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A cross-generational narrative examination of women's career journeys

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CAREER JOURNEYS

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. Sixteen women wage-earners were interviewed to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generation. Specifically, the internal and external barriers to and facilitators of women's career advancement, success and fulfillment were examined. The women reported five influencers on their career choices: mentors or role models, work-life balance considerations, passions and interests, financial needs, and hostile work environments. The process of career planning and exploration the women described was consistent across the generations and included a period of exploration, failure of their initial plans leading to continued exploration or limbo, and their avocations and careers ultimately seeming to unfold naturally.

Acknowledgments

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I am deeply grateful to my loving and patient boyfriend, Daniel, who provided unwavering support, encouragement, and commitment to my success throughout my MSOD journey. Thank you for cheering me on each step of the way!

Finally, I dedicate this study to my mom, Mary Ann Quast. Your courage to emigrate from South Africa so young, to stand up for what you believe in, and to overcome significant challenges as a working, single mother of four children is inspirational. Your strength, perseverance, and resourcefulness are just some of gifts you have given to me, for which I am so grateful. Thank you for your constant support and encouragement on this journey. It meant more to me than you know.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Humans are social animals (Bandura, 1977). From the moment of birth, we are trained by parents and our surrounding community about who we are, who they are, how we fit, and how we are to think and behave to fit into our societies (Swann & Bosson, 2008). Research on girls and women suggest that the socialization for them may result in self-identities characterized by low self-esteem and suppressed drive for achievement (Gilligan, 1982; Jung, Choi, Yun, & Lee, 2007). These self-identities have far-reaching implications for females' academic and professional trajectories. For example, the United Nations' (2010) study on the state of women in the world reports that women are rarely employed in jobs with status, power, and authority or in traditionally male blue-collar occupations.

Literature and studies about women's work experiences focus on what has held and continues to hold them back from fulfilling their potential. Explanations for women's unique career paths include issues such as sexism, racism, glass ceiling, industry-specific factors, and work-family conflicts (Capelli & Hamori, 2005; Gregory-Mina, 2012; Waldrup-Patterson, 2012; Wells, 2009). The guiding premise of this literature is that women are prevented from reaching the top. As a result, these authors focus on how to level the playing field and support women in reaching the executive ranks, such as through diversity programs or through proposals for legislation.

This study approached the topic from a different perspective by gathering and analyzing the personal career stories of women from four generations. Examining the internal and external barriers and facilitators to women's career advancement and fulfillment helped construct a comprehensive view of the career conditions facing

women. Armed with this type of information, organization development (OD) professionals, coaches, managers, and human resources professionals can be better equipped to support women in defining and reaching career success.

Furthermore, questions exist about whether the career paths and possibilities for young women entering the workforce today are the same as what their predecessors—Generation X women, Baby Boomer women, and Traditionalist women—have faced (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Eisner & Harvey, 2009; Twomey, Linehan, & Walsh, 2002). Additionally, it is possible that younger women have different expectations about their careers (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008; Murphy, Gibson, & Greenwood, 2010). Thus, it is important to not only examine the career conditions facing women but also to examine how these may vary by generational cohort.

Brown and Gilligan (1991) assert that narrative methods, which encourage participants to tell their stories in their complexity, are critical for use with women, as the method allows for participants to reclaim their lost voices and lost strengths, and to make sense of the choices they have made. Therefore, this study employed narrative methods.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. Four research questions were defined:

1. What were their career decisions and milestones?
2. What internal and external career facilitators have women experienced?
3. What internal and external career barriers have they faced?
4. What were their methods for addressing perceived barriers and challenges?

Definitions

Three definitions are central to this study:

1. Career journey: what someone did, when she did it, and positions, decisions, and shifts she experienced. Career journey also includes her motivations for doing these, and how she makes sense of these in terms of how she understands the events and the positions she held.

2. Generational cohort: an "identifiable group that shares birth years, age location and significant life events at critical developmental stages" (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010, p. 294). Central to generational cohort theory is the theoretical supposition that a person's personality, values, and expectations are formed early in childhood and remain stable throughout childhood, into adulthood, and on throughout the rest of their lives. If true, it follows that each generation has a discernible and distinct set of values, attitudes, behaviors, expectations, habits, motivations, views of authority, and expectations of leadership and these affect their workplace behaviors and experiences (Crampton & Hodge, 2007; De Meuse & Mlodzik, 2010). Four generations are in the workforce today: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y.

3. Career Narrative: a story about a person's career. The career *holder* is both the author and main character of the story. The story is both a retrospective story that recounts the past and a progressive story that predicts or lays out the future. Thus, the career narrative conveys how the person came to be what she is today and the future she expects to have in a career. The career story also provides an interpretation of how and why she chose the different occupations, how they are connected, resulting in a cohesive career story (Christensen, & Johnston, 2003; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Ibarra & Lineback, 2005).

Significance of the Study

This study provides insights about women's career barriers and facilitators. These insights fill a gap in the literature related to the internalized messages that act as barriers or facilitators to women's personal success in the workplace. Most of the literature uncovered to date focuses on the experiences women have or obstacles they face related to external barriers resulting from gender-based stereotypes and biases. Moreover, the aim of this study is not to add to the existing chorus of voices in the literature that suggest that women have not succeeded unless they have reached the top of whatever professional ladder they are on. Instead, the goal of this study is to uncover the facilitators and barriers women, across generations, experience.

Researcher Background

Just over 10 years ago, I earned my bachelor's degree in business leadership and human resources, completed five courses in Instructional Systems Design, and devoted any free time to professional development, with the intention of getting to the executive table at the company in which I worked. Despite my solid work performance and positive results, excellent performance reviews, and demonstrated commitment to enhancing my skills, I was let go from my position in March 2013, without any reasonable explanation.

Although I possessed a strong set of talents, skills, and abilities, had a solid education in my field, and engaged in career development during my 12-year tenure with this employer, I struggled with debilitating fears of inadequacy because I never received the recognition and promotions I felt my demonstrated service had earned me. I often felt demeaned, marginalized, and humiliated by the top and middle-level "leaders" in the company by their lack of support for the programs *they* requested me to develop. Although deep inside I knew something was askew, I didn't have a name for it. It wasn't until I began reading books on women's careers and talking with other women that I realized I wasn't the only woman who felt unfulfilled, inadequate, and unsuccessful in life and work. I wasn't the only woman who thought she was a failure because she was not achieving the kind of success she felt she had earned. I also was not the only woman who had spent years focused on trying to please others rather than examining the choices I had made. Through these experiences, my reading, and discussions with others, I began to realize that I was fighting things like the proverbial "Queen Bee Syndrome" and the glass ceiling, and various other toxic issues often experienced by women in typically male-dominated industries and companies. I was simply too naïve to realize it while in the thick of it. This epiphany led me to surmise that there was something about the way I

view myself and my own career needs that must be examined before I could find a meaningful career for myself.

This study was a way for me to examine women's career journeys, across generations, and shed light on the barriers to and facilitators of their personal success in the workplace. By employing a narrative approach, this study also provided women a forum in which to share their stories and gain insight into the impact their career choices have had on their lives and their work identities. When these identities no longer serve us, this study may reveal some effective methods for transcending these limitations. Thus, this study satisfies my interest in helping other women overcome the barriers that limit their personal and professional success.

Organization of the Study

This chapter outlined the background and purpose of the study. Key definitions, the significance of the study and researcher background also were discussed.

Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature. A brief overview of career journeys and career narratives are presented first, to provide the context for the subsequent sections. Women's career experiences in general are presented next to provide a baseline for women's typical career paths and trajectories. Finally, literature on generational cohort theory and women's career journeys by generation is reviewed to examine the similarities and differences between generations as well as the perceived barriers to and facilitators of success.

Chapter 3 describes the methods to be used in the study. An overview of the research design is provided first. Procedures related to sampling, data collection, and data analysis procedures also are described.

Chapter 4 reports the results of the study. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results. The discussion outlines key conclusions, recommendations, limitations, and suggestions for further research emerging from the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. The study seeks to surface the voices of women who believe they have achieved meaningful careers and those who feel unfulfilled. Four research questions have been defined:

1. What were their career decisions and milestones?

2. What internal and external career facilitators have women experienced?

3. What internal and external career barriers have they faced?

4. What were their methods for addressing perceived barriers and challenges?

This chapter provides a review of literature relevant to the present study. The constructs of career journeys and career narratives are presented first, including definitions of each term and a discussion of how career narratives are constructed, what they produce, and how they are used. Women's career experiences are presented next, including a discussion of women's presence and roles in the workforce, explanations for their experiences, and considerations of women's normative career journeys and narratives. Finally, women's career journeys are discussed by generation.

Career Journeys

Career journey, rather than a term or theory, refers to a commonly used metaphor expressed by authors and people to describe one's career experiences. Hoffman (2002) defined career journey as a metaphor for working toward a series of goals and through a dynamic and complex process of "becoming" who one is professionally. Moreover, career journey is distinguished from *climbing the ladder,* which suggests movement upward through corporate ranks. She described *career* as "the path you take, full of

detours and bumps, impacted by the environment" (p. 143). She emphasizes that according to this paradigm, the worker—rather than one's boss, fate, or other external factor—is the navigator and driver.

According to these definitions of career and career journey, it follows that these concepts are not limited to white collar, upwardly mobile professionals. Instead, Schein and Van Maanen (2013) pointed out that everyone has a career and that career is "'anchored' by the person's self-image of his or her competencies, motives, and values" (p. 3). Schein and Van Maanen added the constructs of *internal career* to reflect the individual's picture of his or her work life and role in that life and *external career* to refer to the actual steps required within an occupation or organization to progress. The external career is typically comprised by external achievements such as education and training, certain qualifications, and experiences that signify that the person has acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the job. Examples of external career paths are found in the trajectories and series of pay grades in the U.S. military and civil service. Based upon their analysis of organizational career paths at large organizations, Schein and Van Maanen outlined 10 generic external career stages:

> (1) a period of pre-career choosing of a field; (2) educational preparation for entry into that field; (3) formal education and training in the chosen field or occupation; (4) if one is fortunate, entry into the occupation or organization; (5) a period of additional learning, apprenticeship, and socialization; (6) a period of full use of one's talent, leading in some cases to some form of granting of "tenure" through being given permanent membership; (7) a period of productive employment in one or more organizations; (8) a gradual branching into administrative, managerial, coaching, or mentoring roles and other forms of becoming a "leader"; (9) gradual disengagement, part-time work, and even going into other kinds of work; and (10) eventual retirement. These generic stages are far less predictable or certain in today's world than in the past, but their hold on our imagination as to what constitutes an external career are perhaps as strong as ever. (p. 5)

When the worker perceives that his or her external career is unsatisfying for one reason

or another, he or she may switch to another position or career, thus returning to the

beginning of this 10-stage process. However, the process often is truncated, even in the

case of career switching, because knowledge and skills gained in one profession often are

transferable to another.

Thus, one's career path can be boundaryless, freeform, and characterized by

movements from one employer to another, one contract or temporary position to another,

and even from one profession to another. The result of such job hopping means that the

days of lifetime employment with one organization are over for many workers and that

career instability and uncertainty has become the norm. Three types of career paths that

can result:

1. The *protean career*, where employees may move from one field to another, gathering skills, knowledge, and abilities to meet the demands to adapt themselves to open positions (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall, 1996).

2. The *boundaryless career*, where employees remain independent and "sell" their labor to various organizations—for example, through contract positions (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

3. The *kaleidoscope career*, where employees construct their careers based on authenticity (honoring one's own values), work-life balance, and challenge (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

Given the many directions and patterns of people's careers could take today,

Schein and Van Maanen (2013) argue that it is critical for individual employees to

understand "their internal career and the role that career anchors play in it" (p. 4). Schein

and Van Maanen elaborated that people can gain insight about what their career anchors

are by reflecting on each job or career using questions such as: What have I learned about

myself? What am I good at (skills and competencies)? What do I really want (motives)?

What is most important to me? Do these align with what the organization values?

Answering these questions through a combination of introspection and gathering feedback can culminate in a clear career self-concept of what one is good at and not good at, what one does and does not want to do, and what does or does not value. Schein and Van Maanen call this self-concept one's *career anchor*.

Career Narratives

A *career narrative* is a relatively new approach to career counseling and planning (Christensen & Johnston, 2003). The subjective data gained by encouraging employees and job seekers to tell and make meaning of their career path and positions yields an important complement to the objective data collection and testing (e.g., salary histories, experience, education) that has dominated career counseling of the past. Marshall (2001) explains that in career narratives, "The individual is cast as the main character in a career narrative that is meaningful, productive, and fulfilling" (p. 145).

The narrative is created through action and discourse and emphasizes language and theme development. The result is "a coherent personal and professional narrative [generated] through exploration, experience, and reflection" (Severy, 2008, p. 269). For example, a story provides an interpretation of how and why the client entered their different occupations and how they are connected, not just a list of occupations and accomplishments as on a resume (Christensen & Johnston, 2003). Moreover, the narrative is simultaneously retrospective (reporting what has happened) and progressive (predicting a path forward).

Briscoe and Hall (2006) cautioned, however, that constructing the career narrative is challenging, as it unclear how individuals can be made aware of their orientation, opportunities, and context. Moreover, one's social and cultural contexts, which provide

further insights and meanings about the narrative, can be additionally difficult to discern (Cohen & Mallon, 2001).

