process leading to higher education and tenure-track positions.

Higher Education Positions and Tenure-Track Professor

As participants transitioned careers, only five initially secured tenure-track faculty positions. The other three participants first held, what they termed, *interim* or *bridge* higher education positions as an administrator or clinical faculty. Several participants had difficulty securing first tenure-track faculty positions, which I discuss later in this chapter as a career transition challenge.

Eventually, all participants secured tenure-track faculty positions and, to use some participants' term, *subjected* themselves to the tenure and promotion process. Throughout every interview, tenured *and* tenure-track participants constantly referred to

tenure and promotion, especially the process's high research demands and required writing and publishing. Therefore, I discuss tenure and promotion later in this chapter as a career transition challenge. Ultimately, four participants successfully navigated the process to become tenured professors. I asked all participants if they would do it again.

Looking Back

Looking back on their career transitions to the professoriate, participant opinions varied on whether they would do it again. Specifically, Barbara, Christine, Debra, and Gail would again transition to the professoriate. For example, Barbara would do it again but, instead of "be[ing] in such an all-fire hurry to get out of" graduate school in three years, she would add a fourth year to broaden her academic experience. Debra concluded, "I absolutely would do it again, [but wish] I would have been a bit savvier about what it means to be in the professoriate. What it means to be an emerging scholar . . . and what all that entails." Gail responded with a resounding,

Yes, I would! The reason I would do it? This has been such a rewarding field to me and really a natural one. Again, this wasn't something I thought about when I was an undergraduate. I didn't know I wanted to be a professor, but it's just worked out very well for me. I enjoy doing the research, the writing, and the opportunities it has afforded me.

In contrast, Hannah questioned if she would again transition to the professoriate, ultimately differentiating between then and now:

You know, we talk about that, we, my friends, in the professoriate. That comes up. If I were facing academe as it is now, no [I would not]. . . . The demands

have grown so great that I don't think I would be willing to make all those sacrifices. But that's, in a sense, an unrealistic way to think about it. I think I need to think about that question in terms of would I, as I was.

Looking back to when she made her initial career decision to transition, she replied, "I think I would. . . . You know, it's been a good life. I certainly do not regret having done this."

Anna, whose transition continued, questioned if she would do it again, can contribute to the field, and will stay in the professoriate:

I don't regret making the transition and trying it, but I do question whether it will bring me that work/life balance and rewards for my entire family. Am I able to contribute? Will my perspective be honored in this kind of medium, like peer-reviewed journal articles? I don't know! We'll see. I don't regret trying it and taking the path, but I don't necessarily know if, upon reflection in a year, I'm going to say, "This is something I'm going to stay with."

In contrast, Elizabeth and Frances would not do it again. For example, Elizabeth dreamt of working in a profession providing more immediate results:

When I was in Africa, we worked a lot with UNICEF. That's my passion, doing things [where] I can see immediate results. If I have another chance, I often think, "I'm going to Africa and work in the village with kids. You can see changes."

In addition to desiring immediacy, she questioned her impact beyond the academic world:

I think, somehow, we are a self-fulfilling profession. We generate knowledge for the society, but it is—this is me coming from a practitioner background—very limited for me. I’m writing articles that only two people read, three people. I always joke about the articles you write, the editor and two reviewers will read. If you get 10 people to cite you, that is very lucky.

Looking back, all participants found their career transition to the professoriate professionally challenging.

Professional Career Transition Challenges

Participants articulated numerous and varied challenges related to their midlife career transitions to the professoriate, which I divided into professional and personal challenges. Using participant voices, this section describes the major professional career transition challenges (see Figure 9): (a) finding first tenure-track position, (b) tenure and promotion, (c) expert to novice transition, and (d) prevalent politics.

Finding First Tenure-Track Position

While approaching the end of doctoral programs or upon earning degrees, all participants pursued the professoriate. Although initially unsuccessful in finding tenure-track faculty positions, Anna, Barbara, and Elizabeth secured interim higher education positions. Specifically, Anna and Elizabeth accepted clinical faculty positions. In contrast, Barbara applied for 199 positions in 38 states, in what her brother called “the sea-to-shining-sea job search,” but had difficulty securing an on-campus interview:

I knew I could do the work, and no one was even nibbling. No one was calling.

No one was interviewing. I was like, “I’m a smart kid; I’ve done stuff. Why am

I not bubbling to the top of the pile?” It was like not being picked, this weird seventh grade all over again. I don’t have three heads; I promise.

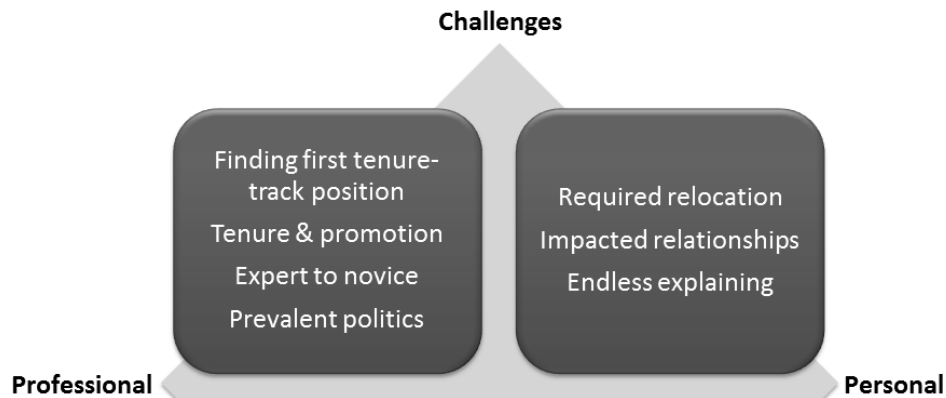


Figure 9. Challenges during midlife women’s career transition to the professoriate

Failing to secure a tenure-track faculty position, Barbara took a faculty development position. After accepting the administrative position, she felt like a failure and strategized about how to continue pursuing a tenure-track faculty position:

There’s an unconscious grooming that you’ll aspire to be a tier-one professor. You’ll start it now, and you’ll do this and this and this. It’s never explicitly said, an unspoken kind of thing. So anything else? I experienced it as failure when I wasn’t getting tier-one interviews. I wasn’t getting professor interviews at all. Then, I ended up . . . doing this administrative thing with a title no one understood. . . . It almost felt like this isn’t what I trained for, even though I was doing faculty development, curriculum design, all these things I *had* been trained for. I started conceptualizing that as my postdoc, and that helped me.

In contrast, Christie, Debra, Frances, Gail, and Hannah secured tenure-track faculty positions. Despite such success, Frances compared the professorial interview process to a marathon: “You have to do a research presentation. You have to do a teaching demonstration. You have to talk. What do you talk to the dean about?” She noted her prior higher education administrative experience as beneficial in the interviewing process, knowing what to expect and how to deliver:

Even if you might not know all those things, you’ve heard them. You’ve been on a search committee. You’ve gone to a teaching demonstration because they’re [your department or program] bringing in candidates. . . . You went to the research colloquium of the candidate they brought in. You get to see what it is.

Although eventually successful, Hannah acknowledged finding a first tenure-track position was risky and required her chair’s intervention: “I was the only [student] who got a job right out of graduate [school]. . . . It’s just the way it is; it wasn’t risk free; you didn’t know.” After initially applying for faculty positions, but not advancing to on-campus interviews, Hannah’s chair intervened on her behalf, resulting in an interview and ultimately a tenure-track faculty position at another institution:

[My chair] and [the department head] had been friends for a long time, and [my chair], basically, sat down with [the department head] and said, “They’re not doing the search right. They’re not looking at each candidate. They’re trying to fill a slot rather than seeing what each candidate can bring.” She told him about me and advocated they interview me and then decide. I think [the department head] said, “I need to be [careful].” [He] was a very political man; he’s retired

now, but was always extremely political. He was really attuned to the wider situation and the winds. [My chair] warned me, “He will do what’s best for the department. He’s not going to hire you because I’ve persuaded him you’re the best candidate. He’ll hire you if, in fact, he thinks that is going to be best for the department.”

After spending years aspiring to and preparing for the professoriate, participants struggled throughout the search process and experienced difficulty finding first tenure-track positions. Midlife magnified such struggle and difficulty in searching for and securing a *first* job, off-time, in 30s, 40s, and 50s. Furthermore, some participants initially did not secure tenure-track faculty positions and experienced feelings of failure in not meeting societal, advisor, mentor, family, friend, and self’s expectations. All participants experienced the search process as long, challenging, and risky, and several required help from mentors and advisors to navigate and advance in the process. Eventually, all participants secured tenure-track positions and experienced the tenure and promotion process.

Tenure and Promotion

The tenure and promotion process is unique to higher education, typically evaluating a professor’s quantity and quality in research, teaching, and service. All participants referenced the tenure and promotion process *throughout* their interviews. Susan compared the process to a marathon with no time to stop. Hannah described the process as horrible and nasty: “It’s institutional harassment. I’ve been on both sides of [the process]. I’ve been on the college-level committee, reviewing dossiers, and it’s like,

“Oh God, this is a horrible process. So on either side of the table, it’s just nasty.” Due to tenure and promotion’s uncertain process and outcomes, non-tenured participants consistently referenced *if* they make tenure.

As a tenure track professor, Debra stressed tenure and promotion’s high stakes: “At the end of this tenure process, if you’re not tenured, you have a year to get out. Then you have a decision. Do I stay in the professoriate, or do I do something else?” She compared the experience to jumping through hoops and contrasted business’s objective performance measurements with higher education’s subjective process:

There’s so much subjectivity. I’m okay with subjectivity; I’m a qualitative researcher. . . . It’s been harder for me coming from business. There were measurements and standards in place that could be argued one way or the other, with not just numbers, but with evidence. Evidence that, in academia, is still very subjective, is difficult to wrap one’s head around. Not only as one who is being evaluated, but I think also those who are evaluating. That was highly frustrating. Well, not frustrating, just concerning. It just seems like a moving ball or moving target, moving hoops that I needed to jump through that I wasn’t sure how to actually get there.

After making tenure, Frances vividly recalled receiving a colleague’s email: “Congratulations, professional hazing is now done.” After a dramatic pause, Frances stated, “I’m sorry to say that statement is true.” As a prior successful businesswoman, she shared her worldview and responsibility to those who follow: “I may have to put up with shit because I’m the first, but I will turn around and make sure that anyone who is

coming up behind me has it easier, because I went before them.” Therefore, she expected but experienced little support during her process: “I think that was probably one of the things that kept throwing me off balance. Where I was expecting support, because someone else had been before me, I wasn’t getting it.”

Although the tenure and promotion process includes research, teaching, *and* service, few participants mentioned teaching and service as challenges in their career transition to the professoriate. Furthermore, when mentioned, they most often referred to teaching and service as barriers to research. For example, Christine found writing-intensive courses particularly challenging to teach, “Enormous amounts of reading and writing and commenting and helping [students]. . . . It’s a lot, and it makes it really hard to do my own writing, because I spend so much time on everybody else’s.”

Furthermore, she advised not allowing other projects to distract you from your research focus, until you make tenure and can do anything you want.

Similarly, Anna was still searching for the magic formula to balance competing research and teaching priorities:

I’m not sure I’ve figured out how to balance, but I think I have at least more of a schedule of when things need to be out for publishing and things like that.

Because [with] the teaching, I’m developing new courses; I’m putting courses online. But *that* professor teaches the *same* four undergraduate courses twice a semester. *I* teach all graduate—master’s- and doctorate-level—courses. I mean, there are other challenges here to meet this expectation of publishing, which you need really focused time to be able to do.

In addition, because of prior administrative and program planning experience, “[Anna was] sucked into all of these service things. When you transition, and you’re not 25, into the professoriate, they’re using all of these skills, but guess what? I’m not writing!” Also related to service, Gail drew upon her prior career organizational skills and advised women midlife career changers to the professoriate, “Guard your time and you can’t serve on a lot of committees.”

As tenured and tenure-track professors, all participants realized research is *the* priority in the tenure and promotion process. For example, after moving from a teaching- to research-focused university, Elizabeth’s department head stressed research as the top priority:

“I don’t care if you’re in the office; I don’t care if you’re a great teacher. As long as you publish single author publications, you are fine. You can be a mediocre teacher; as long as you publish your work, you are fine. But if you are an excellent teacher and don’t publish, you are in deep trouble.” You know how long it took me to get over? Suddenly, I found myself writing in my apartment every day. I realized, when at work, if I poked my head [out of my office], every door was closed.

Furthermore, she felt like she was writing for the sake of writing to hit a publishing number and compromised journal quality in order to increase timely publishing chances. Along the way, she asked herself, “Is this really what [I] want, sitting behind a computer, behind a closed door?” She continued to question her identity

as an academic scholar, preferring to interact with students in the classroom: “I want to help them, to see their success. That gives me tremendous satisfaction.”

As a new professor, Anna temporarily sacrificed her writing voice to mimic her well-published, male, senior colleagues’ voices:

They have a different kind of voice with writing. . . . I remember the first thing I wrote. I tried to adapt this article. Now that I look at it . . . I tried to use *their* voice. I never sent it in, because I sent it to someone to review, [who responded,] “What is this? This doesn’t even make sense.”

She emphasized, “Writing is a process of finding your own voice and what is going to work for you.” However, she simultaneously acknowledged challenges remain, such as “if that voice will be recognized, not only by men, but women as well.”

In contrast, Debra enjoyed and felt confident in her research and writing, but found the publication process long and uncertain:

The publication process is challenging in that it takes a long time, not knowing for sure, and knowing you have to have a really substantial and quality amount of publications at a certain point in your career. If that’s not a challenge for early professors, I don’t know what else is. I’ve never felt inadequate in my research or uncomfortable with my ability to do it, but I was very uncomfortable with the length of time. Even when they accept, how long is it going to take to print? What’s going to count by that point?

After reflecting on the tenure and promotion process, she summarized, “These are the expectations. . . . There was just such uncertainty that was out of my control. That’s the challenge, I think, at least for me and everyone I know who’s an assistant professor.”

All participants experienced ongoing challenges in the demanding tenure and promotion process, which they described as a marathon, horrible, harassment, nasty, professional hazing, and high stakes. The tenure and promotion process evaluates research, teaching, and service. However, few participants mentioned teaching and service, despite identifying love of teaching as a motivation to pursue the professoriate. When mentioned, participants referred to teaching and service as barriers to required research. Several participants struggled with prioritizing research over teaching and questioned their identities as teachers.

Four participants survived the process, becoming tenured professors. As students, tenure-track, and even tenured professors, participants experienced challenges as they transitioned from prior career expert to new career novice.

Expert to Novice Transition

All participants acknowledged the challenge of transitioning from prior career expert to new career novice and journeying to new career expert. However, their challenges differed in degree, timing, and substance. For example, according to Frances, “The hardest thing about being someone who did this [career] transition [to the professoriate] in midlife was going from expert to novice.” Although she perceived herself as an expert, administrators and colleagues treated Frances like a novice:

The thing is I wasn't a novice. That's the problem. . . . I wasn't a novice in the traditional definition of novice in the professoriate. Even there, I wasn't a novice. I had already spent four years teaching at the undergraduate level, so it wasn't like this was my first time in the classroom. . . . My time management, my organization ability, even my program planning skills, really were developed in what I did before I got to the professoriate. So there was a real struggle that I had of feeling like, really? You don't think [I'm an expert]?

In addition to struggling, Frances found the transition from prior career business expert to new career faculty novice stressful: "You have to understand that you're going to go from expert to novice. You have to be . . . willing to grapple with that; otherwise, you add a layer of stress." In response to others questioning her professional identity, Frances kept telling herself, "I am a professional. I know how to do this." Ironically, although the field of adult education values prior experiences, her institution did not value her prior career experience:

The rhetoric says we welcome everyone to the table. [However,] especially if you're going to be a faculty member in the field of adult education, that's not the reality of the higher education culture, those two cultures clash. Understand that higher ed is going to discount your previous experience, because it's not higher education, and then just move past that and go, "Okay, that's fine."