Career narratives are linked to the concept of *professional identity,* meaning one's sense of his or her attributes, beliefs, values, motivations, experiences (Ibarra, 1999), professional role, and the message he or she conveys about himself or herself to others (Cornelius & Skinner, 2005). Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) elaborated that "self-narratives are both expressive of and constitutive of identity" (p. 135) in that the narratives reveal an "internalized and evolving story that results from a person's selective appropriation of past, present, and future" (McAdams, 1999, p. 486). What remains unclear, however, are the central components of work identities, understanding of how self-narratives form, and their exact role in identity construction (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Ibarra (1999) asserted, however, that professional identity forms slowly over time with the accumulation of experiences and meaningful feedback. It follows that professional identity is more malleable early in one's career.

Capturing the career narrative. The career narrative typically is captured within the content of career counseling and is constructed through dialogue between the practitioner and the client (Christensen & Johnston, 2003). Together, the story is discussed, constructed, and written. The actual narrative may take the form of a lifeline, journaling, early childhood memories, career genogram, autobiography, thematic interview, collage, portfolio, exploration of role models, favorite stories, or life theme. The choice of method is informed by which best captures the meaning of the individual's career (Severy, 2008). However, Christensen and Johnston (2003) strongly advised that clients write out their narratives because insight and clarity are often the fruits of writing—especially in the form of story wherein the client is the protagonist.

Christensen and Johnston (2003) elaborated that each written draft of the evolving narrative provides an opportunity for the client to reflect on the meaningfulness, cohesion, and soundness of his or her narrative. The narrative's "holes" will be surfaced and the narrator as well as the reader will notice the absences of narrative material as negative; the story needs more work before it can serve as a meaningful script for the client to live out. Filling in the holes then occurs through dialogue with the career coach or by searching for the missing information.

Although most approaches to capturing the career narrative are practitioner-led, Severy (2008) conducted a project to create an online tool to help clients reflect upon their construct of career, including life themes of success, influence of others, interests, and values. Severy subsequently conducted a study to determine whether the web-based intervention would help reduce participants' career indecision and increase their career certainty.

Marshall (2001) described Cochran's seven-step process for helping clients explore and implement their career narratives. The first step is elaborating a career problem. In this stage, the client identifies the gap between their current and desired states. Part of this also includes forming a rapport and goal-oriented alliance with the career coach, which is aided by agreeing on a purpose and desired outcomes, building trust between client and counselor, and completing activities designed to help the coach get to know the client. This may employ the use of "a vocational card sort, construct laddering, drawing, testing, and the exploration of stories and anecdotes" (p. 146).

The second step is composing a life history. Various assessments and interventions by the counselor are conducted in this stage to uncover and correct distortions in the narrative, enhance the coherence of the client's story, heighten his or

her sense of agency, and galvanize his or her identity. Interview techniques such as Life Line, Life Chapters, Success Experiences, Family Constellations, Role Models, and Early Recollections are potential tools to empower clients' narration (Marshall, 2001).

The third step is founding a future. This step involves architecting a desired future but also (and importantly) evaluating that stated future. Cochran asserts that a career decision is not really about desires, strengths, and values in and of themselves, but rather about an evaluation of these. Client and counselor focus on the differentiation and evaluation of rival narratives. The client's "old story" becomes background and is reframed as a new story. This evaluation is what Taylor (1985) terms second order evaluation and requires the development of perspective (Marshall, 2001). The resulting new narrative then structures the client's world in which career decisions adjustments and solutions take place.

Remaining steps include reality construction (vividly articulating the desired future), changing the life structure (shifting one's life to support the desired future), and enacting a role (taking progressive steps to embody the desired future). The aim of these steps are to enhance the client's capacity to decide and act, as well as to enhance their sense of agency and practical wisdom. Moreover, the steps should be adapted as needed to the client (Marshall, 2001).

Outcomes of the career narrative process. A general goal of career planning is to identify the client's interests, values, and skills. The narrative approach can generate valuable insights about the elements that must be integrated into a plan for the client's future career (Holland, 1997). Ibarra and Lineback (2005) provide further insights about the power of story and why career narratives can be powerful. They explain that stories define us: To know someone well is to know his or her story, including formative

experiences and trials and turning points. Knowing and understanding one's story is particularly needed during times of major transition, such as during career change. Constructing, telling, and retelling one's story at these times can serve as a source of clarity, inspiration, and confidence—especially during times of frustration and even suffering. Ibarra and Lineback explained, "We need a good story to assure us that our plans make sense—that in moving on we are not discarding everything we have worked hard to accomplish" (p. 66). Ibarra and Lineback argued that a good story was essential for successful transition.

Moreover, the career narrative can provide a sense of meaning and identity cohesion—a temporal organization—during the ambiguity and ups and downs of change (Marshall, 2001; Sinisalo & Komulainen, 2008). Order and meaning of this nature are critical to psychological and emotional well-being and is a normative expectation of society. Thus, by having a narrative, the individual satisfies important internal and external needs. By adopting a career narrative, "a person tries to match an ideal vision with the possibilities offered by available options" (Marshall, 2001, p. 145). This is a continuous dialectic process in which the individual is actively constructing meaning. "These personal meanings are then expanded, refined, tested, and revised over the life course, resulting in a unique career narrative" (p. 146).

For example, through narrative, the individual can weave together seemingly disparate personal, professional, and academic experiences into a seamless whole. "Ruptures can be healed as individuals seek explanations for them in the context of the whole story" (Sinisalo & Komulainen, 2008, p. 39). The creation of coherence, however, is not simply constructing a single plot for a life story. In life stories, the coherence is created in a number of ways, through narratives and explanations. The most basic form of

coherence which individuals can create is maintaining the identity of the self through time (Sinisalo & Komulainen, 2008; Linde, 1993).

Utilizing a career narrative. Once the content of one's career narrative is captured, Sinisalo and Komulainen (2008) recommend analyzing it using both deterministic structures and individual agency. Career and career transitions are approached as a dialogue between objective and subjective perspectives. The subjective view refers to the individual's own interpretation of his or her career situation, whereas the objective refers to institutional or societal interpretations of career (Cohen & Mallon, 2001). Institutional interpretations of career include expectations about the stages of enterprise as well as (normative) expectations of the entrepreneurial self, abilities, skills, attitudes and values of the entrepreneur (self). The idea of stories encapsulating a dualistic relationship between individual action and social structure is consistent with Hughes's (1937) notion of the career as Janus-faced: looking outward to a series of status and clearly defined offices, and looking inward to the way in which people see their lives as a whole and interpret the meanings of their various attributes, actions, and what happens to them. Sinisalo and Komulainen (2008) suggest that "narrative analysis of career stories offers a fruitful way of understanding the agency of career actors and career behaviors in a changing economic environment" (p. 37).

Women's Career Experiences

Women—including those with young children—are showing an increasing presence in the U.S. workforce. Although the workforce remains predominantly male, it is approaching gender parity, as women's U.S. labor force participation has increased from 32% in 1960 to 46% in 2007 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Projecting through 2014, a faster growth rate in labor force participation is predicted for women (11%) than

men (9%, Dehne, 2008). Some 63% of women age 16 or older with children under age 6 (59% with children under age 3) were in the U.S. labor force in 2005, compared with 39% in 1975 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Generation Y is entering the workplace at a time when work is the norm for U.S. adults. Some 70% of men and 60% of women age 16 or older are working or seeking work (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

High levels of education also have become the norm for U.S. workers. By 2006, some 61% of U.S. workers had attended some college or held associate, bachelor, or higher degrees; fewer than 10% of U.S. workers age 25 to 64 had less than a high school degree.

Women are now found in management, professional, and related occupations in numbers similar to their workforce presence, holding 50.6% of such jobs. But far fewer women are found in upper ranks, as shown by these percentages at Fortune 500 companies: 2.6% chief executive officers, 6.7% top earners, 9.4% highest titles, 14.6% board of director seats, and 15.6% corporate officers (Catalyst, 2006a). That is unlikely to change soon. It will take an estimated 40 years at current rates before women and men reach corporate officer parity (Catalyst, 2006b). Notably, women are more likely to be managers in occupations where more women work. The U.S. Census Bureau reports the extent of women in management within various occupations; including 72% in medical/health services; 64% in human resources; 63% in education; 60% in advertising and promotions; 57% in finance; 49% in property, real estate, and commercial association; 40% in marketing and sales; 40% in purchasing; 31% in computer and information systems; and 27% in general and operations management (Lawrence & Weber, 2008).

Women in the workforce. Despite women's increasing presence in the workplace, men and women tend to take somewhat different places within the contemporary U.S. workforce. Women are found mostly in retail businesses and service industries like health care, education, finance, insurance, and real estate (Eisner & Harvey, 2009). Overall, women tend to be found in lower paying occupations and work. Moreover, men (65%) working full-time are more likely than women (55%) to be working in the for-profit sector, and women (22%) are twice as likely as men (11%) to work for nonprofits (Dey & Hill, 2007). For-profit organizations tend to pay more than nonprofits for similar work (Otting, 2007).

Entrepreneurship is another feature of today's workplace with gender-linked implications. Some 70% of U.S. firms are small with at least one owner but no paid employees (Buscher, 2004), and half of U.S. businesses are home-based (Bergman, 2006). From 1997 to 2006, majority women-owned firms (2.4 million) grew at almost twice the rate of all U.S. firms (42% vs. 24%) (Center for Women's Business Research, 2007). Women now own about half of U.S. privately held businesses, an increase from 44% in 1997 (Fisher, 2006), and about 30% of all U.S. businesses (Snyder, 2008). One-fourth of women business owners report frustration with the glass ceiling at large firms as the reason they started their own business. Consequently, many women receive their foundational experience at existing firms, then leave and create their own (Kephart & Schumacher, 2005).

Research indicates that working women tend to earn less than working men (Lawrence & Weber, 2008). The Institute for Women's Policy Research tracks two ratios of women's to men's wages: annual median weekly earnings and median annual earnings. From 1950 to 2006, for example, men's earnings were higher than women's

every year, and progress toward gender parity in each ratio has slowed since 1990. From

1980 to 1990, gender parity in annual earnings rose 1.4 percentage points but rose only

5.4 percentage points in the next 15 years. The ratio was largely stagnant from its 1960

rate of 60.7% until its upward path in the 1980s, reaching 71.6% in 1990. It reached 77%

in 2005. Moreover, the wage-gap ratios are annual, showing comparative salaries at a

given time. But annual comparisons understate a larger disparity between lifetime

earnings of men and women. Over the prime working years, a woman's cumulative

earnings are about 38% of a man's.

The Business and Professional Women's Foundation reports the gender wage gap

to have narrowed overall by one-third of a penny per year since 1963 (Lawrence &

Weber, 2008). At that rate, wage parity will not be achieved until 2039. Over the course

of her career, the average women loses about half a million dollars due to the wage gap.

The economic impact of this on U.S. families may be significant. Some 62% of working

women earn about half of their family's income, and 29% earn all or most of that income.

Explanations for women's career experiences. Several factors have been

associated with women's advance to top management positions. Companies with women

in such positions tend to (a) be in industries whose workforces have more than 49%

women (Catalyst, 2006b), (b) have high rates of women in lower level management jobs,

(c) high rates of management turnover, (d) low average management salary, and (e) an

emphasis on employee development and promotion (Goodman, Fields, & Blum, 2003).

Age also appears to be a factor, which seems promising for younger women. Women

who do make it to the top tend to be younger than male peers and to have fewer years of

service with the company and in their job positions (Burress & Zucca, 2004). In addition

to getting to the top faster than male executives, these women tend to work for companies that actively hire and promote women to top positions.

Women's career journeys and narratives. Women are entering the workforce at increasing rates—oftentimes equal to that of men; however, their career journeys and narratives typically do not involve achieving high ranks in the organization (Cornelius & Skinner, 2005). Despite educational attainment that matches or exceeds that of men, women still tend to reach lower levels in the organization and earn less pay for the same positions. Although the glass ceiling explanation still has popularity, it adopts a negative victim perspective that can undermine women's career motivations and efforts. Moreover, women's desires for personal recognition, accomplishments, and work-life balance may be better explanations for their career choices as they re-evaluate and adapt their definitions of success (and, subsequently, their career journeys) throughout their lives as their situations and needs change. Cornelius and Skinner explained, "It may be that the failure to achieve positions at the highest levels represents choice rather than repression" (p. 597). Dwoskin (2012) pointed out that periods of transitions (e.g., when ideas of success are redefined, new positions are sought, or maternity leave is taken), can result in adverse career effects, such as long-term unemployment, irreversible career breaks, divergences, permanent loss of professional reputation, and reduced or eliminated chances for promotion.

In contrast to the norms of the 1960s and 1970s, child bearing and rearing are increasingly unlikely to remove women from the workforce today. Women are working later into pregnancy, with 67% of those expecting a first child continuing to work while pregnant in 2001-2003, compared to only 44% of pregnant women working in the early 1960s when foundational civil rights legislation was enacted. Some 80% of such women

worked until their ninth month of pregnancy in 2001-2003, compared to only 35% in the period from 1961 to 1965. Women also are returning to work sooner, with the majority (55%) now back to work within 6 months of childbirth, compared to only 14% in the early 1960s. Moreover, 64% of women were back to work within 1 year of childbirth in 2000-2002, compared to only 17% in the early 1960s. The percentage of women not returning to work after giving birth fell from 36% in the 1980s to 25% from 2001-2003 (US Census Bureau, 2008).

Despite these shifts in women's work participation patterns, a United Nations (2010) report added that women tend to develop and maintain low or weak expectations about their perceived range of career options and, thus, make less effective career decisions and pursue desired career plans with less consistency. Hackett and Betz (1981) referred to this as the phenomenon of women having lower career-related self-efficacy due to influences ranging from sex-role socialization, attributions of success, stereotyping in media, educational and occupational trends, lack of role models, and lack of encouragement.