To cope, Frances adjusted her approach from asking, "What can I do to make them see that I'm an expert?" to "I no longer do that, because I know that I am an expert. I've had to claim that identity on my own."

Similarly, Anna identified with prior career expert to new career expert. As a prior higher education administrator, she could accomplish tasks in minutes compared to others who took a week. In contrast, she felt demoted when unable to attend a professional conference because of her clinical faculty status. Even after securing a tenure-track faculty position, she remained involved in prior career activities to cope and feel competent: “I *am* smart. I know there are certain things that I don’t have a learning curve on all the time, so it helps your self-esteem to stay [involved].”

Christine, also a prior career higher education administrator, vividly recalled transitioning from the top as a big fish—accessing resources, managing people, winning awards, and holding national offices—to the powerless bottom:

The downside was I [lost my] authority. [In my administrative role,] I had power to make changes and do things for students. I did a lot. I was able to instigate. I could . . . make a case for a new program, for instance, for marginalized students, and get the money, show how it would be beneficial. I could do things; I could create the program; I could get it going; I could see the results. I really liked that. I really loved that job. Then, as you come in as a peon, as an assistant professor, who has no power, you can’t get anything done, as far as for student advocacy. Even as a tenure-track professor at the time of this study, she did not feel like an expert.

Rather than transitioning from *expert* to *novice*, Debra identified with moving from *established* to *unestablished* and missed her prior career credibility:

I was no longer established in a way. The only credibility I had was a Ph.D., which is nice, a nice document, a nice credential, but no other credibility. So no

other background information imbedded in the organizational culture that said I knew how to collaborate with people. That people could respect when I said things, that I was sincere, they could expect me to be supportive. The kinds of thing around organizational culture that, even if you change jobs from one organization to another in the same field, you kind of come with that credibility.

Initially, instead of relating to *expert*, Hannah articulated a feeling of full identity as a professor, “being able to say, ‘Not only is this what I do, but this is who I am.’” After reflection, however, she recalled an expert to novice experience. As a doctoral student, Hannah called upon her prior counseling career during a random encounter with a man who was an alcoholic at an auto repair shop:

I remember walking away, driving away [chuckle], and thinking I was back in that role of professional. Thinking how different that felt from the role of student and how I missed it, which is not to say I wasn’t happy to be a student. It’s that expert to novice experience where you go, “I liked it when I was the expert.” I liked being the professional rather than the student. . . . I felt, in a way, kind of stripped being a novice.

She observed part- or full-time student status may influence the prior career expert to new career novice experience: “I think a critical factor for me was that I was a full-time student.” Many adult education students continue professional work by attending classes part-time. Full-time students, however, often give up prior careers, so expert to novice may be a function of changing professions.

As a novice professor, Hannah worked with a doctoral student, inherited from another professor, who ended up getting a master's degree because she was unable to meet dissertation expectations and standards. With experienced hindsight, Hannah expressed, "I regret that. If I had encountered that student later in my career, I wouldn't have done that. I would have figured out something that she could do and lowered my standards and enabled her to graduate."

In contrast, Barbara did not experience novice feelings with students: "My students, I love them dearly, but they're really pretty green when I get them. . . . They are solid folks, but they don't know much beyond their little bubble." In addition, as the only adult education professor in her department, she did not experience novice feelings around other faculty, but realized being around senior adult education colleagues could result in novice feelings: "If I were in a department with six other associate professors of adult ed, I would very much feel a novice, but I'm not." However, she admitted sharing prior career durations and experiences with students and colleagues to validate age and associated expertise. Hoping for a future faculty position in a bigger pond, she shared, "There's not expert to novice, but I'm starting to see myself more as a novice than even when I started the job."

Unique to midlife career changers, all participants experienced the challenge and stress of transitioning from prior career expert to new career novice and journeying to new career expert, in differing degree, timing, and substance. Ironically, the field of adult education purports to value prior experiences, but within the context of the professoriate, participants felt their prior career experience unrecognized and unvalued.

Furthermore, several participants lost power in transitioning from prior careers, losing authority, contacts, budget, and resources to make things happen and get the job done. Starting over at the bottom of the career trajectory in midlife is especially challenging in letting go of prior career identities to embrace a new professorial identity. As new career novices, all participants noted prevalent politics in higher education.

Prevalent Politics

All participants spoke of prevalent politics in higher education and some spoke of their lack of preparation to deal with such politics. For example, Debra acknowledged her unpreparedness to deal with higher education's complex politics:

Unless you spend a lot of time in academia, prior to becoming a professor, there is nothing that can prepare you for what a bizarre realm the professoriate is. It is at the intersection of heightened bureaucracy, extreme politics, egos, and good intentions. All those things coming together and money issues make academia complex.

Similarly, Barbara felt unprepared and asked "Where does a first gen[eration] kid learn white collar workplace politics?" She proposed a Professor Politics 101 or 601 course to meet unmet needs and highlighted her new advocate role and the need to build alliances:

There needs to be a Ph.D. class that says how to deal with politics, how to observe politics, how to tread lightly, how to navigate that piece of the context of this job. Because it's not just about sitting and interacting with my students. It's about advocating for my program, my students, and myself in a way that is

assertive, but not aggressive, and building alliances that don't come across as Survivor alliances, but are critically important.

Pragmatically, Frances expected political dynamics but found the intensity surprising. In addition, she contrasted business and academic contexts and expressed her sympathy for chairs and deans managing tenured faculty:

Every department, just because it is a group of people, has political dynamics in it. . . . I wasn't prepared for the intensity of the political dynamics. . . . The political dynamics in higher education are different from a corporation. Because, let's be real, if a new CEO comes into a company, the people who directly report to that person, and the people down the line, either do one of two things—they are onboard with the vision, or they go find another job. In higher education, you don't. . . . I say this because I have some sympathy for chairs and deans. Chairs and deans have people who work for them or with them, some of them have tenure, and they have no power over them. Because once you have tenure, the question you can ask yourself at some level, to a certain degree, is, "If I don't do this, can they fire me? You would be surprised how many times the answer is "no."

Elizabeth declared, "I don't do politics," then described the prior year as particularly challenging with politics contributing to thoughts of leaving the professoriate:

I was burned out emotionally. I was beaten and bullied, abused, and I saw leadership so weak. Then I was so disgusted, "I am leaving academia." I cannot

be in this kind of environment. You know what really bothers me? We are educators. We are there in the classroom, teaching students about how organizations should be run. This is an unhealthy organization. Here is what we should do to motivate people. Are we doing any of those? No, we cannot even get along. You cannot even stand up as a leader. I told my leader, “You know what? You are a traitor. You can’t even use what you said; you are a lousy [leader].” That is why I think they hate me. I don’t even care. “You are not even doing what you are preaching.”

Despite desiring to not deal with politics, all participants faced challenging and prevalent politics during midlife career transition to the professoriate. Some participants perceived gender and/or age as particular challenges in higher education institution’s political environment. Such political environments tend to be traditional and hierarchical and, at the extreme, uncivil. In addition to these professional career transition challenges—finding first tenure-track position, tenure and promotion, expert to novice transition, and prevalent politics, participants identified personal career transition challenges.

Personal Career Transition Challenges

This section describes the major personal career transition challenges (see Figure 9) using participant voices: (a) required relocation, (b) impacted relationships, and (c) endless explaining of the professoriate to non-academics. Although not unique to midlife women, midlife career changers experience such challenges more acutely and women may experience such challenges differently than men.

Required Relocation

All graduating doctoral students likely face required relocation in pursuing the professoriate and midlife relocation is complex. As Anna stated, “You don’t process this when you get a Ph.D.—you are *not* staying in your city. . . . If you’re really going to go into the professoriate, you’re moving.” In this study, all participants moved to new institutions for tenure-track faculty positions, requiring seven participants to relocate, including six to new states. The resulting required relocations challenged participants. For example, when broadly asked to describe her career transition to the professoriate, Barbara immediately and specifically replied with relocation logistics; the new academic year loomed as she struggled to sell and buy homes:

It’s hard not to describe it in terms of logistics, mainly because the logistics were so ridiculous. I had a house [1400 miles away]. . . . Packing up the house, but wanting to leave enough stuff, so it looked lived in for when buyers came through. Then working with a friend who was going to shepherd the movers on the day after it sold. . . . What do I need to have with me in the car? . . . Trying to sell my house there; trying to find a house here. I put an offer on this [house] about 10 minutes after it was on the market because that’s what you had to do.

After leaving her doctoral institution to relocate to a new university, Frances found herself a newcomer in *every* situation, compounded by being a single woman:

Just the role of being the newcomer in so many venues at one time, I think that’s the other thing about higher education. . . . I was a newcomer *everywhere* I turned. I was a newcomer walking into a store. I was a newcomer walking into a

church. I was a newcomer walking into my classroom. I was a newcomer walking into my department, my college, whatever. Lots of energy goes to being that. Especially if you don't have a significant other. You don't have a space where you can go and not be new.

In midlife, required relocations not only challenge career changers, but their families too. Christine, a mother and grandmother, spoke of her relocation's impact on her children, grandchild, and spouse:

With the relationships it was difficult. It was difficult for a lot of reasons. My kids, of course, would have been a lot happier if I'd stayed where I was. I would have been there, convenient . . . so they weren't really happy about it. We had [our grandchild]. We actually moved [our grandchild]. . . . I had to take [my grandchild] to orientation with me; I didn't have a babysitter! I didn't know anybody. [My grandchild] was always good to go, but it was difficult, a challenge. . . . [My husband] hasn't said that much about it, but it's been hard on him, to give up stuff and move on. He's always been willing to do it but of course it was still stressful.

Similarly, Anna's relocation took her away from family, specifically a large, extended, multigenerational family, losing support, babysitters, and traditions:

The biggest thing, for me, is that we're just in the middle of nowhere. We are! I don't have my parents here to help me with my son. I don't have any. He never had a babysitter before we moved here. There's a huge extended family [where I lived before this required relocation]. We don't do all of those family things that

we used to do. We're trying to think of other ways to make our own traditions and doing things here.

Furthermore, while appreciating her husband's support, she remained concerned about him finding meaningful employment:

I think I would have been in a different place with the transition if my husband would have been able to find work earlier, when we moved here. Now he's still part-time, so that has had a huge impact on our family. He also has the desire and right to be satisfied in his career. He would give up a lot, but I also feel, again, this is a family unit. This isn't all about me, so I still feel like, hopefully, the part-time will go [full-time], and it's something he cares about. . . . That's another reason why I still feel like, unless things turn around, you can't have that kind of situation continue. So that has added stress and will impact whether or not we're going to stay.

Women midlife career changers likely experience the challenges related to required relocation more acutely. As discussed, relocation was inherently more complex in moving a household of people and belongings in your 30s, 40s, or 50s, than a few boxes and some furniture in your 20s. Furthermore, participants found being new in every personal and professional situation in a new town at a new institution as challenging. As wives, participants deeply appreciated husbands' sacrifices and support, but worried about long-term ramifications and their happiness. Similarly, as mothers, participants worried about the impact of required relocations on their children. In

addition to challenges resulting from required relocations, participants reported their midlife career transitions to the professoriate impacted relationships.

Impacted Relationships

All participants experienced impacted relationships, such as loneliness and, as midlife women, difficulty balancing the professoriate with their roles of wife, mother, extended family member, and friend. Specifically, half the participants experienced loneliness during career transition, mostly from a lack of relationships after relocation. For example, Hannah described her transition from working professional to full-time student, including relocation for graduate school as a very lonely time somewhat eased by graduate school friends. Her loneliness intensified, however, as a new professor. Similarly, Frances experienced loneliness as a professor:

My expectation is that it takes about two years to meet people and get into their routine, so they include you, and they think of you to do things. . . . It's 10 years out and I would say, with probably the exception of three to four people, if I retired and moved tomorrow, I would not disrupt more than three or four peoples' lives.

While Hannah and Frances's loneliness resulted from required relocations, Christine's loneliness resulted from different class and life experiences:

I've felt [loneliness] more because of the class difference. Because my experience of life is *so* different than any of my colleagues, who have always, always done lots of traveling and [whose] parents have lots of education. That's pretty much across the board. I don't really know any other working class

background faculty. You just don't find any. It's not that people mean to make you feel out of place. It happens every single day.

All married participants valued their husband's support, but experienced relationship challenges during career transition. For example, Anna expressed concern about assistant professor divorce rates and acknowledged her husband's consistent support, including sacrificing his career:

My husband has always been 100% supportive. He quit his job to take care of the baby, so I could finish my work. I don't know too many people, in this society, who have that, because there are people who have their hard drives erased by their husbands. . . . I don't think you can do this unless you have a partner who is supportive or you get divorced. I can name probably a ton of people right now, who are also assistant professors, who are getting divorced.

Elizabeth felt guilty about her consuming faculty position: "I shouldn't let the job consume me. When I'm not working, I feel guilty. I feel this is not a life! I don't want a life like this. That's why I'm trying to figure what is the life I want?" As a result, she expressed concern for her husband and marriage:

My husband often says, "[Elizabeth], if I didn't love you that much, I would have walked away long time ago. . . . You know what? I have become your friend. I'm a chauffeur to our [child]. That's all. You come to bed; you are tired. You wake up; you talk about [work associates]." That is right; this job consumes me. . . . He is saying, "Your job is first, your [child] is second, then it's me."

Furthermore, Elizabeth found balancing the professoriate and motherhood challenging, sharing a story from her early professorial years:

I often took [him] to school, to work, on Saturdays saying, “Go with Mommy.”

Then, my office was very big, so we had blanket. I took 10 different CDs and lots of snacks. The secretary section was right outside, so he was eating there.

He would kick his shoes and run. He would have a lot of fun. We would stay there the whole day, the whole Saturday. Then I would take him at seven o’clock in the evening, when I would finish, “Mommy will take you for a treat.”

Sometimes he slept there on the floor until midnight, so my life was all work.

Similarly, Anna worried about the professoriate’s impact on her relationship with her son, while struggling to balance conflicting publishing and motherhood demands.

From the mouths of babes, came wisdom:

I just sent this chapter to a coauthor of mine, and I know that it’s crap. I know it is crap, and I basically told him as much. It was the day before Mother’s Day and my son came in and said, “You know what Mama?” Because I said, “I’ve got to get this out; I’ve got to finish this,” so he says, “You know what Mama? Tomorrow’s Mother’s Day, but I think I have a lot of work to do. I think I’m going to be very busy.” That’s pretty much a sign: attach [chapter to an email], send [to coauthor].

In contrast, Debra, the mother of teenage children, seemed less worried about balancing the professoriate and motherhood. Although a lifetime planner, she did not plan her intersection of professoriate and motherhood:

I constantly get these conversations about “you’ve done it all. You’ve worked it out.” Well, I didn’t go into all this with that plan. I am a planner, probably to a detriment, I mean definitely to my detriment at times, but I didn’t plan to go into the professoriate. I didn’t plan to have kids and then get a doctorate. I just had kids when I felt it was right to have kids. I just wasn’t deterred by the fact when I look back.

Last, the professoriate career transition challenged extended family relationships. For example, Anna described the tension between local family expectations and a tenure-track faculty position offer requiring relocation:

When I was offered this [tenure-track] position, it was a really difficult decision. My whole family is either [on another continent], or they are [local]. My mother is the matriarch, so I’m expected—none of this was ever talked about—to take over a lot of these kinds of roles. It was a huge identity shift. I mean, I just felt, again, this was the worst [transition] I ever had to make. I say worst, because I didn’t want to move.

Furthermore, Frances acknowledged the professoriate’s “24/7” intensity and resulting impact on her extended family relationships and illustrated a recent attempt to prioritize a friendship by setting a boundary around work email:

I think [the career transition to the professoriate] had an impact on my role as a friend or sister or aunt, because tenure is so intense. I even feel like just the professoriate itself. It’s a 24/7 possibility, and I don’t think life should be 24/7. I love what I do, but think there needs to be more balance. It’s not very balanced,

so there were things that I didn't necessarily do or go to. Some things I did, but it was very hard for me. For instance, this coming Friday, a good friend of mine [is getting married out of town], but it is very hard for me, because the semester is just ending ,and I have things to wrap up, to say, "I'm doing this no technology week." I am not going to check email. I may go in and check email, but I'm only going to delete emails. I'm not going to open up an email from anybody; I don't care if you're God. I'm not going to open up an email. If you need an answer from me between the 15th and the 25th, the world's going to come to a halt.

Midlife women, almost by definition, often have extensive relationships and roles. This study's participants found it difficult to balance the professoriate with their relationships and roles of wife, mother, extended family member, and friend. If alone, participants experienced loneliness and missed having a familiar home base. With family, participants experienced relational challenges in leaving extended family and moving partners and children. Some participants felt guilty about the challenges the intense and time-extensive professoriate placed on children and husbands. In addition to these impacted relationships, participants found they endlessly explained the misunderstood professoriate to non-faculty family and friends.

Endless Explaining of the Professoriate to Non-Academics

Seven participants felt challenged to explain the professoriate to non-faculty family members, friends, and clients, who incorrectly assumed they understand a professor's unique position requirements and demands. As Gail described, "Some

people will think they understand what you do or, at least, they really believe that they understand, and they really don't." Christine recommended warning students, especially women, to talk to their spouses and significant others about the professoriate and, like Anna earlier, cited frequent divorce:

I tell my doctoral students that [pursuing the professoriate] will be, might be a problem. They need to be aware that people outside of academia don't understand what you do. I encourage them to talk a lot with their partners, spouses because, statistically, there's a lot of divorce. Especially when it's the woman who gets a doctorate and the husband is doing whatever. Because there are certain supports that you need from a partner to do this job, and when you don't get them, it's hard. The assumptions that they have about what you do is different if you haven't really talked a lot and made them understand, so I actually do talk to my students about that.

Explaining the professoriate's publishing expectation is especially problematic. Although Anna's husband is supportive, she still finds herself explaining the professoriate, especially publishing, which she described as "a new thing for *everybody* to get used to." Similarly, Debra summarized, "so much of the day-to-day life of a professor is so alien to anyone else." Citing her husband's nonacademic background, Debra highlighted, "The tenure process and productivity aren't really well articulated. That's frustrating for him because it doesn't compute." Specific to writing, she added, "The kinds of expectations placed on me in terms of writing, and the kind of timeframe that takes, is difficult for folks who don't write on a regular basis."

Debra found herself differentiating business and academic career trajectories and trying to explain the professoriate's unique career development:

My husband thinks I should be the president of the university by now. . . . His career trajectory is always about more and more and more responsibility, more and more management and upper-management and CEO. He's been a vice president; this is how he thinks. Helping him to understand what career development and progress is and success is, is really different, is totally defined differently from really every angle. It's been kind of interesting in our relationship.

Christine concluded her extended family better understood her prior higher education administrator position. In contrast, the professoriate "is impossible to explain" and the resulting lack of understanding "sometimes causes problems and tensions":

As far as my larger family relationships, I think they could understand the administrative stuff better than the faculty stuff. One, they think I should make a lot of money and I don't. Whenever anybody needs anything, they think I should be able to pay for it, because they think I'm a professor, so I should make tons of money. It doesn't work that way. . . . They just don't understand the life of an academic and it's really difficult.

In addition to generally explaining the professoriate, Barbara concluded adult education is an especially challenging field to explain:

Pick a field that defies explanation! It'd be way easier to be teaching French. Because people can say, "Well, what do you teach?" You can say, "I teach adult

and higher ed.” “Yeah, but what do you teach?” “No, I teach in a program called adult and higher ed.” “Yeah, but what do you teach?”

People have a general understanding of teaching French but are less familiar with adult education.

Participants felt challenged to endlessly explain the professoriate to non-academic family and friends. Embedded in many professoriate explanations, participants attempted to justify their midlife career changes and explain their new identities or roles, often while simultaneously constructing such identities and learning such roles. Participants sought understanding and support during career transition, but often felt misunderstood, especially related to the writing and publishing demands they constantly faced. Educating others about the unfamiliar field of adult education further compounded the complexity of endlessly explaining the professoriate. In addition to the discussed professional and personal career transition challenges, women midlife career changers experienced professional and personal supports during career transition to the professoriate.

Professional Career Transition Supports

Similar to career transition challenges, participant articulated numerous and varied supports related to midlife career transition to the professoriate. Using participant voices, this section describes the major professional career transition supports: advisors and mentors as well as colleagues and peers (see Figure 10).

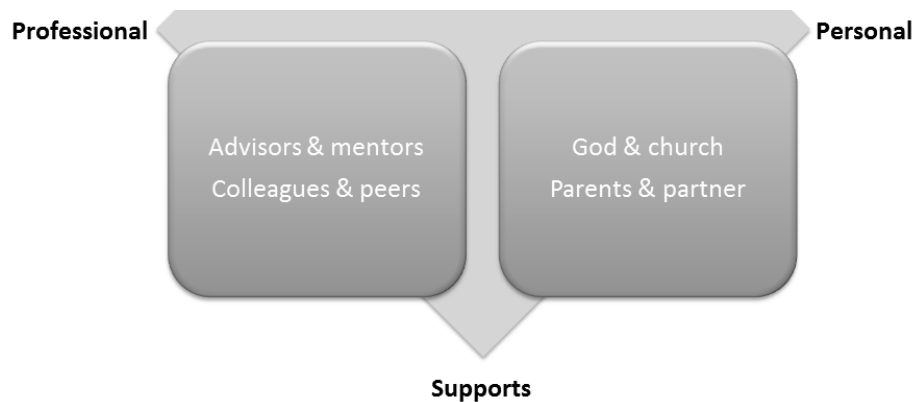


Figure 10. Supports during midlife women's career transition to the professoriate

Advisors and Mentors

Most participants first named their doctoral advisor or chair, hereafter collectively referred to as advisor, as a professional support during midlife career transition to the professoriate. For example, Frances attributed her “transition from doctoral student to assistant professor” to her advisor. Considered a significant professional support, advisors created opportunities for participants to teach and research. For example, Barbara's advisor provided “lots of affirmation” along the way and, since adult education presents few undergraduate teaching opportunities, invited her to co-teach graduate courses:

[My advisor] gave me the opportunity to co-teach. . . . The way our program was structured, like most adult ed programs, there's no Adult Ed 101; there's no undergrad class to teach. . . . If you're doing a French Ph.D., you can teach French 101, so you come out with a lot of experience. Several people extended

themselves to give me at least something to write on my CV that looked like teaching.

Similarly, Hannah's adviser created opportunities for her to research, including writing and publishing, and the relationship evolved into friendship:

Before I knew it, I was working on a major research project, which was going to be a book. I didn't realize, immediately, I was going to be coauthor of the book. You know, I thought maybe a small glowing paragraph [laughter]. But as I got to know [my advisor] better, it became clear to me that I would be the coauthor of the book. That was thrilling; it was thrilling to do research with such a good scholar and teacher. We very quickly became friends; it was just a wonderful relationship from the very beginning.

Mentors encouraged participants by providing positive messages and recognizing potential contributions to the field. For example, Anna's advisor replaced negative messages with positive ones:

I had to have discouraging messages replaced with encouraging messages. I had really good mentors . . . that encouraged, that said, "You have something to contribute. The field needs this. This is important. You have something to contribute that is important." For me, if I can see places where I can positively contribute, then that's an area where I feel that's something I can do. I love to teach, so that part. I've been a practitioner for so long, and that's what they're looking for, not just read this book.

However, not all participants experienced supportive advisers. For example, Elizabeth's advisor was a young, busy, less experienced professor:

My advisor was an assistant professor going for associate professor, so she was all there for herself. I always felt my career journey was very lonely. . . . The last two years, when I went to conferences, [my advisor] would not even respond. She was my second author. I was panicking, crying the whole night. I [told the conference coordinators] a little white lie, that my computer had a technical problem. "Can you give me an extension for the conference?" I worked all night long to write the paper and she didn't even [review it]; she never had time. We scheduled a meeting to talk about my paper. She said, "[Elizabeth], I'm sorry; I didn't read." At that time, I didn't know why she didn't read. What makes you so busy? Now, I do understand.

Elizabeth's lack of advisor support was unique to her as most participants described their advisors as supportive.

Some advisors extended support beyond graduate school, becoming faculty mentors to participants as new professors at new institutions. For example, Christine continued to reach out to a senior committee member who, though not technically the chair, acted as an advisor:

Well, I had [my senior committee member] on speed dial. [laughter] I still have [her] on speed dial. She was very supportive. I would call her and talk through all kinds of things from the health issue . . . and, of course, work issues and things that would come up and applying for new jobs and just everything. She

was an incredible support, just there, a listening ear. Her advice is always sound; I knew, if I did what [she] told me, I'd be okay.

Similar to graduate school advisors providing initial research and teaching opportunities, faculty mentors helped participants develop as researchers and teachers. For example, Debra benefitted from an unofficial mentor, from outside the adult education field, at her first institution:

Professionally, I have had the benefit of extremely strong mentors. None that have been assigned. At [my first institution], I had a very, very strong mentor. Unfortunately, not in my field because there was no one else in my field . . . no senior faculty. The woman, who was my mentor, unofficially, in every way, [was] a really great mentor, an excellent researcher and teacher. She did wonderful things, [had] wonderful ways in helping me understand research in a fashion that would allow me to be very productive. That was useful, super useful.

As a subsequent institution's practice, Debra chose a formal mentor in the adult education field who supported her research by assisting in manuscript submission to a leading professional journal:

She has been a spectacular mentor, [one] that I've never had in my own field, which has made a tremendous, tremendous difference. She helped mentor me with my first [leading research journal] article, getting it ready. I was intimidated by it, putting something into [the field's leading research journal]. She was fantastic in helping me out with that.

Debra went as far as to say, “Mentors have been absolutely *essential* in the process.” In her prior careers, she felt “self-sufficient” and knew what to do “inherently and intuitively.” However, in the professoriate, mentorship was “massive” for her: “I don’t consider myself fully naïve, but kind of naïve. . . . I just *assumed* I knew how it worked. I *didn’t* know how it all works in academia.”

After experiencing effective mentoring relationships in prior business careers, Frances recalled searching for and finally finding a faculty mentor who acted as writing coach:

My biggest support was someone who is [who is a former dean] and adjunct faculty. He became my writing coach, my writing mentor for five years. He was the first person; I gave him a manuscript to read, and he gave me a D- for organization. Then he told me how I could fix it. He told me to literally cut it up into sentences and sort the sentences. It was the most brilliant thing I’ve ever done. If you look at my dissertation and look at my [later book] chapter . . . you can see the before and after. That was five years of focusing on my writing.

Because I love writing, and anything I love doing, I want to be really good. However, Frances expected and missed what she referred to as a *corporate mentor*, “someone who is protecting me and has my back.”

One participant who is a woman of color sought mentors from the same race, citing numerous adult education professors as supports during her midlife career transition to the professoriate. For example, she formally asked a leader in the adult education field, “who we lost a few years ago, to be my mentor. We would meet at

conferences and have our one-on-one time. I would ask her questions. She was just always willing to provide any insights she could.” I sensed this participant deeply valued and missed her mentor and the support.

Advisor and mentor relationships, especially dissertation chair, were critically important to all participants, but such relationships varied in support level. As doctoral students and new faculty, most participants had advisors and mentors who provided emotional and practical support, including encouragement, affirmation, and opportunities to teach, research, write, and publish. However, not all participants experienced such support and even positive relationships were complex at times. In addition to these professional career transition supports, participants experienced personal career transition supports.

Colleagues and Peers

All participants identified colleagues and peers as supports during their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. Such supportive relationships sometimes formed in graduate school. For example, Hannah found a supportive writing peer as a doctoral student:

[He] was working with [his chair] on a book. There I am working with [my chair] and writing a book with her, and both of these [books] were totally apart from our dissertations. I remember we would usually meet at my house, just to give his wife and daughter, not hone in on their, space. My house was pretty quiet. I remember at one point, we talked about it saying, “God, this is such a

privilege to be here and to be doing intellectual work all the time and to be rewarded for being smart.” That’s really unusual.

Gail observed her supportive doctoral student relationships became closer after graduate school, “because they were professors, and they would share information. Some of them were just starting out as professors, too, so we were able to share stories, share experiences, so that was really helpful.” With prior higher education career experience, she felt “very fortunate as it related to transitioning into the professoriate, having an understanding of what needed to be done and doing what needed to be done.” Gail especially acknowledged two higher education colleagues, on the same floor, who came to the professoriate at the same time: “We had some long conversations, some late nights here sometimes, because we were all just trying to get tenure and promotion, which we were all able to do when we went up.” For Gail, “having colleagues in the field who get it certainly makes a difference. They can help you through the process, through the transition to the professoriate.”

Debra spoke eloquently of her deep friendships and relationships with peers: “Relationships with some colleagues are the best things that have ever happened to me. Like [Isabelle], who I used to describe to people as my partner, and they thought we were a lesbian couple, because I obviously adore her so much.” This type of peer support contrasted with Debra’s prior career experience as a higher education administrator:

The people work for you, so it’s hard to have that kind of a relationship, even if you want it. It was kind of a lone position, because in higher administration there

is nothing in common. I had nothing really in common with all. I had friends, lots of friends. We had . . . parties with lots of people. People I am still really fond of and keep up with on Facebook, but not relationships. So I have found it's not just a collegiality; I've bonded with the faculty I've worked with. In my entire adult life, I had not found those kinds of friendships.

Some participants found supportive colleagues at other universities. For example, Frances described such a colleague as supporting her existence: "Somebody else, a friend of mine who was at another university, and we used to call each other and go, 'this is what's going.' We would strategize together, and she was just an invaluable support." Similarly, Barbara met a woman "who gets it" at a conference, and they became supportive peers:

"We're kind of conference friends. There are certain people you see at different places. When I was looking for a professor job, she was finishing her Ph.D. and looking for a professor job, so we went through the job search together. There were a couple places we both applied, but it was never weird, because we had similar, parallel interests, but they don't really compete. There were places where she interviewed, and then they changed the job. I ended up interviewing there and so, "what was it you said about this?" There were a couple of places where we both had phone interviews. Through all that, she gets it.

Eventually, their conference and job searching support expanded to include writing and editing together.

Colleague and peer relationships, especially within the same program of study, were critically important to all participants. Several participant spoke of deep relationships formed in doctoral programs that grew as new faculty and continue to this day. Knowing they were not alone and sharing similar experiences with others supported the participants in their career transitions to the professoriate. In addition to these professional supports, participants identified personal career transition supports.

Personal Career Transition Supports

This section describes the major personal career transition supports (see Figure 10) using participant voices: God and church as well as parents and partner.