Women's Career Journeys by Generation

This section considers women's career experiences in light of their generational cohort. Generational cohort theory is reviewed first, followed by a discussion of the influences on women's career journeys by generation, women's workforce participation across the generations, and women's career journeys across the generations.

Generational cohort theory. A generational cohort is an ''identifiable group that shares birth years, age location and significant life events at critical developmental stages'' (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66). Significant life events include major political, economic, environmental, or sociocultural events such as wars, technological

advancements, or economic depressions, among others. According to generational cohort theory, these events—particularly when they happen during one's formative years—strongly shape individuals' personalities, values, and expectations (Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008). Smola and Sutton (2002) added that once individuals reach adulthood, personalities, values, and expectations tend to remain stable. As a result, the theory suggests that people born within the same generation and sociohistorical milieu share certain attitudes, values, and behaviors that may differ from individuals born within another generation (Sullivan, Forret, Carraher, & Mainiero, 2009).

Although authors vary on the specific boundaries of the generations, Araneta (2009) has observed based on her literature review that the four distinct generations of working age are: (a) Traditionalists, born between 1929 and 1945; (b) Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; (c) Generation Xers, born between 1965 and 1979; and (d) Millennials, or Generation Y born between 1980 and 2000.

The origins of generational cohort theory traces back to Mannheim (1952), who emphasized the importance of social factors in human development. Mannheim argued that characteristic generational values emerge from an interaction of the individual and the social events that unfold and affect the cohort. Inglehart (1977) further developed generational cohort theory and Strauss and Howe (1991) popularized it. Today, birth generation is understood as "a social construction in which individuals born during a similar time period experience, and are influenced by, historic and social contexts in such a way that these experiences differentiate one generational cohort from another" (Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012, p. 342).

A sizable body of literature has been built regarding issues of intergenerational communication and conflict, as well as discussing shifts organizations need to make to

accommodate the up and coming Millennial generation (e.g., P. Hill, 2002; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Steele & Gordon, 2001; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). In terms of individual careers, Sullivan et al. (2009) asserted that members (particularly women) from different generational cohorts cultivated highly diverse expectations and roles with respect to work and family. It follows that members of different cohorts want different things from their jobs.

Despite the recent popularity of generational cohort theory and growth in this body of literature, Deal (2007) found no empirical evidence to support the idea of significant differences in work values across the four generations. Parry and Urwin (2011) concluded based on their own research that the so-called generational differences are rooted in age-related life stages and maturity levels that affect individuals' values and behaviors. Other researchers have echoed Deal's and Parry and Urwin's criticisms (Johnson & Lopes, 2008; Levenson, 2010; Macky et al., 2008; Meriac, Woehr, & Banister, 2010; Real, Mitnick, & Maloney, 2010; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007), arguing that generational cohort theory and subsequent recommendations are more an artifact of popular culture than of social science (Giancola, 2006). Joshi, Dencker, and Franz (2011) took a more moderate view, pointing out that the validity of the claims regarding generational differences remains controversial and that more research is needed, particularly as it relates to implications for organizational change, socialization, and career development.

Due to the lack of scholarly support for the so-called generational profiles that have been propagated throughout the media and popular literature, these profiles are not presented in this review. The remainder of this review focuses on the influences on

women's career journeys by generation, women's workforce participation across the generations, and women's career journeys across the generations.

Influences on women's career journeys by generation. Examination of the literature on career journeys point to four key factors that influence the career path an individual takes and the professional positions he or she assumes. The first factor is gender, which Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) argued is among "the most powerful of all influences on vocational behavior" (p. 63). Historically, particularly for Traditionalists and Baby Boomers, women had fewer occupational choices because of sexism, discrimination, and limited education (Looft, 1971; Mendez & Crawford, 2002; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). Furthermore, Heins, Hendricks, and Martindale (1982) found that in the 1970s, families often encouraged the educational and career aspirations of male children but not those of female children, thus, reinforcing sex roles such as women placing a priority on staying in the home.

Possibly more insidious, females appeared to internalize these cultural norms. Wahl and Blackhurst (2000), for example, replicated studies conducted in the 1980s and found that although girls had broadened their career preferences, their expectations for career attainment remained low, especially for high status, traditionally male jobs. Around the same time, however, other researchers found that females demonstrated an interest in a greater number of careers and displayed more gender-role flexibility in their career aspirations than males (Mendez & Crawford, 2002). Nevertheless, Watson Quatman, and Edler (2002) found that adolescent girls continue to feel conflicted about their future careers contrasted against their commitment to marriage and family. These contradicting findings reveal the need to better understand women's career journeys, their professional possibilities, and how they make sense of these journeys and opportunities.

The second factor influencing women's career journeys is parental career status. Namely, the model that mothers and fathers have presented to their children regarding work have significant conscious and subconscious impacts on children's career aspirations and choices (Burlin, 1976; Signer & Saldana, 2001; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). Given that women growing up in different generations witnessed different degrees of women's labor force participation and different career options for women, it would follow that women of different generations would have different career journeys. However, confirming this requires additional research.

The third factor influencing women's career journeys is parental educational attainment (Mau & Bikos, 2000). Jones and Womble (1998) found in their study that students whose mothers completed either a 2-year or 4-year postsecondary degree had higher perceptions of work and career-related issues. Women growing up in different generations were raised by mothers who had differing levels of educational attainment. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) indicate that in 1970, 33.5% of women in the workforce had less than a high school education and 44.3% had a high school education but no college. Only 11.2% were college graduates. In marked contrast, in 2010, 36.4% of women in the workforce were college graduates and 30.3% had some college or an associate's degree. Only 6.8% had less than a high school education. It follows that women of different generations would have different career journeys because their mothers likely had different levels of educational attainment.

The fourth factor influencing women's career journeys is comprised of their own educational attainment, as this is linked to women's earnings (Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Schiffler, 1975). As women become educated, their career possibilities and the overall duration of their careers begin to expand, particularly in professional careers (Bronstein,

Black, Pfenning, & White, 1987; Tinklin, Howieson, & Raffe, 2005). Despite women's increasing education levels and the fact that they have become the majority of the undergraduate population in degree-granting institutions in the U.S. (Peter & Horn, 2005), their incomes continued to be lower than their male counterparts.

  Women's workforce participation across the generations. Perceptions about women's roles in the workplace have shifted dramatically over time. Although instances of women working outside the home can be found even before the Industrial Revolution, the predominant social role for women was to care for her husband and children in the home (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). Any work outside the home was to be of secondary importance (Gutek & Larwood, 1987; Tinklin et al., 2005). A common societal fear was that valued feminine traits such as meekness and submissiveness would be lost if women entered the workforce (Astin, 1984; Nieva & Gutek, 1981). By mid-19th century, women had slowly made their way into teaching, nursing, and clerical work, jobs that had a caregiving orientation and thus were suitably feminine (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). Nevertheless, those women who did work outside the home either received no pay or were paid less than their male counterparts. Moreover, many women still were viewed as immoral, unfeminine, pitiful, negligent mothers, and temporary and inconsequential as employees.

  After the Second World War, labor force participation by women continued to grow, even among married women and mothers (Rainey & Borders, 1997; Watson et al., 2002). Whereas women's labor market participation was 30% in 1950, by the late 1970s, nearly 50% of all married women and 40% of all women over age 16 were working (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). The World Bank (2014) reported that women's labor market participation in the United States in 2012 was 57%. Nieva and Gutek argued that these

increasing rates of participation reflect more favorable attitudes about working women, longer life expectancies, changing marriage patterns, and improvements in and acceptance of birth control methods. Rainey and Borders (1997) concluded that there is now little question of whether women will participate in the workforce. They added that working women are the new normal rather than being deviations from the norm. Women also have increasingly pursued careers traditionally seen as being male-oriented, including engineering, technology, trades, and among others.

Women's career journeys across the generations. Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng, and Kuron (2012) examined retrospective biographical accounts from 105 individuals about their careers in 5-year increments (e.g., 20-24, 25-29). This approach enabled them to compare members across the four generations within specific life-cycle stages. The researchers concluded that although the accounts revealed a number of differences in career paths across the various generations, career patterns across all four generations showed a typical upward career path, along with some lateral, downward, and career track changes.

Significant intergenerational differences found by Lyons et al. (2012) concerned the number of job changes and changes of employer, which were particularly evident in the 20-24 and 30-34 lifecycle stages. Lyons et al. found that Millennials changed jobs and employers at a much higher rate than other generations during the 20-24 age bracket and that Generation Xers changed jobs and employers significantly more in their early 30s than did the two older generations. The researchers concluded that there is evidence that later generations explore and establish career stages in different ways and have more career mobility (Ng, Sorensen, Eby, & Feldman, 2007) than did earlier generations. Ng et

al. argued that the increased career mobility is due to economic conditions that preclude job stability and career establishment for both men and women.

Twenge and Campbell (2008) later argued based on their evidence that younger generations are more individualistic, have lower need for social approval, are more extroverted and have higher self-esteem than previous generations, meaning that they have less attachment to jobs and organizations than earlier generations. They concluded that Millennials change jobs and employers consistent with their personal career goals.

Yet another explanation for the increasing career mobility may be found in the changing psychological contract that now favors commitment to one's profession (and more frequent job changes) rather than traditional long-term employment and paying one's dues at a single organization (Baruch, 2004; Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

Arnett further posited that the increasing prevalence of *emerging adulthood*, wherein people delay entry into the roles and responsibilities of adulthood (e.g., financial independence, marriage, parenthood) until close to age 30, may be associated with an era of prolonged career exploration and establishment, as young workers take a longer period of time to complete their education, explore job opportunities and settle down in their careers. For their part, Baby Boomers and Traditionalists have shown more career mobility from age 45 to 65, reflecting a period of second career exploration and establishment (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2010; Kupperschmidt, 2000).

Lyons et al. (2012) concluded that the career mobility witnessed in younger generations is the result of recent economic conditions and the pace of change (which affects all generations in the workforce) rather than the result of generational dispositions or preferences.

Summary

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to the present study purpose to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. Although several authors have examined the generational cohorts and contended that significant differences exist and influence their workplace experiences, others have contended that the apparent differences are a function of individual preferences, current global and economic conditions, and life stage and maturity differences. Moreover, limited information is available on women's specific career journeys, especially across generations. As women are increasingly the recipients of undergraduate and advanced degrees and join the workforce, it is important to understand their career trajectories, including what factors facilitate and obstruct their career exploration and establishment. Moreover, to best support women in achieving their desired goals, it is important to understand how career journeys may differ across the generations. The next chapter describes the methods that were used to conduct this investigation.

Chapter 3

Method

The purpose of this study was to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. The study sought to surface the voices of women who believe they have achieved meaningful careers and those who feel stuck or unfulfilled. Four research questions were defined:

1. What were their career decisions and milestones?

2. What internal and external career facilitators have women experienced?

3. What internal and external career barriers have they faced?

4. What were their methods for addressing perceived barriers and challenges?

This chapter describes the methods used in the present study. An overview of the research design is presented first, followed by a description of the sampling procedures used to recruit participants. The procedures used to gather and analyze data are outlined. The chapter closes with a summary.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach to address the research questions posed in this study. The strength of qualitative studies is that they allow the researcher to capture both a breadth and depth of human experience, emotions, and beliefs not possible through quantitative research. Additionally, Maxwell (2005) argues that the strengths of qualitative research include its inductive approach, in that it focuses on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers. Qualitative research can be a valuable method by which to learn about people's feelings, thoughts, and experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The drawbacks of qualitative research as the sole method or approach is that it requires the researcher to have a higher level of familiarity with this

form of research, be fairly skilled at interviewing and observing others, and these studies require additional time for data collection and analysis. Challenges with this type of study also include constraints on time, the limited availability of participants, and the complexity of the topic.

Creswell (2007) defined narrative research "as a study of stories or descriptions of a series of events that accounts for human experiences" (p. 234). Moreover, narrative study seeks to elicit the everyday life world of those studied by discovering their descriptions of experiences as well as their internalized meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). This study employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews and narrative analysis to gather and analyze data. The strength of narrative inquiry is that it is an excellent method by which to access participants' observations and insights, interpretations of situations, and concept of reality (Punch, 2013). Punch argues that interviews are "one of the most powerful ways we have of understanding others" (p. 168). This idea is further emphasized by Jones (1985), who states,

> In order to understand other persons' constructions of reality, we would do well to ask them . . . and to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their terms (rather than those imposed by rigidly and *a priori* by ourselves) and in depth which addresses the right context that is the substance of their meanings. (p. 46)

The strength of narrative inquiry derives from the elicitation of the participant's authentic voice; it focuses specifically on the individual's life story or history, thus reducing the researcher's own interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

A qualitative method was considered appropriate for this study because of its exploratory nature and its aim to capture a deep understanding of the rich tapestries of the participants' lived experiences and gain insight into how they made meaning of their career journeys. Creswell (2007) stated, "we conduct qualitative research when we want

to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study" (p. 40). A narrative approach to data collection was considered appropriate for this study because of its focus on women and the subtle and pervasive nuances of their career experience. Brown and Gilligan (1991) assert that narrative methods, which encourage participants to tell their stories in their rich complexity, are critical for use with women, as the method allows for participants to reclaim their lost voices and lost strengths, and to make sense of the choices they've made.

Sampling Procedures

Qualitative studies focus on examining a topic "holistically and comprehensively . . . in its complexity, to understand it in its context" and to "convey the full picture" of human behavior (Punch, 2013, p. 186). Although the rule of thumb in sampling is to recruit as many participants as necessary to answer the research question (Marshall, 1996), no hard and fast rules govern appropriate sampling in qualitative methods research. The sample size for this study was 16 women (4 women from each generation).

Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to gain deep "insight and so must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Convenience and snowball sampling strategies were used to find participants. Convenience sampling involves identifying study candidates through the researcher's personal and professional networks. Snowball sampling involves asking study participants to recommend additional study candidates (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013).

Sampling began with the researcher creating a list of her colleagues, friends, and acquaintances who satisfy the following participation criteria:

1. A woman who has performed paid work outside the home, in any role and in any industry, for at least 5 years, at the time of this study.

2. At least 75% of her paid work has been performed in the U.S. or for a U.S.-based company.

3. A woman who belongs to one of the following generational cohorts: Traditionalists (born between 1927-1945), Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964), Generation X (born between 1965-1980), and Generation Y (born between 1981-2000).

The researcher then contacted potential participants in person, by telephone, or by email (see Appendix A) to describe the study, the nature of participation, the type of participants sought, and to invite them to participate in the interview. The individuals also were asked to suggest additional potential interview candidates.

The researcher scheduled an interview time with the candidates who expressed an interest in being interviewed. The semi-structured interviews took place in-person, over the telephone, or via Skype because the participants were geographically dispersed and in different time zones. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected for this study using an interview (see Appendix B) specifically developed for this study. At the start of the interview, the researcher reintroduced the study purpose and reiterated the confidential and voluntary nature of the participation. The interview consisted of 35 questions designed to gather in-depth information about women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generation. Specifically, the internal and external barriers to and facilitators of women's career advancement, success and fulfillment were examined.

The interview began with 11 warm-up questions to ease the researcher and participant into the interview. Questions gathered data related to their demographics and current occupation.

The next set of questions examined the participants' career and life from the perspective of the past. The first of these questions began broadly with, "Tell me the story of 'what you wanted to be when you grew up.' Go back in time and revisit that little girl's dreams." Participants were encouraged to provide as much detail as possible. Subsequent questions probed for additional information about specific professional positions they held in the workforce, including the milestones, choices and motivations behind each professional transition, culminating an "illustration" of her career journey. The researcher also probed for both highpoints and successes as well as barriers and challenges that impacted the participant's career journey. Finally, the participants were asked to evaluate their level of success and fulfillment in their career journey to date by reflecting on their career journey in its entirety. Prompts and probes were used to elicit rich data.

The last set of questions examined participants' plans for her future career. For example, Question 34(b) asked, "What are some of the careers or roles you'd like to try next?" The final question in the interview asked participants, "Would you like to share your after-thoughts with me about today's interview?" As noted earlier, Brown and Gilligan (1991) assert that narrative methods, which encourage participants to tell their stories in their rich complexity, are critical for use with women, as the method allows for participants to reclaim their lost voices and lost strengths, and to make sense of the choices they've made. It is critical for the researcher to gather additional data after the

initial interview that captured the impact this research intervention has on the participants, or the *thick description,* as noted by Punch.

A post-interview questionnaire (see Appendix C) was sent 1 week after the interview to gather participants' reflections since the interview and gain insight into the impact of the narrative intervention on the participants. Most of the study participants did not return the questionnaire.

Data Analysis Procedures

Content analysis as described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013) was used to examine the qualitative data. The following steps were followed:

1. The researcher read through each transcript several times to confirm their accuracy and become familiar with the general nature of the responses.

2. The first round of coding focused on identifying the main ideas present in each block of text (meaning unit). A meaning unit represents a block of text that reflects one cohesive idea. A meaning unit could be a single word, a phrase, or an entire paragraph.

3. After the initial round of coding was completed, the data were reorganized as needed and then reviewed to group like codes, split out large categories into smaller categories, and reorganize data again as needed.

4. When the coding is complete and the wording and hierarchy of the codes adequately reflect the data, the number of participants reporting each theme was determined.

5. As a final step, the analysis was reviewed by a second rater who examined the analysis and identified any perceived errors. Interrater reliability was assessed as the quotient based on the number of codes in agreement (based on the researcher and second rater review) divided by the total number of codes. Any areas of disagreement were discussed and resolved. Interrater agreement of 0.93 was achieved.

Summary

This study used a qualitative method design. Sixteen women were interviewed to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generation. Specifically, the internal and external barriers to and facilitators of women's career

advancement, success, and fulfillment were examined. Interviews were transcribed and

content analysis was applied to the data. The next chapter reports the results of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. The study sought to surface the voices of women who believe they have achieved meaningful careers and those who feel stuck or unfulfilled. Four research questions were defined:

1. What were their career decisions and milestones?

2. What internal and external career facilitators have women experienced?

3. What internal and external career barriers have they faced?

4. What were their methods for addressing perceived barriers and challenges?

This chapter reports the results of the study. The participants' demographics are presented first. Next, the women's career decisions and milestones are described. Their perceived internal and external facilitators are then reported, followed by identification of their perceived internal and external barriers. Finally, their methods for addressing perceived barriers and challenges are identified.

Participant Demographics

Table 1 presents the demographics for the 16 participants interviewed in this study. The sample was comprised predominantly of married (n = 11, 68.8%), Caucasian (n = 11, 68.8%) women. Six women have one or more grown children, two have children at home, and eight have no children. Three finished high school, 3 have a bachelor's degree, and 10 have a master's degree.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Country in which raised	Ethnicity	Marital and Family Status	Educational Attainment	Brief Career History
Traditionalist					
Elizabeth	US	Caucasian	Widowed, no children	High school	Full-time roles in accounting and bookkeeping for entire career. Plans to work into retirement years
Grace	South Africa	Caucasian	Married, 4 grown children	High school	Primarily spent career in progressively higher level secretarial and administrative positions. Today, owns a sewing business and plans to continue working through retirement years
Joanne	Beirut	Caucasian	Married, 3 grown children	Master's	Full-time substitute elementary education teacher. Became social worker after 50 years of age. Now retired and volunteering,
Judith	Germany	Caucasian	Married, 2 grown children	Bachelors	Part-time adult education teacher. Now retired and volunteering.
Boomer					
Barbara	South Africa	Caucasian	Married, 2 grown children	Bachelors	Began as a elementary education teacher, then moved into business industry and held clerical roles. Today, works full time in the federal government.
Betsy	US	Caucasian	Married, 2 grown children	Master's	Full-time, increasingly higher level management roles in human resources for various industries. Currently owns and operates organization development consulting business.
Sharon	Jamaica	Black	Married, 1 grown child	Master's	Full-time, progressively higher level leadership roles in the commercial printing and financial reporting industries. Currently holds senior vice president role.
Suzanne	US	Caucasian	Married, No children	Master's	Full-time, increasingly higher level management roles in information technology for various industries. Currently owns and operates organization development consulting business focused on information technology industry.
Gen X					
Cheryl	US	Caucasian	Single, No children	Bachelors	Began her career in talent recruitment and has moved into the organization development field in the information technology services industry. Also owns and operates a life coaching business part time.
Erica	US	Caucasian	Married, No children	Master's	Full-time progressively more responsible roles in the human resources field in the gas and oil field.

Pseudonym	Country in which raised	Ethnicity	Marital and Family Status	Educational Attainment	Brief Career History
Jennifer	Australia	East Indian	Married, 2 teenage children	Master's	Began her career in real estate sales and then operational support. Today, she is planning to launch her own organization development consulting business.
Shelly	US	Caucasian	Married, No children	High school	Began career in music industry behind the scenes in clerical and agent support roles. In her 30s, launched her music career and band with her husband. Today, she is a full-time singer, songwriter, and musician education consultant.
Gen Y					
Amanda	US	Filipino	Single, No children	Master's	Began her career as a business consultant in the human resources industry. Today, she is an human resources consultant for one of the Big 5 consultancy.
Chloe	Mexico	Mexican	Married, 1 infant	Master's	Began her career working with children in early development, then moved into teaching English as a Second Language classes. Throughout college, she worked in her family's retail business managing the operations. After college, she practiced as a psychologist and later moved into the consulting field. Today, she holds a leadership role in the human resources and organization development field in the retail industry.
Hillary	US	Caucasian	Single, No children	Master's	Began her career as a management consultant. Today, she specializes in the healthcare industry as an organization development consultant for a Big 5 consultancy.
Olivia	China	Chinese	Single, No children	Master's	Began her career in the field of human resources with a computer manufacturer. Today, she is a management consultant for a Big 5 consultancy.

Career Decisions and Milestones

Career decisions and milestones consisted of perceived influences on the

participants' career selections, their self-described process of career planning and

exploration, and their self-reported high points and successes. The metaphors the women

used to depict their career journeys also are presented. The following sections describe

these findings.

Influences on career selection. Participants were asked to describe how they selected their careers. Five key influencers were identified through the analysis and substantial consistency in responses was evident across the generations: mentors or role models, work-life balance considerations, passions and interests, financial needs, and hostile work environments (see Table 2). These themes are described in the sections below.

Table 2

Influences on Career Choice

	Trad.	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Role of Others					
Mentors or role models influenced development and career choices	3	3	4	3	13
Role of Family and Work-Life Balance					
Prioritized personal over professional life	4	2	3	1	10
Balanced personal and professional life	1	1	1	0	3
Turned passions and interests into part-time and full-time work	2	3	2	2	9
Financial need influenced career choices	1	3	4	1	9
Hostile work environment shaped choices	1	1	2	0	4

N = 16 (4 from each generation); Trad. = Traditionalist

Mentors or role models. The most common influence on career decision was from mentors or role models. Family members tended to be parents or other family members, neighbors, or other role models in a desired profession. Hillary, a Generation Y management consultant, described the influence of her father:

> My dad was a big one. A mentor in [the computer company], he really pushed me into consulting and said that he knew me well enough and knew the field well enough, and said, "This really is you." He kind of pushed me into it. About my father, he always just supported me in any of my decisions. I bounced ideas off of him. He was a sounding board.

Barbara, a Boomer, discussed the powerful role of her neighbor when Barbara was a child:

> My neighbor taught the clothing designing. . . . Every summer holiday, I would hang out with her. When I got to about age 11, she made patterns for the local companies that couldn't afford a designer. I was tiny . . . and she'd give it to me and I would make it bigger, into all the different sizes that it needed to be. She taught me finer clothing sewing. She never gave me money for all the things I did, but she gave me fabric and showed me how to make dresses that were slightly different from what my mother made for me. I did that from age 11 until I went to college.

Erica, a Generation X human resources business partner, shared the influential impact of a college professor on her choice: "My professor for my HR 101 course. He was phenomenal. . . . He worked for an insurance company for about 20 years before going into academia. . . . He was really dedicated to us as students. He was pivotal."

Although role models and mentors were often cited as having some impact on the career selection of most of the participants, one participant cautioned that emulating role models or mentors can also serve to steer a career seeker in the wrong direction as well. Chloe, a Generation Y professional in Talent Development gave this comparison:

> Sometimes you get a professor and it's like "Oh my God, what they do is so cool. I want to do that!" You never get to meet them as a real person. You never get to see other aspects of their life. You only see what they want to portray. They make such a big impression that you say, "One day I'll do that." But if you were to really get into what they're doing you might not want to.

Work-life balance considerations. The next most common influence on career decision was the role of family and work-life balance. Ten participants across all four generations shared that they placed their husband's, boyfriend's, or children's needs above their career. Joanne, a Traditionalist retiree, described her motivation to become a teacher:

> In December 1961, I got married. I was teaching, and then . . . I got pregnant 6 months after we were married, so then I substituted. So I substituted all the time. . . . Family came first. The reason I wanted to be a teacher was that I wanted to be

home with my children. I knew that I would have children. I wanted to be home with them in the summers, and I wanted to travel with them, which we did.

Jennifer, a Generation X graduate student, shared that she first chose to be a stay-at-home mom and then chose a job that would still allow her flexibility to be with her children:

> In 2000, I had my twins, and I stayed home and did not work for 2 years. . . . In 2002, I realized I am really not someone who [can] be a stay-at-home Mum. I really felt I needed to go back into the workforce. I wanted to find a role that would allow me the flexibility of hours so I could still be with my children.

Barbara, a Boomer, explained that she had to leave her management position due to poor work-life balance:

> School started at 7:00 in the morning because it was a boarding school. You were there from 7:00 until 1:00, and then school was finished, and I would go home and prepare. Every now and again, you had hall duty and you stayed for the week for the 2 hours. I didn't get paid for any extra time I worked. I was working 60 hours a week, the children were cooking the food, washing the clothes, and cleaning the house. They called one of those family meetings to say this wasn't working! [My husband] agreed with them that I needed to find a 40 hours a week job.

Only three women (one per generation, except Generation Y) reported that despite marriage, career advancement was blended with marital and family milestones or career choices were actively negotiated. Erica, a Generation X human resources professional, described the arrangement she and her husband made to give equal importance to both their careers:

> [After] I got married, [my husband and I made an agreement.] . . . The deal that he and I . . . made was essentially that we would take turns. For example, in Washington, we stayed longer there because he had his job extended. Then we went to Canada because I got a job there.

Passions and interests. Nine women across the four generations reported turning their passions and interests into part-time work and full-time careers. Joanne, a Traditionalist whose passion is to really help others, discussed what prompted her

decision to return to school at 50 years of age and ultimately start her own social work

practice:

> [I went] back to school, [to] get my masters in psychology. I enjoyed it. I enjoy working with people a lot. I do not like paperwork, which is what prompted me to go on to start my own company, because at that time the mental health situation . . . was such that you were given a certain amount of time with clients . . . and I wanted to be able to give my clients the time that they needed versus the time that they were allowed.