God and Church

Half the participants mentioned God or church as supports during their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. For example, Barbara invoked God as guide when deciding to leave a prior career and pursue a master's degree: "Is this the direction that God is leading me? Do I stay in this role, doing it a different way? Do I look for a different role or do I leave all together?" Later, she invoked God as strength when deciding to pursue a doctoral degree:

I wouldn't mind going on and doing some more school, but the money and the money. I realized my only objection to pursuing a Ph.D. was money. Well, that's not a good way to make life choices, generally, and with all the decisions, all the career decisions, that's always part of it. . . . To children of parents who were in the depression, money is always there, but I had trained myself that God

never leads through a there's-not-going-to-be-enough-money answer, so that's not a valid excuse.

When making big decisions, Barbara found journaling prayerful and helpful: “For me, journaling is like journal praying. Sometimes I’m just talking, and sometimes I’m just talking to God, and sometimes I’m fussing, and sometimes I’m whining.” God provided support throughout her midlife career transition to the professoriate.

Gail invoked God when making decisions throughout the career transition process to the professoriate. For example, when a mentor sent an email regarding an assistant professor position opportunity, Gail said to herself,

“Oh, okay, I can do this.” Because I have felt that whatever position God has placed me in, that He has allowed me to do well in it. So even stepping into the professoriate, I felt like I would be able to excel in it, and I have been able to do that.

Reflecting on that first faculty position, Gail acknowledged her good fortune resulting from “God watching over me and just open[ing] up this door for me.” Furthermore, throughout the professoriate, Gail believed:

I just feel that whatever God has placed me in, He’s placed me there for a reason. I just feel He is going to give me the tools and resources I am going to need to be successful in that position. That has indeed happened over the years.

Although not specifically mentioning God, Hannah found support in a church community. A student introduced Hannah, who had relocated for a tenure-track position, to a church community that remained supportive throughout the professoriate:

I joined [a church] fairly early on, knowing actually that one of my students, to this day, she's so proud that she brought me into the church. I was grateful. She invited me to come and I was grateful for the invitation because I'm an introvert, so it's hard for me to walk into a room of strangers. It's really hard for me to do that; I don't like it. I have tremendous difficulty doing it, but if I feel strongly that I have to do it. [My student] met me and introduced me around to lots of people. I realized I knew a good number of them already because of contacts I'd made across campus. I worked at becoming part of that church community. I just kept going and developing that sense of connection, strongly. That became, and continues to be, an enormous source of support in this community, absolutely, absolutely.

In contrast, Christine specifically mentioned being an agnostic, resulting from her educational experiences while pursuing a bachelor's degree as an adult:

I was very religious. My family is very religious. I grew up extremely in this fundamentalist mindset, which I shed very quickly, as soon as I got to critical theory. No, I shed that when I had astronomy and geography at the same time. When I realized how long people had been here, and how old the earth was, and how tiny we were in the universe. I realized, basically, I became an agnostic because what I had been taught was not even within the realm of possibilities scientifically.

Although not specifically referencing spirituality, half the participants mentioned God or church as supports. For some, God was a support, guiding them when making

important decisions throughout their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. For others, church provided a community of support, especially after required relocations to new towns. In addition, all participants valued family support, especially from parents and partner.

Parents and Partner

All participants valued family support during their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. Specifically, several participants recognized parents and partner, or spouse, as supports. For example, Barbara felt unconditionally supported by her parents throughout life. When she pursued the professoriate, her father had passed, but her mother remained her biggest fan: “My mom is 100% supportive. If you read my dissertation, it’s dedicated to [my parents], because they gave me the freedom to do things they didn’t understand and that started early [in my life].” She later added:

My mom, even though she didn’t understand it, [was] crazy supportive. She read my whole master’s thesis. I think she, maybe, read the first 10 pages of my dissertation. About the time I started to explain phenomenology, she was like, “Yeah, no.” [laughter] She understood the dedication.

Similarly, Gail’s parents supported her even though they didn’t necessarily understand her midlife career transition to the professoriate. When she received her tenure-track position opportunity, her parents were very pleased:

My parents were real excited when I got the email asking me to come back home. . . . They were happy I was coming home, particularly my dad. He

[jokingly] said, that if I didn't get the position, he was going to blow this place up. [laughter] I didn't know he had a violent side.

Although Elizabeth's parents are across the world, she felt her parents' constant support throughout life and recognized they prepared her for who she is today:

I'm lucky that way. My parents, although they are so far away, my parents prepared me so well in life. I'm really proud, my mom was the one, every step.

You have no idea. When I danced, my mom composed the music; she created all the choreography, everything. She came to do makeup for me. When I went to speech competitions, she corrected all my gestures. That's why it is hard for me to leave mom; sometimes, she felt hurt. I was her product every step of the way.

I think she prepared me very well, so I could be on my own. No one imagined I would be the one to leave home, because I was that close to mom. Even I say, "Why you?" She gave me all that and my dad gave me my character.

Debra's local parents and in-laws provided practical support during her career transition to the professoriate: "I have family around. My parents live close. They took care of the kids throughout all this timeframe, when they needed it, and still pickup my daughter twice a week, my father-in-law and my mother-in-law as well. Very, very strong support, support from family."

In contrast, Anna missed such parental support after her required relocation for her first tenure-track position. Furthermore, her parents worried about the inherent lack of job insecurity in the tenure and promotion process:

I just don't know that [my parents] really saw the usefulness of this. They want me to be safe and have a good job, and this is not it for them. This is not it, that you could be fired because you didn't make tenure. That's not secure for them; they don't like this. They want to come, pack up the truck, and take me back home. That would be their best message.

In addition, Anna noted a cultural difference between her parents and some international colleagues:

My mother would hate to hear this. I have colleagues here who are international faculty, and their parents come from overseas to help them, to sit with their kids and do all that. I don't have that. I won't have it. I won't have it. They, my parents, are just not doing that. I had this expectation, and they're not. So, we have to come up with another [approach]. My family, they're [supportive]; my extended family is not. I mean, they will send things; they will be happy for me, but I don't really sense that's there a lot of support. It's almost resentment.

In addition to parental support, several participants recognized partner support. All partnered participants valued their husband's support, but experienced relationship challenges during midlife career transition to the professoriate. For example, Anna acknowledged her husband's consistent support, including sacrificing his career to support her career, and frequent divorce among assistant professors:

My husband has always been 100% supportive. He quit his job to take care of the baby, so I could finish my work. I don't know too many people, in this society, who have that, because there are people who have their hard drives

erased by their husbands. . . . I don't think you can do this unless you have a partner who is supportive or you get divorced.

Her tenure-track faculty position required the family to make a challenging relocation, "the worst move ever," but they made it together: "I told my husband, I feel like we just held hands and there was this, it looked like, a safe pool of water, and we were on the cliff, all holding hands, and jumped."

Christine described her supportive husband as a constant encourager and concluded, "If he were somebody different, I don't think I would be doing it [pursuing the professoriate]. There is no way." In many ways, he sacrificed his own career to support her "ambition to be tenure-track," including multiple relocations, and "had to put his ambitions on the back burner." She recognized "that took a lot of ego swallowing to do that in our culture." Furthermore, Christine, who grew up working class, felt different from her colleagues with different class and life experiences. However, at the end of the day, her husband is the "one person who understands":

He also grew up working class, and worked in the mines and those kinds of things. I don't even know how someone like me, with such a different background than my colleagues. I couldn't marry somebody who grew up upper or middle class. I don't think I could take it. I think I'd have a breakdown, because you would need somebody to understand.

Last, even though Debra's husband and children do not understand the professoriate, they provided support and love: "[My husband] is extremely supportive of

me in my profession, in my goals. My kids are. They don't know what I teach. They still don't understand what I do, but they love me.”

Although women midlife career changers to the professoriate identified impacted relationships as a career transition challenge, such relationships provided career transition support. Despite endlessly explaining the professoriate to parents and partners who did not understand their daughters and wives' career transitions, parents and partners provided significant emotional and practical support. Although participants mentioned colleagues and peers, few participants mentioned friends as supports during the career transition process. Perhaps participants left friends due to required relocations or felt non-faculty friends did not understand higher education and new professorial roles. In addition to the discussed career transitions challenges and supports, participants identified strategies to manage midlife career transition to the professoriate.

Career Transition Strategies

Similar to career transition challenges and supports, participants articulated numerous and varied strategies to manage midlife career transition to the professoriate. This section describes the major career transition strategies using participant voices as applicable (see Figure 11): (a) apply prior career experience (b) create community, and (c) practice productivity.

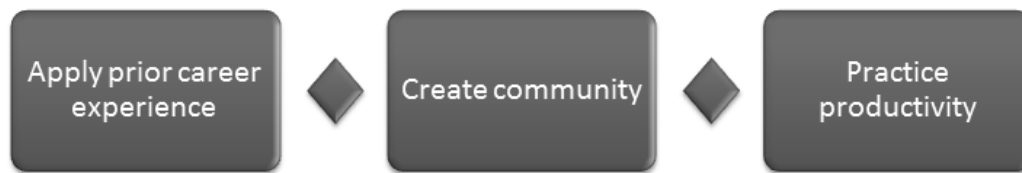


Figure 11. Strategies used by midlife women to manage career transition to the professoriate

Apply Prior Career Experience

All participants recognized prior career experience positively influenced their career transitions to the professoriate. Specifically, participants applied such prior career experience to their teaching and working with students and colleagues, and, if applicable, applied prior higher education experience to assist themselves and others.

For example, Hannah articulated how she applied prior teaching and counseling experience in a new context and developed her professorial teaching and advising:

I've done lots of different things. I think the major professions I've been part of involved teaching and counseling. . . . Maybe those are the two big ones. Those just fold in, so neatly into the professoriate. I mean there are changes obviously. The context is very different. The teaching demands are way more explicit and intense. The counseling is advising, which certainly involves doing what you need to do for the student to help them make it through the program. But it's way more than that. There's real continuity there, for me, and sort of a logical progression because of that. It's like taking the same interests and abilities that I have and developing them in different contexts.

Ultimately, Hannah used the metaphor of weaving to illustrate the application and development of prior career experiences in a new context:

It's the same thread. It's like you're continuing to weave the same fabric.

There's another way of saying it in a different context. The threads, I'm not a weaver, so I'm going to get lost on this metaphor real fast. I guess it's the warp, the vertical threads that are strung tightly on the loom; those remain the same. I guess the weft, going back and forth, is the different contexts, those threads change. I see continuity and change, continuity and development.

Several participants used prior career experience to add teaching value in the classroom. For example, in addition to “shaping” her research agenda, Elizabeth’s prior international career experiences added authentic practice to her teaching: “I’m always pulling my experiences. My students always say, ‘Wow, I’ve never learned so much.’ I think my international perspective broadens students’ perspectives, instead of listening to Americans when we are talking about international.” Similarly, Anna’s wide range of work experience and contexts enables her to provide students with theory-to-practice examples and connections: “Even if I’m not in their field, I can figure out ways to connect to some kind of contextual situation they may be dealing with or that I can make links with content.” Ironically, Barbara enhances her teaching by drawing examples from prior jobs and careers she did not necessarily value at the time.

In addition to teaching, participants applied prior career experience working with diverse people to higher education. For example, Debra described how prior career experience evolved over time and helped her learn to work with people:

I was in management positions, meaning that I oversaw the work of other people, as a young woman. I got a little bit older and I learned how to be very organized. I learned how to . . . talk with people in ways that were hopefully going to be productive, even when they might offer a view for improvement. . . . Over time, I learned to work with people. . . . Moving into a management role, in a few different areas, I think helped me to put some of those relational skills into more complex situations. From that, moving into academia, where there is all sorts of folks who are in academia from a wide variety of, not only academic and class and racial and gender, backgrounds, but also from academic standpoints, different experiences academically and different expectations. Being able to work with a lot of different people in those realms, I definitely would say, I can connect back to previous career experiences.

Similarly, prior career experience prepared Frances to read a budget and work with a wide variety of people on campus:

It's prepared me because I can read a budget. I'm not afraid; I know how to work with people up and down and across the university. I was a manager. . . . In that way, it has prepared me to do this. . . . My prior life coming into the professoriate has helped me to operate in multi-disciplinary arenas.

Last, if applicable, participants applied prior higher education experience to assist themselves and others. For example, Anna described prior higher education experience as "huge," specifically her understanding of academic cultures and subcultures, which she used to help herself and a colleague:

I know, at least, about academic culture, and I worked in higher education. That helped me, and it also helped me being from somewhere else. Because my poor other colleague who is here, sort of got pushed into being there from 8:00 to 5:00. “You’re a faculty member,” I said. I came here and I told them, these are my office hours. I cannot write if I’m sitting in this office, and you want me to. I had an understanding of other ways of doing things. Because I had to work across campus and build alliances and network (in my prior career], I understood what I needed to have done to protect me when I came here. I have a mentor who is assigned to me but I also meet with people for coffee, and I made sure I did those connectors.

Christine candidly spoke of higher education’s political environment, which does not always prioritize and serve students. She philosophically stated, “I think that was a good lesson to learn before I went into the professoriate.” Her prior higher education administrative experience exposed her to politics and hierarchies, helping her understand how things are interconnected and processes to get things done. She recognized politics differs at universities, but politics is complicated everywhere. In addition, a faculty colleague recognized Christine’s prior career experience as helpful in creating a new program:

She relied on my knowledge of universities, because she had never worked in that kind of setting. . . . She really relied on my knowledge of that a lot, [so] she would tell me. To me, I had just been doing it a long time, so I didn’t realize.

She would say to me all the time, “I’m so glad you know about these things because it helps.”

Christine’s application of prior career experience contributed to a mutually supportive relationship with her colleague.

Participants strove to apply prior career experience in their new higher education contexts. Such experience influenced their research, writing, and service. For example, prior career knowledge, skills, and interests influenced research agendas, brought real world practice to classroom theory, and influenced service assignments and activities. Despite such striving, participants often struggled in how to best transfer such prior career experience to the professoriate. In some cases, advisors, mentors, or colleagues helped guide such transfer. Overall, however, participants would have appreciated greater recognition of their prior career skills and benefited from help in *how* to transfer such skills to the higher education context. In addition to applying prior career experience, all participants created community.

Create Community

All participants took deliberate action to create community during their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. Although different in form, each community provided personal and professional support during graduate school or the professoriate. For example, in graduate school, participants created community with other students, especially the department or program’s full-time students with assistantships, shared similar experiences, and provided support. However, as faculty, participants generally

did not find support in their departments or programs, necessitating they look elsewhere to create community.

According to Hannah, “you do everything to create a world that is habitable in a new place.” For example, not finding the support she needed as faculty within her department, Hannah looked outside and found support by joining an on-campus women’s faculty organization: “I recognized very quickly that I had to create for myself what would be a life-giving environment, because it didn’t exist on its own. So meeting these other women was one way I was doing that.” Similarly, Elizabeth felt sustained by such an organization, telling her husband, “I hope you understand, I hold onto [the women faculty’s organization], not because I like extra work, because that’s where I feel, ‘Wow, this is the team.’” As further example, Anna strategically and purposefully met people for coffee to connect and create community with colleagues:

People would say, “This is a waste of time. You should be writing.” It is *not* a waste of time. That is the way the world works, and it has benefited me.

Because I understood that you have to have this, and people have to know who you are.

Similarly, Gail created community through networking, which assisted her in the tenure and promotion process:

Just getting to know people, because it was brought to my attention that these individuals had to write letters of support on your behalf. I just got to know people, not necessarily brown-nosing or anything; I don’t do that well, just

genuinely getting to know people in the field. That worked out very well, too, because, when I went up for tenure . . . nine [people] ended-up writing letters.

Frances was most deliberate in creating community in various contexts. For example, she “created her own little community of practice” as a new professor, referring to this strategy as “another thing I do”:

There were four people who came, who started at the same time I did. . . . We literally created a community of practice. When it got time for us for our fourth year dossier, we met. We met and exchanged all the information we knew and could gather. We even devised a tab system, that I’m surprised the university doesn’t use.

This was not a new strategy for Frances, who also created a community of practice in graduate school: Four doctoral students, “four people seems to be the magic number,” at different stages, met almost every Monday morning for breakfast. Recently, Frances created a community of practice with three students:

Even here, because of one of my doctoral classes, I’ve created a community of practice. It’s three doctoral students who are in various stages, one just defended his prospectus, a former doctoral student of mine, and myself. We have an article that is revise and resubmit with [a professional journal]. We have a second article that is going to go out this summer, all based on [this community of practice].

Frances acknowledged this community will evolve over time as student members graduate and possibility relocate but, for now, the members find this strategic community supportive and productive.

All participants took purposeful actions to create community in order to manage the midlife career transition process to the professoriate. By strategically creating community, they sought to cope with career transition challenges and leverage career transition supports. Created communities provided emotional and practical support to participants. For example, they found comfort in realizing or confirming they were not alone in their experiences. Furthermore, the created communities understood and supported several career transition challenges, such as the loneliness and newness of required relocations, the stress of tenure and promotion and impacted relationships, the tedium of endlessly explaining and defending the professoriate, and the political pressures of higher education. Beyond such emotional support, created communities also offered practical solutions such as sharing information, brainstorming solutions, and researching, writing, and publishing activities. Last, participants strategically took action to practice productivity in order to manage midlife career transition to the professoriate.

Practice Productivity

All participants shared numerous strategies to practice productivity. Common strategies primarily focused on tenure and promotion, specifically productive researching, writing, and publishing. For example, to prepare for tenure and promotion, Frances strategically studied the formal *and* informal requirements:

Getting to know the informal . . . network. There are the formal requirements for tenure, for what you should be doing in the classroom, whatever, and then there are the informal things. My strategy was [to find] out everything I possibly could, as soon as I could. . . . In the professoriate, well actually any place, it's knowing who has the power and understanding the power of the peer review committee. The composition changes every year, so knowing who was on the committee as you were going up and being prepared. Even if a colleague of mine is coming up for tenure, I want to make sure there is somebody on the committee . . . who understands adult education, [so] they have an advocate at the table.

In addition to her benefit, Frances wanted to understand the formal and informal requirements to benefit her colleagues.

Specific to research, Debra advised midlife career changers to the professoriate prioritize research and hone a narrow focus:

If they want to go to a research university, the advice is standard; you have to make publishing a priority. Narrow the research agenda, so they get known for one thing, which is something I didn't do because I have a lot of broad interests. I wish I had. Except I enjoyed what I had, what was different. Career-wise, it's best to find a passion and stay just on that and don't get distracted by other projects that seem like they might be interesting. Until you make tenure, then you can do anything, anything you want.

For Elizabeth, professoriate failure was not an option. Therefore, she worked hard and focused on her top strategy—publishing—to make her known to the field:

What is my strategy in my career? I happen to be very ambitious. I never failed in my life. Every competition I went to, I never walked out without winning awards. I am not good at dealing with failure. That is my major issue. I'm not good. I said, "Okay, I want to be successful here." The only way is [to], I want to only, publish in [the field's top] journals, so people can see my name over and over again. I don't care about publishing in other . . . journals. I want to see them, remind them of my name every year, a couple times.

Debra advised, "If you don't like to do research, don't go into the professoriate, unless your focus is on a teaching institution." She consistently stressed research's importance in the tenure process: "If you're interested in the tenure-track trajectory, you'd better love, love research. It better not be on the second burner. It better be on the front burner." However, she vacillated between research and teaching as top priority:

I've put my research first, but I refuse to have my teaching suffer. What actually suffers is a balance of time, personal time versus professional. Teaching and research have to be extremely important if you're going to be successful in this work. So if it comes down to responding to email, which I'm an addict of, or doing something. Prioritization, I guess, is the strategy. You have to prioritize, probably first teaching, what is going on in the classroom, because, honestly, if you're not taking care of your students and what they're learning, then you really

don't have a job, but very, very closely after that is the writing and the research that needs to be done.

Gail practiced productivity in course scheduling, reducing preparation and classroom time to create more writing time:

Because we offered classes year round, [another colleague and I] would alternate teaching in the summertime. She would teach one summer, and then I would teach one summer, so we could focus on our writing. That worked really, really well. . . . Another strategy my colleagues and I had was teaching the same courses, so not having a new course prep every single semester.

Furthermore, after scheduling courses on her calendar, she blocked writing time throughout the week.

In addition, several participants wrote collaboratively as a strategy. For example, Anna took the lead with a colleague to boost their writing and publishing through collaborative co-authoring. Specifically, she met with another assistant professor and laid out a writing and publishing plan:

You know what? This is what I think our plan should be. [laughter] We need to have [a] strategy, right? You need to have, let's say, 10 publications by the time you're [up for promotion and tenure], 10 peer reviewed journal articles and some other stuff, conference proceedings and conference presentations and book reviews and all that. We're not counting that. We should have three soloed, at least three soloed, and one original study. . . . We conceptualize these every year

and we do two together each spring. You're first author on one and I'm first author on the other one. . . . That's just what we're doing do.

Anna admitted hitting a required number of publications felt like a production process and stressed maintaining a line of inquiry and using soloed pieces for the things you really care about. She reflected on her strategic and productive approach, "I feel better about it, when I can help other people, and we can help each other."

Gail encouraged collaboration with colleagues in other fields, citing healthcare as an example: "Don't just lock yourself into adult education, certainly think of other arenas that you could work in." As an example, in one study and associated journal article, an out-of-field colleague "focused on the nursing; I focused on the education, so there are certainly different ways that you can collaborate with colleagues. . . . Don't just lock yourself into adult education. Certainly think of other arenas." Frances used a similar strategy for grant productivity and funding:

I don't like being on grants. That's just my own personal [opinion]. You can't say that, that's the thing that adult educators don't understand. For instance, I'm on a grant for [healthcare] education. Now the person who is the principal investigator is a fabulous adult educator, but she doesn't have the credentials. She's a nurse. She doesn't have the credentials. My credentials bump the grant up.

As a final strategy, several participants shared, "just say, no" or "learn to say, no." Although difficult, participants provided examples of saying no to department heads, programs chairs, and students, primarily to protect research and writing time. For

example, Frances said no to chairing dissertation committees: “I would be a reader on a dissertation committee, but until I actually got [tenure], I did not agree to . . . chair a dissertation.” Similarly, Elizabeth starting saying no to students:

I have several students coming to me, to serve on committees. One of my favorite students, I was her advisor, I said, “No, I am not serving.” This student was shocked, and said, “Wow, I am very surprised you will not even serve on my committee as member.” I said, “Because I already have more than I can handle. I am not giving them enough attention. If I had started with you, I wouldn’t say no.”

Although difficult, participants found saying no a productive strategy to protect their research, writing, and publishing time.

Participants clearly understood research and publishing are top priorities for tenured and tenure-track faculty positions. However, several felt conflicted about devoting time to research at the expense of teaching. They purposefully sought to practice productivity by minimizing, as much as possible, conflicting demands and focusing on what it takes to make tenure and promotion. Therefore, practicing productivity usually related to increasing the time devoted and activities related to research, writing, and publishing. In addition to advancing in the tenure and promotion process, participants hoped practicing productivity would free up time, and alleviate related guilt, to spend with family and friends, who often did not understand the process’s demands. All participants identified strategies to manage midlife career

transition to the professoriate, specifically apply prior career experience, create community, and practice productivity.

Summary

This chapter began with participant descriptions at the time of the study and the beginning and endings of their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. The chapter continued with the career transition process, professional and personal challenges, professional and personal supports, and strategies to manage midlife career transition to the professoriate. In the next chapter, I discuss these findings using the literature.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This last chapter comprises a summary of the study, discussion of the findings using the literature, implications for theory, policy, and practice, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Record-breaking undergraduate and graduate enrollments in higher education institutions (Aud et al., 2013) are influencing increasing numbers of faculty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b), reflecting changing faculty characteristics and altering higher education's landscape. Two such changes include increasing numbers of new faculty with prior careers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004) and women faculty (Aud et al., 2013; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b). However, traditional adult development and career development theories may not account for the intersection of these two dimensions in examining faculty careers in higher education.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate. Three research questions guided the study:

- What is the career transition process of women midlife career changers to the professoriate?

- What challenges and supports do midlife women experience during career transition to the professoriate?
- What strategies do midlife women use to manage career transition to the professoriate?

Three bodies of literature situated the study: adult development, career development, and expert to novice career transitions. Schlossberg's adult transition model (Anderson et al., 2012) and Hansen's (1997; 2011) integrative life planning (ILP) model formed the conceptual framework and guided the study.

Although adults and their transitions may differ, Schlossberg's adult transition model provided a framework to analyze and understand adult transitions: approaching transitions, potential resources, and excluded from this study, a counseling process to strengthen such resources (Anderson et al., 2012). According to the authors, the model's first phase, *approaching transitions*, consists of transition identification, such as type, perspective, context, and impact, in addition to the process. The model's second phase, *potential resources during transition*, comprises four variables referred to as the 4 S's: situation, self, support, and strategies. Since this study investigated midlife career change, I used Schlossberg's adult transition model in conjunction with a contemporary career development model, specifically Hansen's (1997, 2011) ILP model.

According to Swanson and Holton III (2009), Hansen's ILP framework "draws upon psychology, sociology, economics, multiculturalism, and constructivism and takes a holistic approach by encouraging people to connect various aspects of life" (p. 106). As designed by Hansen (1997; 2011), *integrative* emphasizes body, mind, and spirit

integration, and *life planning* recognizes life's multiple and interrelated aspects and adults' responsibility to plan their career development. She organized ILP into six critical tasks for career development and decision-making: finding work that needs doing in changing global contexts; attending to our physical, mental, and emotional health; connecting family and work; valuing pluralism and inclusivity; exploring spirituality and life purpose; and managing personal transitions and organizational change. In contrast to traditional linear theories and models, this model's recursive tasks support career development throughout the life span. In addition to this conceptual framework, the research design guided the study.

To support the study's purpose and answer the research questions, this qualitative study used a transcendental phenomenological research design. As a methodology, phenomenology focuses on understanding (Creswell, 2013) and describing (Moustakas, 1994) the essence of a lived phenomenon. In addition, phenomenology's analysis unit supports studying multiple individuals who shared a common lived experience, in this case, women who experienced midlife career transition to the professoriate. To support research quality, Creswell (2013) recommended using at least two validation strategies; this study used four validation strategies: clarifying researcher bias, member checking, peer review or debriefing, and rich, thick description.

Eight participants provided perspectives about the essence of their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. Purposeful sampling comprised criterion, convenience, and snowball (Creswell, 2013). Inclusion criteria consisted of women, tenured or tenure-track faculty, in adult education or related fields, at four-year institutions, who

self-identified as career changers to the professoriate, while age 35 to 60 years. I used convenience sampling to identify potential participants using academic contacts and professional networks and snowball sampling to expand the pool by inviting potential participants to share study information with colleagues.

To prepare for data collection, I used Moustakas' (1994) Epoché process to investigate and bracket the essence of my experience as a woman midlife career changer who aspires to the professoriate. Phenomenological data collection typically consists of a long interview or multiple interviews. Therefore, I conducted, recorded, and transcribed two semi-structured interviews with each participant, using a protocol of open-ended questions to investigate the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

The data analysis process comprised phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). After participants had an opportunity to member check the transcriptions, I reviewed the data for understanding. Data analysis began with phenomenological reduction, comprised of bracketing the essence of my experience as the researcher using the Epoché process, horizontalization or unitizing the interview transcriptions into individual statements, delimiting to invariant horizons or meaning units by creating or assigning codes to significant statements, and clustering invariant constituents into categories or themes resulting in individual textural descriptions or *the what*. Data analysis continued with imaginative variation comprised of systematic varying of the structural meanings (the *how*) underlying the textural meaning through coding and clustering, recognizing the underlying themes accounting for the phenomenon's emergence, and searching for exemplifications using participant

voices, resulting in individual structural descriptions or the *how*. In the final data analysis step, I integrated the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a comprehensive statement of the essences of the phenomenon, resulting in the findings, 15 major categories or themes presented and discussed in the next section.

Discussion of the Findings

The data revealed findings related to women midlife career changers to the professoriate, specifically a career transition process (the *what*) and related challenges, supports, and strategies to manage the process (the *how*). This section summarizes then discusses these findings using the literature.

Summary of Findings

Participants had difficulty articulating a clear career transition process to the professoriate. Using terms like “connecting the dots,” they described their midlife career transitions as the culmination of prior life, education, and work experiences. Generally, however, they identified a career transition process influenced by midlife age with differing beginnings and endings and the following shared steps: (a) prior experience; (b) a doctoral program; (c) an interim higher education position for some; and ultimately, (d) tenure-track professor. Furthermore, participants described related career transition challenges, supports, and strategies to manage the process.

Although participants articulated numerous and varied challenges related to their midlife career transitions to the professoriate, the data indicated seven major challenges, which I initially grouped as professional or personal. Professional career transition challenges comprised (a) finding first tenure-track position, (b) tenure and promotion, (c)

expert to novice transition, and (d) prevalent politics. Personal career transition challenges comprised (a) required relocation, (b) impacted relationships, and (c) endless explaining of the professoriate to non-academics.

Similarly, participants described major relational career transition supports. Professional career transition supports comprised advisors and mentors as well as colleagues and peers. Personal career transition supports comprised God and church as well as parents and partner.

Last, participants described major career transition strategies to manage midlife career transition to the professoriate: (a) apply prior career experience, (b) create community, and (c) practice productivity. Organized to address the research questions, the next section discusses the findings.

Career Transition Process

Research question #1: What is the career transition process of women midlife career changers to the professoriate?

All participants had difficulty articulating a clear career transition process to the professoriate. Using terms like “connecting the dots” and “all the points along the way were inputs,” they described their midlife career transitions as the culmination of prior life, education, and work experiences. This finding illustrates Caffarella and Olson’s (1993) conclusion from a literature review that women’s development is unique and non-linear with diverse experiences. This finding also illustrates an expanded definition of *career development* with varied and unique experiences, such as Greenhaus et al.’s (2010) “ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each

of which is characterized by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks” (p. 12). As described by Sands and Richardson (1986), midlife women often reassess work and achievement and may pursue a new career. These findings suggest non-traditional and varied paths to the professoriate with generally shared steps.

Despite nonlinear paths to the professoriate, participants generally described experiences constructing a career transition process (see Figure 12): prior experience, including first adult education awareness; a doctoral program, including part- or full-time work; for some, an interim higher education position; and last, tenure-track professor, including the tenure and promotion process.

As discussed, this study used Hansen’s (1997; 2011) ILP model as the career development part of the conceptual framework. The participants’ career transition process aligned with four of Hansen’s six critical tasks, later discussed in challenges, supports, and strategies. In contrast, the process only partially aligned with the two remaining critical tasks. Specifically, the study did not align with critical task one, *finding work that needs doing in changing global contexts*. A few participants alluded to work that needs doing, for example, contributing to the field; however, participants did not discuss global contexts. In addition, the study only partially aligned with critical task five, *exploring spirituality and life purpose*. Participants did not use the term *spirituality*; but identified God and church as career transition supports, discussed later in this chapter. They also did not discuss life purpose. However, Mullins (2009) found midlife adults often change careers in search of greater meaning, and Crow et al. (1990)

found career changing graduate students to education gave up financial rewards for deeper personal satisfaction.