Shelly, a Generation X professional singer and songwriter shared her life-long passion for

music and its significance in her life:

> [I remember] my first grade teacher . . . told me that I was going to be a professional singer one day. I told her I very much wanted to be a singer, but I didn't know what "professional" meant. I could hear music very easily and I had a good tone and I had a good recall [and love] for music. It seemed to flow pretty naturally for me. [In] 1998, [my husband and I] officially started . . . our own record label. Since then, we've been touring and making our living writing music and performing. . . . I would have to [say] that this career, or form of expression, chose me. I do not feel whole or complete or fully functioning if I am not doing music.

Barbara, a Boomer, turned her love of quilting into a part-time job after losing her full-

time position:

> I left [my legal receptionist job] and had no idea what I wanted to do. In fact I don't think I wanted to do anything. Except, since 1994, I had been teaching quilting at adult education [classes]. The circle of friends I had developed were all quilters. We were paying [someone] to quilt our quilts on her long-arm machine. The girls all said [to me], "Look, you don't have a job. Why don't you buy one of those long-arm machines and we'll give you our quilts and you can quilt them!" [My husband] and I spoke about it . . . [and ultimately] bought a long-arm machine. I considered that this would be a part time job. I couldn't imagine doing it as a full-time job.

Financial needs. Another nine participants (primarily Boomers and Generation X

women) reported financial needs as having significantly influenced their career choice.

These financial needs arose from a variety of circumstances including divorce,

unanticipated debt, and economic downturn.

Grace, a Traditionalist, shared the impact of unexpectedly becoming a single mother in that generation, had on her:

> I didn't really choose to have a secretarial career, so to speak. I *had* to return to the workforce after my divorce to provide for my family. . . . I think I always believed that having some skills to be able to work in an office would always stand me in good stead. When I married, I did not anticipate having to go back into the work place. I was dedicated to play the role of mother and wife, and maybe when the kids were grown I might think about that [working outside the home]. I never anticipated having to do that at a young age with young children.

Suzanne, a Boomer, shared that her early job decisions were motivated by financial crisis:

> A lot of my motivation in my career, early on, through college, was "how can I do the best that I possibly can to get to the next level, so I can make more and pay more bills?" Married at 19, divorced at 21. He left me in considerable debt. Being in a community property state, I had all the debt, because they couldn't find him. That was a big motivation for me to do what's needed so that I can advance to the next level. It wasn't necessarily, "What do I like to do?" or "What would be fun?" or "Am I utilizing my strengths?" but it was "How can I get ahead and make more money?" That was a huge factor throughout my 20s.

Olivia, from Generation Y, recalled having to move to another state to find work:

> When I graduated in summer 2008, the economy was bad in California. A lot of American students couldn't find a job. I had not only to find a job but I had to find one where they would sponsor my H1-B work visa. That was a challenge. When I got an offer in Texas, I thought, "Oh well, why not. I've never been to Texas."

Of note, the Traditionalists who did not experience divorce each recognized their good fortune of having a husband who provided well, which alleviated these women from the financial worries other participants expressed. Judith, a Traditionalist and former part-time teacher admitted, "For many of [my teaching colleagues], . . . it was a financial struggle, and they used to say that I was lucky because I didn't have to worry about the financial part. And they were right."

Other women described the impact of financial need in delaying or limiting their career choices, having to take roles that were stepping-stones instead. Jennifer, of Generation X, expressed it this way: "When you are struggling, you end up taking jobs that come your way rather than being very proactive about the jobs you want to take."

Hostile work environments. Four participants (excluding any Generation Y women) stated that a hostile work environment significantly influenced their career choice. The nature of the environment ranged from blatant gender discrimination to unethical behavior. Joanne, a Traditionalist, faced gender discrimination at a university:

> Then in 1973, [we] moved to Utah and I [was a substitute teacher]. We were there for 3 years. I wanted to work for the University of Utah and called up the department of international students. . . . They had wanted a part-time person, and that director told me that he only wanted men to apply. So, I continued to sub[stitute teach].

Hillary, from Generation X, recalled having to quit her job and find another to escape a colleague's unethical behavior:

> The individual that the owner had put in charge of the recruiters . . . was given a lot of autonomy. He was not very ethical. He would go through all of the new job opportunities that would come through for us to recruit on, and he would cherry pick them and take all of the good opportunities and leave the scraps for us. The owner was aware but didn't do anything about it. When you're in an environment and it's toxic and you have to get out. . . . I couldn't do it anymore. So again I started my job search.

Process of career planning and exploration. After discussing the influences on their career selection, participants were asked to describe the process of career planning and exploration they used to find their careers. Five key approaches were identified through the analysis. Additionally, substantial consistency in responses was evident across the generations, with the exception of the deliberate approach: exploration led to clearer self-awareness and, subsequently, career choices, failure of one plan led to continued exploration or limbo, avocation and career unfolded naturally, working at a

young age, and deliberate career choices (see Table 3). These themes are described in the

sections below.

Table 3

Process of Finding One's Career

	Trad.	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Period of exploration led to clearer self-awareness and career choices and goals	1	3	2	2	9
Failure of initial career plan led to continued exploration or limbo	2	3	2	1	8
Avocation and career unfolded naturally, one step at a time	1	2	2	3	8
Made deliberate career choices in accordance with desired development plans	0	1	0	2	3

$N = 16$ (4 from each generation); Trad. = Traditionalist

Period of exploration led to career choices. The most common approach to the

process of finding one's career was through a period of exploration that led to clearer

self-awareness and career choices. Exploration tended to be aimed at testing out roles to

see if they were a good fit, to simply following one's passion and interests, to fumbling

along until becoming aware of one's passion and interests. Linda, a Boomer organization

development (OD) consultant, described the approach she took during law school to

explore law careers:

> In law school, I was a law clerk, from 1977 to 1979. That transition and that work
> was about me wanting to see what the actual work was like. It is one thing to
> study it, and [another] thing to do legal work. I started doing work as a law clerk
> and I did that at a few firms. That was very opportunistic. I'd hear about a firm
> doing the kind of law I was interested in and I'd apply and get job opportunities
> with them.

> Amanda, a Generation Y consultant, sought out a role in consulting based on her

interest in the field:

My first job . . . was [as] an associate consultant [at] . . . a human resources consulting firm. What motivated that move is that I have an interest in the field of organizational development. I found that from the courses I was taking at college, my organization strategy, organization behavior and resource management, were my favorite classes. Being a business major, I wanted to combine the two. I knew that consulting in general would give me exposure to lots of different types of projects and clients, which was important to me because I wanted to be able to continuously learn on the job.

Hillary, a Generation X human resource consultant and life coach, shared the struggles she experienced trying to learn about herself and find a field she liked and work she wanted to do:

If I have to decide what I'm going to do for the rest of my life, let me talk with my friends. It's quite a big choice! You're 18 years old and you're told, "Here. Sign up for school. You need to pick something to do forever." It is really overwhelming. That's why I had such a hard time with it. You're given no guidance. "Here are opportunities. This is what's good. Here's what this will involve." None of that. You're just thrown in and you learn as you go. . . . I changed my major five or six times. . . . I struggled a lot. It took me a while. I . . . started out with the music major and realized it wasn't for me, and went on to Psychology. I was basically swayed by everybody that I knew . . . [who said] there [would] be no jobs available. . . . So I ended up in journalism. Ultimately, I have always wanted to help people, so I have found how I can do that in the human resources function. The life coaching is along the psychology side of things, so it has circled back, but way back in the day you never heard of life coaching. That wasn't something that people hired. That's definitely a new profession.

Failure of initial career plan. Eight participants' responses indicated that another common approach to the process of finding a career resulted from the failure of an initial career plan. This often led the participant to further exploration or, in some cases, limbo. Notably, three of the eight participants mentioning this theme were Boomers.

The failures participants described tended to be driven by failing to meet requirements to pursue a dream, being laid off from a job, and losing one's interest in a profession. Jennifer, from Generation X shared her disappointment about not passing entrance exams:

When I grew up, I really, really wanted to be a doctor just like my mother and father. . . . I wanted to be . . . a psychologist just like my father. It represented for me wanting to please them but it also had the component of healing others and having a great impact with the work I would be doing. . . . I did not get into medicine. I did not score high enough on the [secondary school qualifying] exams and I was not admitted into medicine, which was a great disappointment.

Amanda, a Generation Y consultant, expressed her angst after being laid off from

her dream job:

I know coming out of college, part of my career goal was to work for about 5 years at my first company [the HR consulting company], and move a couple of levels up and to build some sort of an expertise. That was my intent, but that didn't happen because . . . I was laid off [and out of work] for about 6 months. . . . I expected to remain in the organization effectiveness, human resources consulting space . . . to develop in that area. . . . That was my intent, but it didn't happen. . . . I found myself pretty down during that period. I didn't want to do anything. It was challenging because I was fresh out of college. I had [only] 2 years of experience. Consulting is quite broad, and so it was hard to feel like I had an expertise or a focus.

Barbara, a Boomer, shared her devastation after realizing she did not like teaching

at all:

I went and got a job at a school teaching, amongst other things, home economics. That was the rudest awakening I'd ever had because within the first 6 months, I realized I actually didn't like teaching at all. I discovered that I don't like other people's children. . . . I taught for 4 years and found it boring, limiting, and repetitive. Extremely repetitive. At the end of my fourth year of teaching, I left. I was so happy to leave. The reason I left is I was bored out of my mind. I had never been bored before. I found school challenging and interesting, I found college unbelievable, and then when I had to go to work and actually teach, I thought that everybody could teach! It never occurred to me that I wouldn't like it. [After that,] I had no expectations. I think that I thought I was going to be a teacher. I was devastated when I realized that I didn't want to do that. It meant that I had miscalculated very badly. I was upset for a very long time about the fact that I didn't want to teach. I . . . had no idea what I wanted to do. In fact, I don't think I wanted to do anything.

Avocation and career unfolded naturally. Eight participants' responses revealed

that another common approach to the process of finding one's career was taking small

steps toward goals or falling into a career by chance. Notably, three of the eight

participants mentioning this theme were from Generation Y.

The small steps participants described were often unplanned and roles often

presented themselves or "found" the participant. Chloe, a Generation Y director of

training, claimed she always took the next obvious small step that came along, and

together, they create a logical path:

> [I found my current career] . . . through a series of small positions. You don't
> choose it. Someone said that . . . and it totally makes sense to me. I think you
> make a lot of small decisions that will get you on the right path on where you
> want to go. . . . [For me,] I was graduating from college . . . [in] organizational
> psychology and . . . I decided to look for a job. I got a consulting job at this
> human resources consulting company. Then we moved to Houston . . . [and] I
> started working at the company where I work now. I started . . . as a training
> coordinator. . . . Probably what got me [the] job was some of the experience I had
> consulting in Mexico. . . . That combination of the human resources degree, the
> consulting experience [in Mexico], and the culture part with the company. [So] I
> started as training coordinator, then I went to senior manager, and now I'm the
> training director.

Suzanne, a Boomer, explained that she fell into the information technology (IT)

industry as a result of abandoning her first career dream in medicine:

> I fell into the IT industry trying to find these positions that could get me to higher
> levels and more responsibility and more pay. It just so happens that . . . I was
> working on a project and they liked my work and I went over to the IT area and
> started moving up in the IT area. When I was 33, I was a director in IT, making a
> good living, great career. . . . [After trying medicine, and deciding it wasn't for
> me,] I went back to the company I was working for, [and] [t]hey offered me a
> director of IT position over in England, and I lived there for a couple of years.
> That opened me up to another world. I got [the] travel bug and then [realized] . . .
> that there is so much in life to see and experience.

Erica, from Generation X, shared how she landed one of her early human resources roles:

> [At first,] . . . I didn't have a plan. I didn't purposely take the time to explore other
> career options and things like that. It just kind of naturally happened. It's
> basically, "I want to be in human resources." [This company] has a pretty robust
> track and for me . . . [Then] one of the vice presidents approached me about 1.5
> years in [to my first human resources job] and said, "We have this opening in
> Washington. You have to be there immediately, and by the way you'll get big

raise." I said, "Okay, sign me up." I decided to leave Houston and move to some place beautiful. . . . For me it was . . . about living in places that I wanted to live and continuing to move around and [have] adventures.

Made deliberate choices in accordance with desired development. Only three women across the four generations reported making deliberate role and career choices to either avoid unwanted job transitions or to gain knowledge and skill in desired areas. Suzanne, a Boomer, whose motivation is to explore what's out there and continually discover new things, work in different industries, discussed some of the decisions and milestones that ultimately led her to the field of OD:

> [The company] had decided to move my entire function . . . to India. I had the option of moving to India, but that did not appeal to me. Nothing about it sounded right, . . . so I declined the role. [Then] when I started looking for jobs, [my intent was to] find . . . one in a different industry. . . . Something that's just different. What's out here? That's when I landed in the . . . retail environment. [It was] a wonderful company, very large corporation, and [I realized] I just didn't want to be another number, another piece or cog in the machine. I wanted to make more of a difference. I wanted to make more of a direct impact. [Then I] ended up taking a position [as] head of IT . . . for a small, privately owned company. I thought this could be interesting. . . . The pattern here is that I like change, I like different industries, and I like different roles. [After my position was eliminated,] I took time off to think about what it was I wanted to do, and that's when I discovered OD and started the OD master's program at Pepperdine and decided I didn't want to go back into a pure IT function . . . [During the program,] a job presented itself . . . [that allowed me to] do . . . a lot of the stuff I was learning in OD and . . . apply it real-time to bridge the gap between [the company's] IT department and their business units. I loved it. It was perfect.