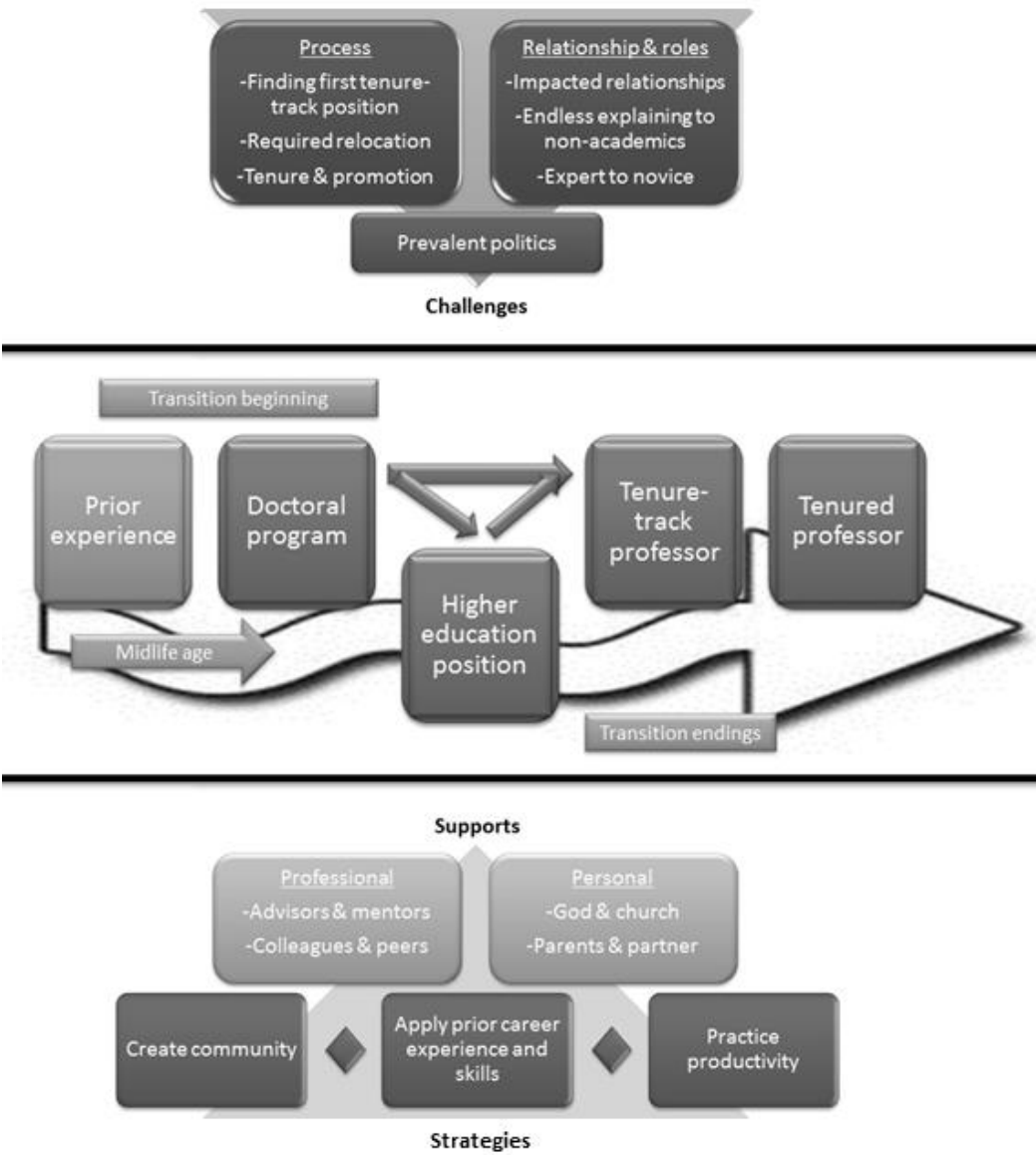


Figure 12. Women’s midlife career transition process to the professoriate

Based on higher education institutions' increasing hiring of career changers to the professoriate, Crane et al. (2009) raised the question, "What do we need to consider regarding non-traditional paths to the professoriate (p. 24)?" This study's participants identified three unique aspects of their midlife career transition process to the professoriate: (a) midlife age, (b) differing beginnings and end, and (c) varied prior experience.

First, half the participants perceived age influenced their midlife career transitions to the professoriate. For example, using terms like "late to the game" and being older as "a strike against you," participants described experiences of being older as doctoral students and faculty. More specifically, they expressed past and current concerns about their midlife age in relation to being hired as new faculty and advancing in the professoriate. Such career concerns are substantiated in the literature. According to Newman (1995), potential employers may resist hiring midlife career changers due to applicants' age, perceived lack of mobility, and new employee costs with limited remaining work years.

One participant specifically acknowledged age and associated work experience increased her credibility with students and colleagues. Although other participants did not connect their prior career experience specifically to age, they generally acknowledged such experience influenced their research agendas, enhanced their teaching, and, for some, provided skills for effective service. According to Bird (1992) and Newman (1995), midlife career changers offer employers higher stability, motivation, and productivity than younger workers and are equally willing to learn new

job skills. Similarly, Mayotte (2003) found career changers to teaching brought valuable experiences and skills, including demonstrated competence, proven responsibility, and career success.

Second, participants identified differing career transition beginnings and endings, beginning as early as before doctoral programs and as late as program end. Specifically, some participants entered doctoral programs interested in being a professor or became interested early in programs while others did not pursue the professoriate until almost completing or completing their doctoral programs. According to Neugarten and Datan (1973), social time underlies society's age norms, and being off-time affects self-identity and self-esteem as individuals compare cultural and societal time expectations to their own time. Thus, as participants pursued doctoral degrees and career transitions in their 30s, 40s, and 50s, they were off-time compared to traditional 20-something graduate students pursuing first careers. In addition to differing beginnings, participants experienced differing career transition endings, ranging from first tenure-track position to no ending. For participants with ended transitions, such endings comprised first or second tenure-track assistant professor or tenured associate professor positions. For one participant, the career transition to the professoriate continued.

This finding of differing transition beginnings and endings complements Schlossberg's adult transition model, which emphasizes differing transition durations (Anderson et al., 2012). Furthermore, while moving in and moving out of transitions, adults experience a variety of challenges and tasks. According to the authors, adults deal with how to balance transition activities with other responsibilities, face challenges, and

find support during the transition journey. In the latter, adults end transition activities as they move to new career activities. This finding suggests midlife women career changers experience differing transition beginnings and endings, face challenges, require supports, and use strategies at different times.

Third, participants brought varied prior education and work experience to their career transition process to the professoriate, as evidenced by diverse undergraduate and master's degrees and prior career roles and responsibilities. In addition, participants discovered the adult education field at different times and in different ways and contexts. These findings illustrate three of Brousseau et al.'s (1996) four multiple career concepts—linear, expert, spiral, and transitory—each depicting a different career experience pattern with varying direction, movement frequency, and motivations. Specifically, in their current tenured and tenure-track faculty careers, this study's participants illustrated the more traditional *expert* career concept (Brousseau et al., 1996), depicting less upward movement, with occupational devotion focused on knowledge and skill building, motivated by a desire for competence and stability.

In contrast to the shared expert career concept (Brousseau et al., 1996), participants' prior career experiences illustrated the most traditional *linear* and more contemporary *spiral* career concept. In prior careers, some participants followed the linear career concept, having experienced an upward job direction, over time, with increasing responsibility and authority, motivated by a desire for achievement and power. Others followed the spiral career concept with seven to ten-year movements across related jobs, specialties, or jobs, achieving competence before moving on,

motivated by creativity and personal growth. This finding suggests midlife women use multiple career concepts and may differ from traditional faculty, who use the expert career concept by joining the professoriate directly from undergraduate and graduate school.

Career Transition Challenges and Supports

Research question #2: What challenges and supports do midlife women experience during career transition to the professoriate?

During the career transition process, participants experienced challenges and supports or support systems. Originally, I clustered challenges and supports each into professional and personal attributes. Upon further reflection, however, the challenges more logically clustered into challenges related to the career transition process, relationships and roles, and prevalent politics. Specifically, participants experienced process-related challenges such as finding a first tenure-track position, required relocation, and tenure and promotion. They also experienced relationship- and role-related challenges such as impacted relationships, endless explaining of the professoriate to non-academics, and expert to novice transition. Overall, prevalent politics remained challenging throughout the career transition process. In addition to challenges, participants described relational career transitions supports; advisors and mentors provided professional supports, while God and church provided personal support. Therefore, this section discusses the findings in four categories or themes: (a) process-related challenges, (b) relationship- and role-related challenges, (c) relationship-related supports, and (d) prevalent politics as a challenge.

Process-related challenges. According to Newman (1995), midlife career changers face common transitions more acutely than younger counterparts and uniquely face loss of prior career identity and decreased income. In addition, potential employers may resist hiring midlife career changers due to applicants' age, perceived lack of mobility, and associated new employee costs with limited remaining years. More acute and unique career transition experiences, combined with hiring employer resistance, may create significant challenges for midlife women seeking to transition to the professoriate. This study found career transition process-related challenges (see Figure 12): (a) finding first-tenure track position, (b) required relocation, and (c) the tenure and promotion process. Furthermore, some participants perceived age influenced these process-related challenges.

First, while approaching the end of doctoral programs or upon earning a doctoral degree, all participants pursued the professoriate and most experienced difficulty finding first tenure-track positions. For example, some participants initially failed to find a tenure-track faculty position, eventually accepting clinical faculty or faculty development positions. Although initially successful, other participants described finding first tenure-track positions as risky, a marathon, and requiring assistance. Some participants perceived midlife age added a barrier to the job search and hiring process. These finding suggests women midlife career changers to the professoriate need to better prepare, and need help preparing, for first tenure-track positions and consider alternative positions.

Second, all participants eventually moved to new institutions for tenure-track faculty positions, requiring seven participants to relocate, six to new states. The resulting required relocations challenged participants logistically, relationally, and personally. Logistically and relationally, they bought and sold homes and managed complex moves often impacting immediate and extended family members. Personally, as “newcomers” in *every* situation, they felt challenged at home, in a new job, on a new campus, navigating a new neighborhood, finding new doctors and service providers, and learning a new community. While these challenges are not unique to women midlife career changers to the professoriate, the likelihood and ramifications of required relocation and related challenges are greater for midlife career-changing faculty. For example, for 20-something new faculty, required relocation often means moving self, some boxes, and limited furniture to a new apartment. However, for 30-, 40-, and 50-something new faculty, required relocation often means selling and buying houses; separating from extended family, possibly including children, grandchildren, and aging parents; leaving established personal and professional networks; and moving a spouse or partners, children, and accumulated household. This finding suggests women midlife career changers to the professoriate will likely experience relocation challenges more acutely and require supports and strategies to manage such challenges.

Last, the tenure and promotion process is unique to higher education, a process that evaluates a professor’s quantity and quality in research, teaching, and service. All participants referenced the tenure and promotion process *throughout* their interviews, including comparing the process to a marathon, jumping through hoops, and juggling

glass balls. As midlife women pursuing male-majority tenured faculty positions, some participants described the process as horrible, nasty, and institutional harassment. Despite increasing workforce diversity, Bierema (1998) found women's career development is contextual and includes continuing patriarchal segregation and discrimination. At the extreme, according to Dentith, Wright, and Coryell (2015), higher education's tenure and promotion process, unclear expectations, and subjective evaluations, contribute to potential bullying and uncivil cultures, which often result in the above-noted negative experiences. Due to the unclear process and uncertain outcomes, non-tenured professors consistently referenced *if* they make tenure.

Furthermore, although tenure and promotion rely heavily on faculty's research, teaching, and service, few participants mentioned teaching and service as challenges, instead referring to them as research barriers. Cress and Hart (2009) concluded women and men faculty pursue fundamentally different research, teaching, and service activities. Similarly, Park (2000) determined men faculty devote more time to research, and women devote more time to teaching and service: "A gendered division of labor exists within (as outside) the contemporary academy wherein research is implicitly deemed 'men's work' and is explicitly valued, whereas teaching and service are characterized as 'women's work' and explicitly devalued" (p. 286).

Despite such gendered division of labor in research, teaching, and service in higher education, the stakes are equally high for men and women faculty. As one participant observed, the tenure and promotion process has high stakes; if unsuccessful in earning tenure, faculty typically have one year to find a position at a new institution or

outside of higher education. This finding suggests women midlife career changers can benefit from institutional support to navigate the tenure and promotion process, making sure excessive teaching and service activities do not replace research activities. Research quantity and quality are the most important criteria in tenure and promotion considerations. In addition to these process-related challenges, participants identified relationship- and role-related challenges.

Relationship- and role-related challenges. Additional challenges often compounded the above noted process-related challenges. This study found three relationship- and role-related challenges (see Figure 12): (a) impacted relationships, (b) endless explaining of the professoriate to non-academics, and (c) expert to novice role transition.

This study's participants often discussed relationships and roles in separate, although related, ways. The literature, however, most often discusses relationships and roles together. For example, Caffarella and Olson (1993) identified a theme of relationships and roles as critical to women's self-identity. According to Ross-Gordon (1999), this theme illustrates women and men's differences by underscoring women's connection over separation in contrast to men's autonomy portrayed in traditional adult development theories. Irrespective of gender, Schlossberg's adult transition model recognizes potential impacts on relationships and roles in the transaction identification stage (Anderson et al., 2012). This study's participants experienced relationship and role tensions during their midlife career transitions to the professoriate.

First, during midlife career transition to the professoriate, all participants experienced the challenge of impacted relationships, including loneliness and difficulty balancing the professoriate with roles of wife or partner, mother, grandmother, extended family member, and friend. Specifically, half the participants experienced loneliness during career transition, resulting from lack of relationships after relocation. In addition, partnered participants experienced familial relationship challenges during career transition, including marital pressures and concerns, partners sacrificing their careers, and guilt about consuming faculty positions and lack of time for interactions with immediate and extended family members. Peck (1986) described women's relationships as bi-directional—influencing and influenced by others—including affective relationships with spouse/lover, children, family, and friends. In this study, participants sacrificed relationships to meet faculty role expectations resulting in further conflict between the personal and professional dimensions of faculty lives. This finding suggests career transition challenges impact women midlife career changers' relationships and roles.

Second, most participants felt challenged to endlessly explain the professorial role to non-academic family members, friends, and clients, who incorrectly assumed they understood faculty's unique positions, requirements, and demands. Citing frequent faculty divorce, one participant recommended warning students, especially women, to talk to their spouses and significant others about the professoriate and its expectations. Even participants with completed career transitions continued to explain their professorial role, especially the pressures and timeframes required to write and publish.

To facilitate explanations, some participants tried to draw parallels between business and higher education; however, they found faculty work and the tenure and promotion process less defined, more challenging to explain, and difficult for others to understand. In addition, most participants found the adult education field particularly complex to explain. This finding suggests women midlife career changers have difficulty explaining new faculty roles and may at times feel misunderstood and undervalued.

Last, unique to midlife career changers, all participants acknowledged the challenge of transitioning roles from prior career expert to new career novice and subsequent journey to new career expert. Scheid (2005) found starting a new career required exiting former work roles and entering new roles. In this study, as prior career experts, participants had influence, authority, and resources to get the job done; however, as new career novices, they felt powerless. As novice clinical faculty, one participant could no longer attend professional conferences, while another could no longer help marginalized students the way she had in a prior administrator role. Furthermore, administrators and colleagues did not recognize some participants' prior experiences and skills, such as teaching and program planning experience as well as time management and organization skills. Ironically, such reality in a higher education context contradicts the adult education field's purported importance of recognizing and validating adults' prior experiences.

While there is a paucity of research on women midlife career changers to higher education, this study's findings parallel studies of women midlife career changers to primary and secondary teaching. For example, George and Maguire (1998) sought to

illuminate the dilemmas mature trainee teachers experience, using a qualitative research design and interviewing 11 women. Findings included sexism and ageism experiences, such as prior experiences viewed as a disadvantage, and age and maturity viewed as liabilities. Furthermore, they found faculty and administrators did not recognize or validate mature trainee teachers' prior experiences and knowledge, and the mature trainee teachers felt patronized, undervalued, and invisible.

Similarly, Williams (2010) found women career changers to teaching "face dilemmas and challenges as they struggle with the tensions posed by being both experienced and accomplished in prior career experts, and novice in teacher education" (p. 640) and needed to reconcile prior identities to develop a new professional identity. According to Crow et al. (1990), midlife career changers to teaching played novice roles after having advanced in other prior occupations. This study's participants experienced and attempted to counteract such expert to novice tensions by purposefully continuing prior career activities, calling upon prior career skills in unplanned encounters, and employing positive self-messaging, such as "I am an expert." This finding suggests women midlife career changers must reconcile changing roles and identity from prior career expert to new career novice and develop strategies to navigate the subsequent journey to new career expert. In addition to relationship- and role-related challenges, participants identified relationship-related supports.

Relationship-related supports. Participants articulated numerous and varied supports related to midlife career transition to the professoriate with four common relationship-related themes (see Figure 12): (a) advisors and mentors, (b) colleagues and

peers, (c) God and church, and (d) parents and partner. I will discuss the first two professional supports, followed by the second two personal supports.

First, most participants immediately identified their doctoral advisor, dissertation committee chair, or mentor as a professional support during midlife career transition to the professoriate. Motulsky (2010) found relationships assist midlife women in overcoming career transition barriers, especially relationships with experts, colleagues, and friends. Furthermore, midlife women with such *professional* relationships experienced fewer and dealt more effectively with career transition challenges.

Paradoxically, while recognizing and validating prior experiences, Mayotte (2003) and Williams (2010) cautioned educators and mentors not to assume a novice's competency precludes the need for support and encouragement. Mayotte found career changers not viewed as novices, because of age and prior experiences, may not receive needed support. She encouraged educators and mentors to recognize the depth and breadth of prior experiences, and help career changers transfer and build upon such experiences. In addition to recognized and validated prior experiences, Williams concluded women midlife career changers to teaching required social and academic support. In this study, advisors generally affirmed and encouraged participants and created teaching, researching, writing, and publishing opportunities. Some advisors extended support beyond graduate school, mentoring participants as new faculty at new institutions with advice, encouragement, and further development as teachers and researchers.

Based on a literature review of prior career expert to new career novice transitions in healthcare and teaching, Cherrstrom (2014) concluded the mentoring relationship is a critical source of support to midlife career changers but can be complex. For example, Jackson and Cleary (2011) found career changers' mentoring relationships are complex, influenced by emotions and power; require resilience and endurance, and must withstand the doctoral process's critique and pressure. Last, they identified support as a primary mentoring function, concluding midlife students may require different types of support than younger students.

Specific to teaching, midlife career changers valued relationships with supervisors and principals. According to Eifler (1997), non-traditional age student teachers were surprised by how much they valued mentoring; however, their relationships with supervising teachers and principals were complex, described as benign, destructive, supportive, and mentoring. For example, supervising teachers and principals had higher expectations of older student teachers in pedagogy expertise, resulting in tensions and destructive relationships. Similarly, Pellettieri (2003) found principals had different perceptions and higher expectations of second-career teachers than first-career teachers and offered fewer and different types of supports. Although complex, this finding suggests women midlife career changers benefit from mentoring relationships, specifically the recognition and validation of prior experiences and help in transferring and building upon such experiences in a new context.

Second, in addition to advisors and mentors, all participants identified colleagues and peers as career transition supports. Some supportive relationships began as early as

graduate school and grew as new faculty at new institutions kept in touch and shared information. Other relationships began at new institutions, as new faculty helped each other teach, publish, and successfully navigate the tenure and promotion process. Yet other relationships spanned institutional boundaries, for example, beginning as conference acquaintances and evolving to research collaborators and writing colleagues. In addition to advisor and mentor support, this finding suggests women midlife career changers to the professoriate require and can provide colleague and peer support.

Complementing these professional supports, a higher power and family provided personal supports. First, half the participants mentioned God or church as career transition supports. For example, they invoked God as guide or strength throughout the career transition process, specifically when deciding to leave a prior career, earn a master's or doctoral degree, and pursue the professoriate as well as facing tenure and promotions challenges. Individual participants found journaling major decisions helpful and prayerful and felt God watching over them and opening doors. Additional participants found support in church communities, especially as new faculty in new towns. In contrast, one participant transitioned from fundamentalist to agnostic while studying the sciences for a bachelor's degree as an adult. Schlossberg's adult transition model includes spirituality, related to but distinct from religion, as a self-related resource during transitions (Anderson et al., 2012), and Hansen (1997) pairs spirituality with life purpose as one of six critical tasks, including a reference to "a higher power" (p. 21). This finding suggests many women midlife career changers draw upon spirituality, specifically God and church as a source of guidance through their career decisions.

Last, all participants valued familial support during midlife career transition to the professoriate. Specifically, several participants recognized parents, partner, or spouse as supports. For example, participants felt unconditionally supported by their parents, although they did not necessarily understand their daughter's midlife career transition to the professoriate. In addition, some parents provided practical support, (e.g., childcare and transportation) during their daughter's career transition, especially during graduate school. Eventually, however, some participants lost such support due to required relocations for first tenure-track positions. In addition to parental support, several participants recognized partner support. Despite experiencing career relationship challenges and endlessly explaining the professoriate to non-academics, all partnered participants valued their husband's support, including some husbands sacrificing careers to support their wife's faculty careers. Although challenged by impacted relationships, this finding suggests women midlife career changers value parents and partners as career transition supports. Furthermore, since supports were exclusively relational, these findings suggest the high importance of professional and personal relationships as supports during women's midlife transition to the professoriate.

Prevalent politics as a challenge. The last career challenge, prevalent politics, permeated the career transition process and beyond (see Figure 12). All participants spoke of politics as prevalent and complex in higher education, especially in the tenure and promotion process. In addition, some spoke of lacking preparation to deal with such politics, and one recommended a course or workshop to meet tactical and coping needs and learn how to build alliances and advocate for self and program. In the adult

transition literature, Anderson et al. (2012) concluded political context affects our experiences of and reactions to transitions. Similarly, Johnson-Bailey and Tisdell (1998) concluded gender, in addition to race, sexual orientation, and class, influences social position, in turn influencing women's career development prospects and progress. In higher education, Park (2000) found sexism imbedded in university structures, norms, and policies. Yet, Cress and Hart (2009) concluded new women faculty assume they and others will be treated equitably in higher education: "Hard work will be rewarded, rules will be followed, and everyone will compete on the same playing field. [As a result,] the realities of academic life can come as a shock to women faculty" (p. 481).

In this study, for example, one participant temporarily sacrificed her writing voice, emulating well-published male colleagues' voices, in order to increase publishing chances. Despite re-claiming her voice, she warned men, and possibly women, may not recognize a woman's voice. According to Bierema (1998), "systemic discrimination is prevalent in a work system designed and controlled by white males. The organizational culture benefits men more readily than women and rewards behavior emulating the prevailing male-dominated leadership" (p. 97). Glazer-Raymo, Townsend, and Ropers-Huilman (2000) concluded women face subtle and intractable barriers in higher education and find it difficult to attain higher professorial ranks, especially at major researching institutions.

Specific to midlife, George and Maguire (1998) found career changers to primary and secondary teaching felt *othered* as college students studying on campus and schoolteachers training in classrooms. As they summarized,

Older teachers can exclude younger and less experienced colleagues; younger teachers can exclude older and less energetic or up-to-date colleagues. However, the older trainee teacher does not fit comfortably into either of these categories and threatens to disrupt this ageist population. (p. 423)

These teachers experienced sexism and ageism, including, but not limited to, prior experiences viewed as disadvantageous and age and maturity viewed as liabilities. This finding suggests higher education is a political context in which women continue to face discrimination and women midlife career changers to the professoriate face genderism and ageism.

Last, Alfred (2001) found culture and identity influenced faculty women of color's career development and proposed the internal career as minority careers develop within majority institutions. She described the internal career as "the personal construction and application of strategies, tools, and resources for managing the majority culture" (p. 123). Similar to the women in Alfred's study, this study's midlife women developed strategies to manage their career transition to the professoriate.

Career Transition Strategies

Research question #3: What strategies do midlife women use to manage career transition to the professoriate?

This study identified three major career transition strategies (see Figure 12): (a) create community, (b) apply prior career experience and skills, and (c) practice productivity. Schlossberg's (Anderson, et al., 2012) adult transition model includes strategies as a potential resource, addressing how a person in transition copes.

Accordingly, this study's participants identified and executed strategies to cope with and manage midlife career transition to the professoriate.

The career transition strategies relate to Hansen's (1997; 2011) critical task number six, *managing personal transitions and organizational change*. According to the author, "Although all the tasks of ILP are important, this last is perhaps the most salient because it affects people in context, the context of the wanted and unwanted changes in their lives and families and work organizations" (p. 215). For Hansen, this last critical task encompasses personal transitions, influenced by Schlossberg's (1984) earlier adult transition model, organizational changes, and global social change, in which she encourages individuals to be change agents. In contrast, this study's participants identified strategies to navigate career transition but did not focus on global contexts. Rather than experiencing organizational change, their career transitions resulted in experiencing new organizations, specifically new higher education institutions.

This study's career transition strategies illustrate Jones and DeFillippi's (1996) boundaryless career, requiring six interrelated competencies. The first three career competencies—*what*, *where*, and *when*—form an industry picture. Adapted to this study's context, *what* addresses higher education's opportunities, threats, and requirements, including this study's challenges of the tenure and promotion process and prevalent politics. *Where* addresses the location and boundaries for women midlife career changers entering, training, and advancing in the professoriate, including this study's finding first tenure-track position, required relocation, and tenure and promotion

challenges. *When* addresses career timing and activity choices, including this study's tenure and promotion process and research, teaching, and service.

The remaining three competencies—*why*, *whom*, and *how*—provide self-knowledge and skill to navigate higher education (Jones & DeFillippi, 1996). *Why* addresses the meaning, motives, and interests for pursuing a new midlife career, only indirectly addressed in this study. *Whom* addresses relationships with access to opportunities and resources, such as this study's relational supports of advisors, mentors, colleagues, and peers. Last, *how* addresses the skills and talent for effective performance, such as this study's tenure and promotion process and related research, teaching, and service. Participants took strategic action to develop and apply such boundaryless career competencies, as discussed in each finding. In doing so, they found community to be an important strategy in their career transition to their professoriate.

Create community. First, all participants took deliberate action to create community during their midlife career transitions to the professoriate, primarily seeking information and support. This action supports Jones and DeFillippi's (1996) boundaryless career competencies related to industry—*what*, *where*, and *when*—as well as the *whom* and *how* competencies. Although different in form, each participant created community as support during graduate school and the professoriate. For example, in graduate school, students shared experiences and information and provided support.

After joining the professoriate, however, new faculty did not generally find support in their departments, so looked elsewhere and proactively created community. For example, participants found support by joining on-campus women's faculty

organizations, purposefully meeting people for coffee to form collegial communities, networking at conferences and in the field, and creating communities of practice. Motulsky (2010) found relationships assisted midlife women in overcoming barriers such as dysfunctional self-perceptions and reinforced negative beliefs, specifically identifying friends, colleagues, experts, and even deceased connections as significant influences. Midlife women with strong supports and connections, especially if career development related, experienced fewer and more effectively dealt with barriers. Davis, Chaney, Edwards, Thompson-Rogers, and Gines (2011) found Black women faculty participating in communities benefited from networking, professional relationships, skills, strategies, and information, including those drawn from prior career experiences.

Apply prior career experience and skills. Second, unique to career changers, participants strove to apply prior career experience and skills in a new context. This action supports Jones and DeFillippi's (1996) *what, where, when, and how* competencies. All participants recognized prior career experience positively influenced career transition to the professoriate. Specifically, participants applied such experience to their research, teaching, and service as well as work with students and colleagues. If applicable, they also applied prior higher education experience to assist themselves and others. For example, prior career experience influenced participants' research agendas (e.g., women's studies, international perspectives, human resource development interventions), added authentic practice to teaching (e.g., industry examples, case studies), and provided skills related to working with diverse people (e.g., multicultural competence) and advising students (e.g., counseling).

However, career changers may need help in transferring prior career experience and skills to new careers. Mayotte (2003) posited women midlife career changers to teaching bring valuable experience and skills, including demonstrated competence, proven responsibility, and career success. She found prior career competencies, when transferred, contribute to career changers and their institutions; however, women midlife career changers may not recognize or easily transfer such skills to the new teaching career. Thus, support in connecting prior career competencies to the current classroom aids career changers' adaptation to teaching. This finding suggests women midlife career changers to the professoriate seek to apply prior career experience and skills in a new context and can benefit from help on how to transfer skills and make connections.

Practice productivity. Last, to survive and thrive in the tenure and promotion process, women midlife career changers practiced productivity through individual and collegial activities and relationships. This strategy illustrates Jones and DeFillippi's (1996) *what, where, when, and how* competencies. Although participants shared numerous strategies to practice productivity, the preponderance of strategies focused on surviving and successfully navigating the tenure and promotion process. For example, participants studied formal and informal requirements to prepare for tenure and promotion and prioritized research and publishing. Specific practices included honing a narrow research focus, targeting lower quality journals to increase publishing probability, and conversely, targeting higher quality journals for publishing prestige. In addition to sole authorship, participants leveraged collaborative writing practices, varying first and second authorships, to increase publishing productivity. This finding

suggests women midlife career changers seek productive practices to navigate the career transition process, especially tenure and promotion.

This section discussed the study's major findings related to women midlife career changers to the professoriate, specifically a career transition process and related challenges, supports, and strategies to manage the process. The next section discusses implications and recommendations for theory, policy, and practice.

Implications for Theory, Policy, and Practice

Based on the findings, this study of women midlife career changers to the professoriate has implications for (a) theory; (b) higher education policy and practice; and (c) practice related to transition.

Theory

This study has implications for theory in the adult development, career development, and expert to novice literature. First, the study expands the adult development and career development literature with its focus on midlife women. According to Lippert (1997), defining midlife for contemporary women is complex, and according to Ross-Gordon (1999), women have different behavior, interests, and attitudes than men, reflected in our social structures and norms. These differences manifest themselves across cultures and in turn influence the behaviors, interests, and attitudes deemed appropriate for men and women.

Second, this study expands the literature with its focus on midlife women's career transition to the professoriate. Traditional adult development and career development theories are linear and may not explain the multi-directional context of

multiple careers (Baruch, 2004) and resulting career transitions in a lifetime. In addition, many traditional adult development and career development theories studied White men and may not fully apply to people of color and women (Alfred, 2001; Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Ross-Gordon, 1999). Bierema (1998) concluded women's career development is complex, diverse, and, in the United States, different, changing, and contextual. According to Johnson-Bailey and Tisdell (1998), gender, race, sexual orientation, and class influence social position, in turn influencing women's career development prospects and progress. In the higher education context, traditional adult development and career development theories may not account for the intersection of increasing numbers of career changers to the professoriate and women faculty in examining faculty careers. This study adds the influences of age and gender, specifically midlife women, on career transition to the professoriate.

Third, this study expands the literature with its focus on expert to novice transition, generally and specific to career transition and the higher education context. Although the literature includes studies of novice to expert development in diverse domains, we know little about the transition from prior career expert to new career novice and subsequent journey to new career expert. Furthermore, although the literature includes some studies of midlife career changers to primary and secondary teaching, we know little about midlife career changers to higher education.