High points and successes. After discussing the process of their career planning and exploration, participants were asked to describe some of the high points and successes they enjoyed along their career journey. Four key themes were identified through the analysis and women across the generations reported these with general consistency (see Table 4). These themes are described in the sections below.

Table 4

High Points and Successes

High Point or Success	Trad.	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Recognition	1	3	3	2	9
Promotions and key achievements	1	3	3	1	8
Making a difference	2	2	1	2	7
Meaningful work	2	1	1	1	5

$N = 16$ (4 from each generation); Trad. = Traditionalist

Recognition. The most commonly reported theme (n = 9) was being recognized

for one's contributions and abilities. Grace, a Traditionalist who spent much of her

working years as a stay-at-home mother and, alternately, as a seamstress or secretary,

reflected:

> Staying with a company long enough to be rewarded and promoted was important
> to my confidence. [In one position,] I worked for the president of a property
> management company. The president required harmony throughout the office and
> the fact that I had raised four children and still seemed sane to him [was proof of
> my qualifications for the job.] He said, "I think you're the person for me. You can
> keep harmony in this office." It was rewarding to get that acknowledgment that
> some of the things that I did at home related to my business life as well.

Linda, a Boomer OD consultant, shared an experience from earlier in her life:

> A really early success was that when I was 16, I was a dance instructor. I taught a
> class of 21-year-old women. I thought they were really old. Teaching them and
> being respected for my knowledge and skills [was great]. It was pretty awesome
> for me to have what I thought of as mature women listening to me and following
> my instruction and advice, and responding to me. That felt like a big success.

Erica, a Generation Xer, shared her experiences of receiving recognition:

> A big one was when I left the refinery in Washington State. I'd been there for 4.5
> years. I had people on both sides of the fence. People on the management side and
> on the union side. They said a lot of really complimentary things. Even afterwards
> people would get in touch with me. There was something that came up a few
> years later that I heard about where an employee said, "Erica would have never let
> that happen." Things like that. That was good.

Amanda, a Generation Y consultant, reflected on a recent work experience:

> In the financial analyst role, . . . there was a meaty project that I was heavily involved in. I was one of the leads on it and I did well and I felt needed. . . . I felt that my contribution was really valued and my manager was really explicit about it. Feeling that sense that I'm important and my voice matters, feels good.

Promotions and key achievements. Eight women named "having significant responsibilities and making key achievements" as their high point. Notably, only one Traditionalist and one Generation Y identified this theme. Judith, a Traditionalist and former part-time teacher shared that, despite her abhorrence for lawsuits, the "crowning glory of [her] career" was playing a key role in winning the lawsuit to win benefits for part-time teachers. She explained, "I became the main plaintiff [in the lawsuit] because I had the longest record of teaching part-time. . . . What we got was retirement . . . [and] health insurance. . . . That was without a doubt my greatest achievement."

Sharon, a Boomer executive, shared her experience of helping her organization recover from the dot-com bust:

> They were acting as if there was a boom. . . . Even though we had a lot of work, we weren't profitable. We were actually losing money. There was no organization. There was no go-to-market strategy. . . . There was no structure, no order. It took me a few years. The first year, I had to stop the bleeding. We weren't going to make money, but I had to make sure that we weren't losing any more than we'd lost the years before. The second year, it was getting the right team in place, and being flat. Not being in the red, just getting to zero. The third year was getting into the black and then building on it. I was able to do that and within 5 years. Not only were we hugely profitable, we had become number one, with a third of the people that we'd had in year one when I started. I had built a brand. I had done some really difficult things but they were right for the business.

Shelly, a Generation X musician, shared her high point:

> Headlining at one of our favorite venues, the Brit festival, with people like Bonnie Raitt and Tony Bennett and Chris Isaak, that was a real highlight in our career. Opening for the Doobie Brothers at the same venue was also a highlight, in a different way. . . . it's the sensation of knowing that our music has touched lives and changed lives. . . . What stays with me and motivates me is the connection with people on a very open-hearted, vulnerable level.

Hillary, a Generation Y management consultant, shared her career achievement:

It was a high point when I was able to take ownership of developing our change management strategy for a large, large implementation. It had a $5 million budget. They were basically implementing a new EMR and TPOE across over 50 hospitals. It was the high point and very interesting that I was involved from the very beginning, to take this chaos that was going on and make sense of it, and say, "This is what we're going to do." . . . I get this high of going in and cleaning up organizations and then leaving this finished product to the people to maintain.

Making a difference. Roughly half the women in each generation named "seeing the impact of one's work on others" as a high point. Grace, a Traditionalist who sometimes worked as a seamstress, described her impact on others:

Working as a seamstress was invaluable to me in terms of relating to other people on a personal basis because alterations is a very personal thing. Putting other women at ease and enjoying them finally feeling good in their clothes, you saw a change in them and you take a certain amount of pride in knowing you helped achieve that for them.

Barbara, a Boomer who had worked in a variety of jobs over time, described the rewarding sense she felt from having an impact on her quilting group:

When I left [Fort] Lauderdale, . . . the girls I had taught to quilt [for the past 10 years] threw a farewell party just for me. They all brought photographs of the quilts I had inspired them to make. That was, for me, the ultimate high. They had taken time out of their lives and had thrown this huge party and had come just to see me, to say good-bye, to make sure that I knew they appreciated what I had done for them. There's nothing that I ever got paid to do that compared to that.

Jennifer, a Generation X OD graduate student, reflected on an earlier work experience in stating that she had developed "a university housing program which was a leader in the nation. I felt very good about being on that program because I know it made a difference and it is still in place today." Chloe, a Generation Y human resources consultant, reported that her high point comes at the end of training or an intervention, when she realizes she made a difference. She explained,

When I finished a session, an intervention, it felt so good. There was a good energy. It helped. Here at work, what I'm doing now, when I finish an intervention and I know it's going to work. It will change the way they work. It changes their lives. It changes their relationships they have. It's going to change

the decisions they make. The high points are not related with what I get, it's the satisfaction I get by helping others.

Meaningful work. Two Traditionalists and one additional woman from each generation identified their high point as "feeling good about the work I do and relationships I build." Joanne, a Traditionalist substitute teacher, described her work in the classroom:

> I felt very good about my working with children. My first class, I had 12 girls and 22 boys. They gave me the worst kids that they had for a first year teacher. I loved them all. I thought they were great. I felt very good about my way of teaching, which is hands-on. . . . I felt really good about my teaching.

Amanda, a Generation Y consultant, shared, "The role itself allowed me to work cross-functionally and across a business unit of about 70 people. Overall I was able to build relationships with all of these different people and learn a lot of different things."

Career metaphor. Participants were asked to provide a metaphor to reflect their career journeys. They were asked to both verbally describe and graphically depict their metaphors, although nine participants refrained from providing a diagram or providing a description. Analysis of the metaphors that were shared pointed to three common themes (see Table 5).

Table 5

Career Metaphors

Metaphor Theme	Trad.	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Traveling a great distance	2	3	1	3	9
Being fragile and in a state of emergence	0	0	1	2	3
Balancing many demands	1	0	1	0	2

N = 16 (4 from each generation); Trad. = Traditionalist

Nine participants described their career journey as one of traveling a great distance and encountering and solving challenges along the way, often without direction or being directed by others. Sharon, a Boomer, described it like this:

> [I see an] image of a beautiful orchid, one of those that's round, or oval. It has many different colors, pink, purple, magenta, deep dark brown, and a deep, deep, deep blue purple. It's nestling in water. . . . If you look closely, you can see the thin roots. . . . None of them are firm . . . thick . . . [or] established, but this orchid just keeps being moved ever so slightly. It's almost like the orchid is dancing by the currents. Because there are no strong roots, because there are just many lightly embedded roots, the orchid gets to move and dance and move all around the lake. It's not so rigid or firmly planted that it can't be influenced, that it can't be moved, that it can't be shifted by a wind or a tug or a breath. It lives there. It stays there, but it's always just ever waiting to open fully. It's half-open. It's so beautiful to look at because it has these very pretty colors. You keep watching it and thinking "Wow, tomorrow it's going to open up." But it shifts a little bit and all you see tomorrow is maybe another vantage point. Maybe you see a bit more pink or a bit more blue or a bit more magenta. You come tomorrow and it is never fully opened, but it is open enough that you can behold its beauty. It's ever moving and ever-influencing and it is ever being influenced and it's learned not to grow deep roots because that would cause it perhaps to not be able to explore the rest of the lake.

Suzanne, another Boomer who provided this metaphor, presented her metaphor graphically, as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Suzanne (Boomer) Career Metaphor

Three participants in Generation X and Y provided metaphors concerning the theme of being fragile and in a state of emergence. Amanda, a Generation Yer, explained, "when I first get out of college, [my image is] of a little girl, carefree, skipping on a path, in a field, very happy and bright. Then the remainder of my career journey . . . it feels forced . . . because of the things that happened." Similarly, Hillary, a Generation Yer depicted her own journey graphically using the images in Figure 2. Her use of a butterfly was notable, given that it is a fragile creature that has a short life span. Additionally, her description of her career and use of the cocoon image suggest the state of emergence and being "about to take off."

Image of Career Journey thus far: Each life stage represents a stage of development a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly
* From childhood, to high school, to college to my previous years of work experience, each step has contributed to my success

Image of future Career Journey : Because of the knowledge gained through graduate school, my prior work history and personal values, I believe my career is about to "lift off" and fly towards the sky! I have greater confidence I can do this!

Figure 2

Hillary (Generation Y) Career Metaphor

Two participants described their career journeys as a balancing act, having to balance many demands and roles. Judith, a Traditionalist, described herself as:

A juggler, struggling to keep all the balls up in the air: cook, nurse, counselor, teacher, "siren", cleaner, etc. Yes, occasionally a ball was dropped. Sometimes,

fewer balls were used, and those were simpler to juggle. For example, when the kids were out of the house and home, teaching, and volunteer work were the only balls I had to focus on. [I also have an image of] the stage, appearing in different costumes for whichever role was played at the moment. Really tough sometimes when costumes had to be changed at top speed. It's easier to have masks on a stick. By just holding them in front of your face you can switch and switch again rapidly. Or even superimpose two or more at one time.

Jennifer, a Generation Xer, provided a diagram of her balancing act (see Figure 3).

The image that comes to mind…I describe her as a woman with 7 or 8 arms, just like the Hindu Goddesses. I was basically trying to be all things to all people pleasing others. The arms represent all the jobs I was holding. I didn't recognize that I had other jobs that I wasn't being paid for like being a mother or volunteer work or mentoring other people throughout my career. And actually doing the career itself. So I see myself in every single job as this 8 armed woman trying hard to do it all but not doing it all very well.

Figure 3

Jennifer (Generation X) Career Metaphor

Internal and External Facilitators

After describing their career decisions and milestones, participants were asked to identify the internal and external facilitators they experienced along the way. Six internal facilitators emerged when analyzing participants responses (see Table 6): confidence (n = 9); relentless drive, hard work, and competitiveness (n = 9); education and competencies (n = 7); seeing and capitalizing opportunities (n = 2); flexibility and centeredness (n = 2); and positive attitude toward self and others (n = 2). The three most common themes are described in the sections below.

Table 6

Internal Facilitators

Internal Facilitator	Trad.	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Confidence	2	2	2	3	9
Relentless drive, hard work, and competitiveness	0	2	4	3	9
Education and competencies	1	1	2	3	7
Seeing and capitalizing opportunities	0	2	0	0	2
Flexibility and centeredness	0	1	0	1	2
Positive attitude toward self and others	1	1	0	0	2

$N = 16$ (4 from each generation); Trad. = Traditionalist

Confidence. Although discussed succinctly, confidence (n = 9) was mentioned

rather equally by women of each generation. Grace, who alternated between being a stay-

at-home mother, a seamstress, and a secretary, simply stated, "I think part of that is

demanding respect for what you do." Suzanne, a Boomer IT executive, similarly stated,

"Confidence is huge." Jennifer, a Generation X graduate student explained how her

growing self-confidence helped win others' support and confidence in her:

> Now, the more confident I am about what I want to do, they have become more supportive of me. My confidence and my transformation has proven to them that they do not have to make decisions for me because I am more confident now.

Olivia, a Generation Y participant, shared her sense of confidence and

accountability for her life, which she credited to being an only child raised by divorced

parents and culminated in her confidence to do things that others her age were not doing:

> Being a single child of a divorced family, I always felt grown up, that I could do things that I choose. I get to make my own decisions [and] I understand that whatever decisions I make, I will be the one to be responsible for those decisions. [When I first left for] college in Beijing, I went by myself. I didn't have my parents . . . fly to Beijing [with me] and help me set up. A lot of my classmates did. I remember my first day walking into the dorm, just myself and my

backpack, and everyone else had parents and grandparents. I was just by myself. I didn't think it was strange. I thought it was the way it should be.

Relentless drive, hard work, and competitiveness. Nine women mentioned

"relentless drive, hard work, and competitiveness." Notably, none of these were

Traditionalists and only two were Boomers. Sharon, a Boomer executive, shared,

> I come from a culture that says, "You honor your leaders and you make them look good. If you make them look good, they'll take care of you." All the bosses I've had have motivated me to do well because I want them to look good. I don't want to let them down. I don't want them to have to go to the board and have to explain why Sharon's region didn't do well. I don't want that. I want that to be going to the board and asking them to donate to Sharon's region. "We have to get her $2 million more to go do this, do that. . . . [Also] I hate to lose! I am as competitive as hell. I don't know where that comes from. . . . No matter what I'm doing, nobody is going to beat me. Nobody. Nobody's going to win. I'm going to win.