Last, this study has implications to theory in the combination and expansion of adult transition and career development models. First, the study demonstrated Schlossberg's (Anderson et al., 2012) adult transition model in conjunction with

Hansen's (1997; 2011) integrative life planning (ILP) model as a framework to investigate midlife career transition. Second, the study expands the limited literature applying Schlossberg's adult transition model to career transition and to higher education contexts beyond students. Third, the study expands the limited application of Hansen's ILP model. Fourth, the study adds a process, challenges, supports, and strategies related to changing organizations, as in moving from one organization to another, in addition to the model's emphasis on managing change within organizations. In addition to these implications for theory, this study has implications for policy and practice.

Higher Education Policy and Related Practice

According to Crane et al. (2009), higher education institutions seek experienced midlife career changers to replace retiring faculty members and meet professional schools' accreditation requirements, most commonly in applied fields such as education, human services, business, and management. To address such a trend, this study has implications for higher education policy and practice related to women midlife career changers as doctoral students and new faculty.

First, related to doctoral students, admission policies can encourage or discourage applicants with prior education and work experience and accommodate or create barriers to differing doctoral program beginnings. In practice, admission practices such as marketing and recruiting can include, or even target, midlife career changers as doctoral students.

Once admitted to doctoral programs, student advising policies can support differing program durations and endings and offer residency requirement alternatives; advising practices can accommodate part-time and full-time student statuses and provide distance services. Programming practice can schedule convenient course offerings and include online and face-to-face options. Last, policy and practice can support the preparation and socialization of doctoral students and future faculty through graduate assistantships and professional development, including the skills needed to find first tenure-track positions and navigate political academic environments.

Second, this study has implications for higher education policy and practice related to women midlife career changers as new faculty. As discussed, according to Crane et al. (2009), higher education institutions seek midlife career changers to replace retiring faculty members and meet professional schools' accreditation requirements, but treat such new faculty the same as traditional new faculty. Accordingly, this practice raises questions about the experience of midlife career changers as new faculty related to career paths, similar and different issues compared to those joining the professoriate directly from undergraduate and graduate school, positive or negative influences of prior career experience on transitions, unnoticed challenges, and assumptions regarding ability.

For example, policy and practice related to search committees determine membership and activities. In addition to demographic diversity, search committee membership can include midlife career changers as well as those with traditional career paths. Women midlife career changers may appreciate scheduled time to meet with

other career changers during search visits. Similarly, hiring policy and practice can encourage or discourage such midlife career changer applicants and potential faculty. For example, job postings may reference comparable experience for required qualifications or include practitioner or nonacademic experience as a preferred qualification.

Last, practice related to faculty development and socialization can help or hinder women midlife career changers as they strive to meet challenges, utilize supports, and leverage strategies. Helpful actions include programming to educate about the tenure and promotion process, navigating political workplaces, applying prior career skills in higher education context, and productive practices. In addition, higher institutions can provide opportunities to practice productivity, especially researching, writing, and publishing, as well as to create community. In addition, this study offers implications for practice related to transition.

Practice Related to Transition

This study has practice implications related to transition for women midlife career changers, administrators, faculty, advisors, and adult educators, especially advisors. This study generally informs midlife women of a career transition process to the professoriate and related challenges, supports, and strategies. First, for doctoral student practice, such information can influence program selection and assist potential and current students in understanding common and unique process characteristics, such as varied prior experiences and differing transition beginnings and endings. In addition, students will know they are not alone in facing career transition challenges and be better

prepared to meet such challenges. Similarly, students can recognize and call upon available career transition supports and proactively learn about and execute career transition strategies.

Second, for new faculty, such information can influence midlife women career changers' attitudes and activities as they job search to find first tenure-track positions and select institutions. Similarly, they may be better prepared for the complexities of required relocation and the tenure and promotion process in midlife. Creating community may assist them in managing challenges and offer support. Applying prior career experience and skills and practicing productivity may assist them in navigating the tenure and promotion process, especially tenure-track's emphasis on research, writing, and publishing. In addition, women midlife career changers may benefit from and provide support to peers and colleagues.

Third, as doctoral students or faculty, women midlife career changers will likely experience role transition from prior career expert to new career novice. Based on this study's findings, administrators, faculty, and advisors may not recognize and validate prior experiences, including prior career experience and skills, and simultaneously underestimate and not provide needed development support. This study provides practical transition information and strategies to leverage prior career experience. Related to needed development support, women midlife career changers, administrators, faculty, and advisors may be better prepared to respectively ask for and provide such support.

Fourth, this study has implications for adult educators, especially advisors, with women midlife career changers as students and colleagues. All of this study's professional supports related to advisors, mentors, colleagues, and peers. By understanding the career transition process, adult educators will be better prepared to advise and mentor students through doctoral programs and new faculty through tenure and promotion. Adult educators can recognize and validate women midlife career changers' prior experiences and help them transfer and apply such experience in a new context. For example, educators can design instruction to draw on prior career experience and make connections to foundational literature and theory. In addition, adult educators can encourage and provide opportunities for women midlife career changers to create community and practice productivity within the higher education context. This section discussed the study's implications for theory, policy, and practice; the next section discusses recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

As discussed, faculty characteristics are changing and two such changes include increasing numbers of new faculty with prior careers and women faculty. While numerous studies address midlife adult and career development, few studies focus on midlife women and even fewer studies focus on career transition to higher education. Traditional adult development and career development theories may not account for the intersection of these two dimensions in examining faculty careers in higher education. This study contributed to the adult development and career development literature through a conceptual framework comprised of contemporary adult transition and career

development models to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate. In addition, it addressed the literature gap regarding prior career expert to new career novice. Based on the findings, I identified four recommendations for future research.

First, I recommend future research focus on women midlife career changers at specific points along, and a longitudinal study spanning, the career transitions process. This study's participants were women, tenured or tenure-track faculty, in adult education or related fields, at four-year institutions, who self-identified as career changers to the professoriate, while age 35 to 60 years. While providing insight into the essence of their career transitions, additional research is needed to understand midlife doctoral student development, midlife new faculty development, mid-career faculty development in general and occurring later in life than traditional faculty, and senior faculty at advanced ages. Such research may further examine the socialization of midlife students and new faculty to the professoriate.

Second, I recommend future research to investigate women midlife career changers to non-tenure track faculty and other higher education contexts. For example, the number of tenured and tenure-track positions are limited, and the number of women in lower professorial ranks is larger than higher ranks and increasing. At the same time, higher education has a variety of contexts, including community and junior colleges, undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, teaching, and research institutions.

Third, I recommend future research beyond adult education and related fields. Openness to midlife career changers as faculty and perceived value of prior career

experience likely varies by field. As discussed, according to Crane et al. (2009), higher education institutions seek midlife career changers, with their experience depth and breadth, to replace retiring faculty members and meet professional schools' accreditation requirements, most commonly in the applied education, human services, business, and management fields. These fields provide a logical place for additional research and may provide an interesting contrast to science, engineering, technology, and mathematics, as examples.

Last, I recommend future research regarding the transition from prior career expert to new career expert and the subsequent journey to new career expert. The literature presents novice to expert development models, but we know little about expert to novice role transition. From a human resources development perspective, such future research could identify a process from prior career expert to new career novice to new career expert and explore the individual and organization's roles in such career development. Further study of challenges, supports, and strategies could identify interventions to facilitate such a transition.

Conclusion

This study comprised five chapters: (a) introduction, (b) literature review, (c) research design, (d) findings, and (e) summary, discussion, and recommendations. Chapter I comprised the background to the problem, problem statement, conceptual framework, research purpose and questions, definitions of terms, and significance of the study.

Chapter II discussed the three bodies of literature situating this study: adult development, career development, and expert to novice transitions. For the adult and career development bodies of literature, I discussed traditional development, women's development, and adult transitions. Due to the lack of expert to novice literature, I discussed novice to expert models and studies of prior career expert to new career novice.

Chapter III discussed the research design, including the transcendental phenomenological methodology; methods, comprised of participants, data collection, and data analysis; and quality standards and validation strategies.

Chapter IV presented the major findings related to women midlife career changers to the professoriate: a career transition process and related challenges, supports, and strategies to manage the process.

Last, this Chapter V comprised a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications for theory, policy, and practice, and recommendations for future research.

Higher education institutions' faculty characteristics are changing and traditional theories may not account for the intersection of increasing numbers of faculty with prior careers and women faculty in examining faculty career development in higher education. Using a conceptual framework comprised of adult transition and career development models, this phenomenological study investigated the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate. Findings comprised a midlife career transition process to the professoriate, process- as well as relationship- and role-related

challenges, professional and personal career transition supports, and strategies to manage the process.

This study's women midlife career changers connected their dots, or life experiences, and transitioned to the professoriate at different times and in different ways. Midlife age influenced their career transition experiences, presenting unique challenges and intensifying the complexity of other challenges. However, relational career transition supports benefited these midlife women, and they used strategies to manage the career transition process. Through their voices and experiences, this study expands the literature related to midlife, women, career transition, and higher education. In addition, the study has implications for women midlife career changers and their educators, mentors, and institutions, related to policy and practice in doctoral programs; hiring and employment; faculty development; and the tenure and promotion process. Through research, teaching, and service, women midlife career changers to the professoriate can benefit their students, colleagues, institutions, communities, academic fields, and the world.

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APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear [insert Faculty or faculty's name]:

As you likely know, higher education institutions are experiencing increasing numbers of (a) new faculty with previous jobs/careers and (b) women faculty. Traditional adult development and career development theories may not explain the intersection of these changing faculty characteristics.

I invite you to participate in a dissertation study investigating the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate. Participation includes two interviews, totaling 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 hours. A copy of the consent form is attached for your information and review.

The study's inclusion criteria follow:

- women
- tenure-track or tenured faculty
- in adult education or related fields (e.g., human resource development, continuing education, lifelong learning)
- at four-year institutions
- who self-identify as career changers to the professoriate
- while age 35 to 60 years

Please help in two ways:

- (a) If you meet these criteria and are willing to be interviewed, let me know.
- (b) Forward this email to colleagues who may meet the criteria.

Potential participants were identified based on being, or referred by, (a) faculty professionally known to the researchers, (b) members of the Commission for Professors of Adult Education listserv, and/or (c) faculty of adult education and related fields at four-year institutions.

Thank you in advance for helping me on my midlife, career-changing journey to the professoriate. If you have questions, please let me know.

Best,
Cathy Cherrstrom
Doctoral Student [or Candidate]
Texas A&M University

APPENDIX B

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION PROGRAM

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: The Career Transitions and Strategies of Women Midlife Career Changers to the Professoriate

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Cathy Cherrstrom, a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether to take part. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.

Why is this study being done?: The purpose of this study is to investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate.

Why am I being asked to be in this study?: You are asked to be in this study because you are a woman, tenure-track or tenured faculty, in the adult education or related field, at a four-year institution, who self-identifies as a career changer to the professoriate, while age 35 to 60 years.

Potential participants were identified based on being, or referred by, (a) faculty professionally known to the researchers, (b) members of the Commission for Professors of Adult Education listserv, and/or (c) faculty of adult education and related fields at four-year institutions.

How many people will be asked to be in this study?: Six to 10 people (participants) will be invited to participate in this study.

What are the alternatives to being in this study?: The alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

What will I be asked to do in this study?: You will be asked to participate in two interviews, totaling 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 hours, about your experience as a woman midlife career changer to the professoriate.

The first interview will last from one to 1-1/2 hours. The second interview will last from 30 minutes to one hour. During these interviews, you will be asked to respond to demographic and open-ended questions.

Will photos, video or audio recordings be made of me during the study?: The researchers will take audio recording during the study in order to accurately transcribe and analyze the data. If you do not give permission for the audio recording to be obtained, you cannot participate in this study.

_____ I give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

Are there any risks to me?: The things you will be doing are no greater than the risks you would come across in everyday life.

Will there be any costs to me?: Besides time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

Will I be paid to be in this study?: You will not be paid for being in this study, but may be offered refreshments.

Will information from this study be kept private?: The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records.

Information about you, including the consent form, will be stored in a locked drawer and on a password-protected and encrypted computer.

People who have access to your information include the Principal Investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and information is collected properly.

Information about you and related to this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

Who may I contact for more information?: You may contact the Principal Investigator, Mary V. Alfred, Ph.D., to tell her about a concern or complaint about this research at 979-xxx-xxxx or malfred@tamu.edu. You may also contact the Protocol Director, Cathy Cherrstrom, MBA, Ed.M., at xxx-xxx-xxxx or cathy.cherrstrom@tamu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant; or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

What if I change my mind about participating?: This research is voluntary and you have the choice whether to be in this research study. You may decide not to begin or stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your relationship with Texas A&M University.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I agree to be in this study and know that I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. The procedures, risks, and benefits have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered. I know new information about this research study will be provided to me as it becomes available and the researcher will tell me if I must be removed from the study. I can ask more questions if I want. A copy of this entire consent form will be given to me.

Participant's Signature

Date

Printed Name Date

INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT:

Either I have, or my agent has, carefully explained to the participant the nature of the above project. I hereby certify, to the best of my knowledge, the person who signed this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in her participation.

Signature of Presenter Date

Catherine A. Cherrstrom _____

Printed Name

Date

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**The Career Transitions and Strategies of Women Midlife Career Changers to the
Professoriate**

Thank you, in advance, for your time and sharing your experience for this study. To begin...

Study's purpose: To investigate the career transitions and strategies of women midlife career changers to the professoriate

Research questions:

1. What is the career transition process of women midlife career changers to the professoriate?
2. What challenges and supports do midlife women experience during their career transitions to the professoriate?
3. What strategies do midlife women use to manage their career transitions to the professoriate?

First Interview

Participant information

Before we begin the interview, I'd like to collect some demographic information.

1. First, what is your race/ethnicity?
2. The remaining demographic questions pertain to you (a) at the beginning and (b) end of your career transition to the professoriate and (c) now:

Participant Information	Beginning	End	Now
a. Age range			
b. Socioeconomic status			
c. Marital/partnered status			

Participant Information	Beginning	End	Now
d. Parental status			
e. Education			
f. Employment status			
g. Academic rank or job level			
h. Tenure-track or tenured			
i. Job role			
j. General description of your institution or organization			

Life span career transitions

For this study, *career transition* or *career change* is defined as not just changing jobs, moving from one employer to another, but changing careers, leaving an established occupation for a different one.

3. Tell me about your career transitions over the life span.

Career transition(s) to the professoriate

4. What triggered your career transition(s) to the professoriate? (anticipated, unanticipated, or a nonevent?)
5. What career transition(s) did you experience in your career change to the professoriate?
6. At the time, what was your perspective about the career transition? (positive, negative, both, benign?)
7. What was the context of your career transition? (culturally, socially, politically?)
8. Why did you choose the professoriate?
9. Who influenced your career transition to the professoriate?

10. When did you first think of pursuing the professoriate and when did you decide?
11. How did you pursue the professoriate?
12. Where did you pursue the professoriate? (same town, commute, relocation)

Impacts, challenges, supports, and strategies

13. How did the career transition to the professoriate impact your
 - a. Relationships?
 - b. Routines?
 - c. Assumptions?
 - d. Roles?
14. During your career transitions to the professoriate,
 - a. What challenges did you experience?
 - b. What supports did you experience?
 - c. What strategies did you use to manage the career transition?

Process

15. Describe your career transition process to the professoriate?
16. Describe your experience from prior career expert to new career novice.

Closing

17. What would you like me to know about your career transition experience to the professoriate that I have not asked you?

Thank you!

Second Interview

18. Based on your review of the first interview's transcription, what changes or clarification would you like to make?
19. [Ask any unanswered or unclearly answered questions from the first interview.]
20. What else you would like to share about your career transition(s) to the professoriate?

Thank you!