Shelly, a Generation X musician, described the intense drive, hard work, and "X" factor

required to become successful in the entertainment industry:

> At times, [my husband and I are] doing the work of four people in a day. . . . I had no concept it would be this part of it would be so grueling. . . . [As] musicians, . . . there is a drive for your expression to be heard. . . . That motivates you to wake up in the morning and express yourself, in whatever art form you're in. . . . It's the same [drive] when you've been in the studio for 12 or 15 hours and you've not really eaten since breakfast, you can still keep going. It's an X factor. . . . Our business is fraught with disappointment. . . . [Yet,] there is something that internally is a driving force to keep going.

Chloe, an HR consultant, similarly commented on her own drive:

> I can't be sitting down and doing nothing, whatever that's called. I'm always looking for something to do. Even when I don't have a job, I volunteer for something. I'm over-committed. I want to be doing something all the time.

Education and competencies. Three Generation Y women (compared to two

Generation X and only one Traditionalist and one Boomer) cited "education and

competencies" as a facilitator. Linda, an OD consultant, commented,

> I think I was lucky in that I came into these corporate positions with my JD [law] degree . . . because it put me on a different footing, especially going to [Acme] Aircraft. They were an engineering organization and they valued degrees. It gave me credibility.

Cheryl, a Generation X consultant, reflected,

Various certification courses like the [Certified Human Resources Manager] (CHRM), the human resources certification courses definitely helped me in my career in learning about things. The OD certification helped me understand and become more well rounded with the OD role.

Amanda and Olivia, both from Generation Y, agreed on the importance of formal education. Olivia commented, "Education is definitely key. Without that I couldn't have gone so far from home."

When asked about external facilitators (see Table 7), participants identified four sources of support: bosses, mentors, and role models (n = 12) and spouse, family and friends (n = 5). They additionally named challenges that called forth their competencies (n = 3) and being a woman in a male-dominated environment (n = 2).

Table 7

External Facilitators

External Facilitators	Trad.	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Sources of support					
Bosses, mentors, and role models	3	3	4	2	12
Spouse, family, and friends	2	2	1	0	5
Additional factors					
Challenges that called forth my skills, abilities, strengths	1	0	0	2	3
Being a woman in a male-dominated environment	0	2	0	0	2

N = 16 (4 from each generation); Trad. = Traditionalist

Support from bosses, mentors, and role models was mentioned rather consistently across the generations, although only two Generation Y women cited this theme. Judith, a Traditionalist former part-time teacher, described her inspiration:

I went to Barnard College in New York. . . . The woman who was president was Millicent McIntosh, and I just read a little article about her 2 days ago. I found myself nodding the whole time reading it. She had a way of saying to young women, "You can do it." She had four kids, was married to a doctor, and she was

president of a named college. . . . Millicent McIntosh was a great inspiration and it wouldn't have mattered what you ended up doing.

Suzanne, a Boomer IT executive, described the notable support her boss gave her:

I remember when a boss of mine and I were talking about my development, and he said, "How can I help you on your journey?" I told him I really wanted to get into formal leadership but I don't have any formal leadership experience under my belt and everybody looks for that. He took it upon himself to arrange for me to leave my job for 3 months to go be a supervisor in an area, to get that experience. He did without me for 3 months for me to get that. That's huge. I remember how thrilled I was that I won the position to go live in England. I beat out all these other candidates. I thought, "Wow. I get to go live in England and have this awesome experience for a few years. I can experience this culture over here and what it's like to work in this environment." . . . I'm very fortunate. I've worked very hard, but I've also had these people make this investment for me.

Erica, a Generation X consultant, shared,

In terms of people, external forces if you will, a lot of it is being available and at the right place at the right time, especially after this last practicum. I realized I need to work more on my network. Having said that I know that I have sponsors who have looked after me and people who have put my name forward and took a chance on me, that kind of thing.

Chloe, a Generation Y human resources consultant, shared her viewpoint: "God had plans for me. I don't know if you select them or God selects them but there's always been good people around me, like the wonderful boss that I have. He's amazing."

Internal and External Barriers

Participants also were asked to describe the internal and external barriers they experienced during their careers. As shown in Table 8, two internal barriers were commonly cited by women across the generations: their own limiting attitudes, beliefs, or preferences ($n = 9$) and having prioritized caring for children over their career opportunities ($n = 4$). Two additional barriers were mentioned, although each was cited only two participants: lack of balance and dealing with cultural barriers.

Table 8

Internal Barriers

Internal Barrier	Trad.	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Own limiting attitudes, beliefs, or preferences	0	4	1	4	9
Prioritized caring for children over career opportunities	2	1	1	0	4
Lack of balance	0	1	0	1	2
Dealing with cultural barriers	0	0	1	1	2

N = 16 (4 from each generation); Trad. = Traditionalist

It is interesting to note that no Traditionalists and only one Generation X woman cited the barrier of limiting attitudes, beliefs, or preferences, in contrast to all Boomers and all Millennials who mentioned this theme. Some of these women phrased the limitation as having a lack of experience. For example, Olivia, a Generation Y consultant, noted that she was a foreigner and had no experience, thus greatly diminishing her job opportunities. Jennifer, a Generation X OD graduate student, noted that back when she was age 23, she had a desire to lead but that she

> . . . wasn't mentally ready to lead . . . . I wasn't ready to deal with all the politics that come with a position of leadership. I would get entangled in a lot of the politics and, if I am authentic, I contributed to the politics because I was not mature enough to handle the politics that take place at the top of a company.

Other women described their limitation as an insatiable drive for variety or challenge. Suzanne, a Boomer IT executive shared that her

> . . . lack of satisfaction was a big driver where it was not wanting to be in corporate America or feeling that a role was stagnant. . . . I don't like status quo. I like change. I like new. That piece of me makes me constantly explore.

Amanda, a Millennial consultant similarly shared, "I want something new, I want to continue to learn, I want to be challenged in different ways."

The remaining women talked about limiting attitudes such as feelings of loneliness and inadequacy, perfectionism and having a harsh inner critic, avoiding conflict excessively, and failing to get along with others. Sharon, a Boomer executive, shared that as a single, divorced mother, she felt a

> . . . feeling of inadequacy, or the feeling of loneliness when I'm at a function and I'm alone, and others are with their spouses, and I may not have had a suitable partner to bring. Also, the fact that while others could have gone and dated and partied . . . [while] I had to go home to relieve the babysitter.

Linda, a Boomer consultant, shared that her inner critic stops her, describing it as "the voice that tells me it's got to be perfect when it doesn't have to be. I kept watching men not being perfect and that was fine." Hillary, a Generation Y consultant, similarly shared,

> I've heard a statistic where men feel a greater confidence for promotion than women do, and I would say that's true. I have felt that. . . . This year, I'm going up for promotion, and there's a guy that has less experience, but he got promoted. He was fully confident that he could do this, and I'm like, "Seriously? The little chump thinks he can do this? Now?". . . [In contrast] I've looked through the list [of job requirements], and if I see one or two things that I'm not doing, then I feel maybe I should wait another year.

Two Traditionalists but only one Boomer and one Generation X woman stated that she prioritized caring for children over career opportunities. Grace, a Traditionalist who alternated between being a stay-at-home mother, a seamstress, and a secretary, provided her perspective:

> I think that one of the biggest challenges for a mother with young children going to school is finding the best day care. Without that, there can be no concentrating on your job. That was always the prime important factor for me. Once I found that exceptional day care for my kids, it allowed me to give my all to my job, with the understanding from my bosses that my job was 9 to 5 because I had to leave to pick the kids up.

Erica, a Generation X consultant, expressed the challenges and her internal debate about whether being a working mother really was possible:

Human resources is mostly women . . . [and I've seen] people who work insane hours, they have their kids help them put together PowerPoint presentations for work. I see things like that and I was resolute that I would . . . have to quit work, I would have to go part-time, I would have to significantly reduce my hours and take a lower position in the organization to have a family. It wasn't a good feeling. It was what it was. One of the biggest things that I think and worry about is, can you actually be a working mom? Is that going to work out? I don't have the answer to that yet. I see the sacrifices moms in the workplace make, and I also hear what managers say about people with children. They're trying to work a high potential female around a part-time schedule. The managers are kind of messing around with it. "You guys, this isn't that hard! You've got to make this happen. You just have to restructure the job to make it a part-time role." I see that kind of thing and I get a little frustrated but I keep working on it. If not for me, for the others.

Discussion with participants about external barriers yielded several insights (see Table 9). Notably, the participants were split regarding whether they experienced gender bias and discrimination. Seven participants across the Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y cohorts shared that they did perceive gender bias, intimidation, and hazing in male-dominated environments.

Table 9

External Barriers

External Barriers	Trad.	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Gender bias and discrimination					
Perceived gender bias, intimidation, and hazing in male-dominated environments	0	2	3*	2	7
Did not perceive gender or age discrimination	2	1	2*	1	6
People and politics	2	1	2	1	6
System or environment	2	0	2	2	6
Other circumstances	1	1	1	2	5
Lack of mentoring	1	0	1	0	2
Perceived discrimination based on race or religion	0	1	1	0	2

N = 16 (4 from each generation); Trad. = Traditionalist; *one Generation X participant responded that she both did and did not experience gender bias and discrimination

Linda, a Boomer consultant, shared her experience of discrimination:

> I worked in a lot of male environments in manufacturing. They hadn't had women in employee or labor relations. That was a male bastion. . . . I went through a lot of hazing. The guys on the shop committee, the union representatives, they went out of their way over my first few months to intimidate me. They'd stand around my cubicle and puff their cigars in my face. There were times when I was doing negotiations that the guys on the other side of the table are trying to intimidate me. This one guy had the word *hate* tattooed across his knuckles. He's putting his hand in a big fist in my face saying, "This is what I think about you." I get it. I get where they were coming from and the show they needed to put on. It was hard to get things done because of that. . . . Certainly, there were gender bias issues, but that's to be expected given where I was.

Shelly, a Generation X musician, shared that in a previous job, despite her successes, she experienced limitations because she was female:

> I was in charge of people. . . . I saved the company a lot of money by taking on some tasks that were otherwise done by an accounting firm that was costing a lot of money a month. I took on those jobs and proved to them that I could save them money, which, ultimately, I asked for in bonuses for the whole company at the end of the year. . . . I [eventually] realized it was a very male-dominated industry and that my voice did not carry a lot of weight.

In contrast, six women across all four generations noted that they did not perceive gender or age discrimination. Judith, a Traditionalist retired teacher shared, "I have never felt, ever, that [my gender] was a hindrance. The fact that I stayed part-time my entire life is simply because that is how the system functions. I really don't think it has to do with my sex." Cheryl, a Generation X consultant, echoed, "I really have never felt that being a woman in corporate America was a disadvantage or faced any of those kind of barriers."

Six women across the generations cited people and politics. Jennifer, a Generation X graduate student, shared, "As you are climbing up the corporate ladder, if you are not self-aware, you can definitely get thrown into the politics. I was used as a pawn for other people's objectives." Elizabeth, a Traditionalist, shared that people with education

received supervisory positions and higher pay, even if they did not or could not do the

work:

> One thing that kind of always bothered me a little, especially in the California job in that office, was that even though there were about 20 people in the office, four of us that did 90% of the work. . . . None of us have any formal education. They would hire someone with a degree in accounting from one of the colleges, when they needed someone in a department, and not a one of them would do the work. We would up doing the work, and they got paid. We had to do the work because they would say, "Do this and do this and do this." They're making $300-400 dollars more than us because of that degree, that piece of paper, but they can't do the work.

> Six additional women cited the system or environment as a barrier. Judith, a

Traditionalist and retired part-time teacher, explained why she never taught full-time:

> The fact that I stayed part-time my entire life is simply because that is how the system functions. [I would have preferred to teach full-time rather than part-time] and did apply a couple of times, but it's like it is today. Posting the job and interviewing is a formality. They already have the person selected before the hiring process starts. . . . I can beat my head against the wall, but it's not going to change it. Even if you aren't happy with it, it's how the system is working right now.

> Shelly, a Generation X musician, explained the many systemic challenges that

exist for people in her industry:

> There have been many internal obstacles in that it's not a path. It hasn't been laid out before us. It's not a typical path of, for example, an attorney, where you go to school, you get your degree, you do the intern route, you work very hard, you try to make partner, you get the name on the door. There's a path. Doctor: You study, you intern, you're a resident. There's a path. There's a path in many other industries. In the music industry as an independent artist, there is no path. You've got to do it all. You've got to figure it out from scratch. It's also a very closed industry. People don't share their secrets. They don't share like, "I have this great booking agent and he's getting me lots of work. You should call him!" It doesn't happen. You have to figure everything out from scratch and that takes away your energy from being a creative being to being a disappointed trying to figure out how the business works. We've also had managers and people coming into our lives, promising the world, overpromising and under-delivering, and we realized that until we find the right person who is aligned with our beliefs and integrity and really gets what we do, we spend more time trying to placate these people's insecurities. We end up being the babysitter to their bad behaviors. It takes away all of our energy from being musicians.

Methods for Addressing Perceived Barriers and Challenges

Given the many internal and external challenges the women faced, it was important to understand how they addressed these (see Table 10). Although five themes were identified, only one was reported with some saturation or by women across all generations. This most commonly cited approach was to seek learning, growth, and career advancement. Generally, this involved obtaining additional formal degrees. For example, Jennifer, a Generation X OD graduate student, shared,

> In my performance review in 2011, I asked my boss what it would take to become a vice president in the company. He said I needed a master's degree. I went to University of Phoenix first and was prepared to do that because it was fast. Then a friend suggested I look at Pepperdine University and an Ivy League School. I filled out the forms for an executive [master's of business administration]. During an interview with a faculty member, I learned about what the field of OD was. I interviewed several chief operating officers, who all said success in that role comes from having expertise in managing and working with people. I then switched programs.

Table 10

Methods for Addressing Perceived Barriers and Challenges

Method	Trad.	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y	Total
Sought learning, growth, and career advancement	3	1	1	2	7
Changed my approach	0	3	1	0	4
Stood ground and worked proactively to get needs met	1	0	1	1	3
Initiated difficult conversations	1	1	0	1	3
Found jobs better suited to personality and needs	1	1	0	0	2

$N = 16$ (4 from each generation); Trad. = Traditionalist

Other approaches to challenges included changing their approach (three Boomers, one Generation X), standing their ground and working proactively to get needs met (three

women across the generations), initiating difficult conversations (three women across the generations), and finding jobs that were better suited to their personality and needs (one Traditionalist and one Boomer).

Summary

This chapter reported the results. Participants' career decisions and milestones were reported first. The women reported five influencers on their career choices: mentors or role models, work-life balance considerations, passions and interests, financial needs, and hostile work environments. The process of career planning and exploration the women described was rather consistent across the generations and included a period of exploration, failure of their initial plans leading to continued exploration or limbo, and their avocations and careers ultimately seeming to unfold naturally. The women reported experiencing common high points and successes, including being recognized for their abilities and contributions, having significant responsibilities and making key achievements, seeing the impact of their work on others, and feeling good about the work they do and the relationships they build.

The women believed that their careers were bolstered through their confidence; relentless drive, hard work, and competitiveness; and education and competencies. External facilitators included support from bosses, mentors, and role models as well as from spouses, family, and friends.

The women most commonly cited their own limiting attitudes, beliefs, or preferences as an internal barrier to their careers, while some believed that prioritizing caring for their children over career opportunities also limited their opportunities. The women had mixed views regarding their experiences of gender bias and discrimination and whether this had limited their careers. Other external career barriers they perceived

included people and politics and the way the system, industry, or environment operated.

The women's most common response to their career challenges was to seek learning,

growth, and career advancement.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. Four research questions were explored:

1. What were their career decisions and milestones?

2. What internal and external career facilitators have women experienced?

3. What internal and external career barriers have they faced?

4. What were their methods for addressing perceived barriers and challenges?

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings. Conclusions are presented first, followed by practical recommendations and limitations of the study. Suggestions for continued research are then presented.

Conclusions

Conclusions were drawn for each of the research questions posed in this study. Key findings and implications for each question are discussed in the following sections.

Women's career decisions and milestones. Examination of the data gathered suggested that the women's process of career planning was not linear and, in fact, seemed like a rather aimless wandering, driven by a combination of familial and cultural expectations, influences from role models, and personal interests. For most, the paths did not seem to be grounded in a deep sense or understanding of self; nor did they seem to be guided by an overarching life purpose or mission. Most chose to identify and pursue a tentative career idea. When or if that fell through, the women entered a temporary, extended, or never-ending period of career limbo. Ultimately, the women tended to make choices that met their financial needs and relevant priorities.

These findings are consistent with the literature. For example, previous authors similarly noted that women's career choices and approach to career planning were often significantly influenced by other their other life choices, based on the need to accommodate the needs others and various life circumstances (Arnold, 1992). Wentling's (1996) study of professional women found that most women did not have clear career plans. Previous research argues that this lack of planning by women is linked to socialization and family issues (Hite & McDonald, 2003).

The lack of career planning by participants was perhaps best evidenced by the finding that when participants were asked to create a drawing or metaphor of their career journey, many of them could not. Nine expressed that they could not do it and it was too hard. Additionally, the metaphors and descriptions of their career journeys did not indicate a deep understanding of the self, their careers, or their guiding life purposes. Three of the seven women came up with the metaphor of a butterfly—a short-lived and fragile creature—and their stories focused on the process of the cocoon and becoming the butterfly, not the life of the butterfly. One woman described her journey as a meandering pathway that was regularly altered by others' needs and direction. Others came up with various images that reflected long, meandering journeys rather than clear pathways guided by a deep purpose or self-direction.

The study findings further indicated that the women's career choices were influenced by mentors and role models, prioritizing personal over professional life, turning their passions and interests into part-time and full-time work, meeting their financial needs, and leaving hostile work environments that no longer served them. Each of these are considered in the following sections.

Mentors and role models. The study findings suggested that role models and mentors had a strong intended or unintended influence on what careers the women chose for themselves. Previous authors similarly noted the role that mentors play in women's work lives. Hackett and Betz (1981) noted that women generally lack career role models, whereas Vinnicombe and Bank (2003) found in their study of executive women that mentoring and positive models were one of the top 10 key success factors named by their participants. What is notable about the present study, compared to past literature, is that the present study indicated that role models and mentors influence career decisions very early in life, whereas past literature primarily examined mentoring and networking only once a woman is on a particular career path (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Vinnecombe & Bank, 2003).

The participants' stories suggested that what they believed possible for their careers closely centered around what they were told by mentors and what they observed in available role models as being possible. For example, one participant described being told that anything was possible; yet, she had very clear ideas about what did and did not constitute an "acceptable" job choice, based on the careers held by family members.

Thus, according to the findings of the present study, the people surrounding the person of interest (a girl or woman, in the case of this study) often set the horizons of possibility for that individual. It follows that if most of the women in a girl's life are nurses, that girl may be predisposed to becoming or trying to become a nurse. If the majority of the women are stay-at-home moms, that girl likely may be prone to viewing career and family at odds, and thus may choose to (a) leave work when she has a family; (b) prioritize family over work, despite any consequent career limitations; or (c) opt to not have a family. Previous research conducted suggests that women select occupations

in alignment with social norms and by their mother's occupation. Hite and McDonald (2003) noted that the Traditionalist women included their study perceived they had only four career options available to them: teaching, nursing, secretarial positions, or being a homemaker. Similarly, Burlin (1976) concluded that career choices and ambitions of females were significantly influenced by the mother's type of work. And, Signer's and Saldana's (2001) study found it was the social status of the mothers' careers, versus the social status of fathers' occupations, that had a greater connection with the social status of female students' career aspirations.

The present study's findings regarding the influence of mentors and role models have implications for girls and women, parents, educators, and employers. For example, girls and women aspiring to careers they do not currently see modeled in their current network are advised to seek out suitable mentors and role models. Parents and educators may assist in this effort, particularly if they observe budding interest or talent in their daughters that they are unable to model or cultivate as mentors themselves. For example, those concerned about a lack of women and girls entering science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers (C. Hill, Corbett, & St. Rose, 2010) are advised to create mentoring programs so that interested girls are exposed to the role models they need to formulate and realize those career dreams.

Prioritizing personal over professional life. The participants' stories suggested that they placed the needs of family above their own careers, and adjusted or planned to adjust their career goals to take on family responsibilities. For example, the eight participants who have children shared cases of accepting roles or positions that were flexible enough to accommodate their need to balance work and family life or leaving roles that took them away from their family responsibilities. One participant relayed that

as a result of her job requiring more than 40 hours of her time per week, and her earning one tenth of her husband's salary, he convinced her to quit her job to take care of family and offered her two tenths of his salary to do so. Additionally, the participants who were still planning to have a family shared their concerns about not being able to keep the roles they were in today, or having to step down or away from their work in order to have a family. None of them felt they could (or would want to try) work the long hours they currently work and be successful as wives and mothers. Several participants also stated they saw evidence at their employers regarding the stigmas attached to women attempting to juggle work and family. They shared that part-time and flex-time programs as well as avoiding travel can be detrimental to women's career trajectories.

Past literature has similarly addressed the issue of work-life balance and work-life conflict. Hewlett and Luce (2005) surveyed a nationally representative group of 2,443 highly qualified women, defined as those with a graduate degree, a professional degree, or a high-honors undergraduate degree. They found that 24% of participants in their study left their careers for a period of time for such things as having children, caring for elderly parents or other family members. This was the most commonly reported factor that prompted women to leave their careers when compared to all other pull factors (life events drawing women away from their careers) and push factors (aspects of work driving women away from their careers). Thus, women may be opting out of their careers—not because of a glass ceiling or other forms of discrimination, but because they, their employers, and members of their social environments consider family a women's top priority.

These findings have implications for girls and women, educators, and employers. Women may have many more opportunities for life and work than they may have ever

had before. However, women may not be carving out the lives they want personally or professionally because they haven't figured out who they are, what they want, how to turn it into reality and how to balance their priorities. They may not be pursuing the fields, careers, or career paths they truly want because of perceived limitations. They may not be making the choices they want regarding marriage and family, or when and if these happen. Because women tend prioritize their personal over their professional lives commitments, organizations may be missing out on the knowledge, unique skills, and experiences women have to offer. A new career path being discussed is labeled the *kaleidoscope career*, in which employees build careers based on honoring their own values, work-life balance, and desired level of challenge. Cornelius and Skinner (2005) noted, "As organizations are demanding more time from their employees, women are starting to demand greater voice in shaping the character of their work lives" (p. 605). Despite the promising sound of a kaleidoscope career, the present study did not reveal any evidence that women are taking a stronger role in shaping their careers. Instead, it appears that women are continuing to take the usual off-ramps for family.

   Role of interests, finances, and hostile work environments. Half the participants' stories suggested that passions and interests, although very important to their personal fulfillment and satisfaction in life, often become subservient to financial needs. This led many of them to choose careers or jobs based on the amount of earning power they held rather than on whether they were fulfilling or meaningful or interesting. Additionally, it seemed that many of the women's initial career choices were not aligned with their passions and when they later left those careers, many of them entered a stage of limbo for extended periods of time—some of them never regained a direction. In lieu of passion, many ended up choosing what satisfied financial needs and goals.

These findings suggest that women's processes of career exploration are linked to their health and well-being. For example, one woman relayed becoming so burned out by the toxic environments in which she was working that it practically wiped out her sense of self. She realized she had been playing roles and wearing masks to survive at the office, resulting in a feeling that she had lost any notion of what was interesting or meaningful about work.

It is vital for women to know themselves well to make career choices that are aligned with their own passion and interest and values, especially as these change over time and become influenced by others. There is no one right answer. Similarly, Cornelius and Skinner (2005) argued based on their research that men and women are increasingly creating their own definitions of success and pursuing positions and opportunities that allow them to reach their own version of success.

Of the women who expressed a strong desire to find work about which they were passionate, each reported having had a lack of support and guidance in this area. These findings have implications for OD practitioners, career counselors, or career development staff within organizations who help women find meaningful work. For example, if women are unaware of their interests or not sure about what type of work is meaningful to them, they may be ignoring unique talents and gifts or careers that would be more satisfying.

These findings can also have negative impacts for both the employee and employers. For example, if a women is not doing work that is meaningful, interesting and aligned to her values, she may not be as productive or engaged and in fact harming her health. And her disengagement can negatively impact the company's productivity and profits.

Internal and external facilitators. Participants identified several internal facilitators, including self-confidence, relentless drive, an ethic for hard work, being competitive, and having education and needed skills and competencies. These internal facilitators are notable, given that women's "ways of being" have been documented in past literature as involving collaboration and connection rather than competition, expressing caring and sympathy, understanding others, and not seeking leadership roles (Barnes, 2006; Eisler, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; D. Hill, 2006). In turn, masculinity has been characterized as involving independence, logic, and assertiveness (D. Hill, 2006); taking risks; being tough, ambitious, goal-oriented, and confident (Janey, Janey, Goncherova, & Savchenko, 2006; Vinnicombe & Bank, 2003). If these constructs hold, this implies that the participants in the present study associated the expression of masculine traits as facilitating their careers.

Participants also identified several external facilitators, including support from bosses, mentors, and role models; support from spouses, family, and friends; and facing challenges that called forth their skills, abilities, and strengths. Similarly, mentoring and networking programs have been associated with supporting women's career advancement (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Vinnecombe & Bank, 2003). Wells (2009) additionally found in her study of 10 Latinas' pursuit and achievement of the executive office that having a supportive community and developing one's skills as career facilitators.

Overall, the present study was consistent with past literature in terms of what factors facilitate women's careers. These include the expression of traits traditionally associated with masculinity, such as expressing confidence, drive, strong work ethic, competitiveness, goal-orientation, and assertiveness. Additionally, it is important to possess needed education, skills, and knowledge. Forming a personal and professional

network of individuals who can offer moral, practical, and strategic support also appears to be critical. These findings emphasize the critical role mentors play in women's lives and careers, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Additionally, it is interesting to consider the importance of drive, goal-orientation, confidence, and ambition in light of the earlier discussed finding that the women tended to wander along a meandering career path heavily shaped by a combination of familial and cultural expectations, influences from role models, and personal interests. This provides additional support to the importance of understanding one's own personally meaningful career purpose. Practical and research suggestions emerging from this finding are discussed later in this chapter.

Internal and external barriers. Participants named two primary internal barriers to their careers. Nine women (all four Boomers, all four Generation Y, and one Generation X participant) believed their own limiting attitudes, beliefs, or preferences limited their careers. Some of these stemmed from inexperience, such as lacking practical job experience or lacking the mental and emotional maturity to lead others, whereas some stemmed from a seemingly insatiable desire for variety and challenge that kept them moving from job to job. Still others described self-judgment as a key barrier to their success. Four women (two of whom were Traditionalists) believed that prioritizing caring for their children over career opportunities had presented barriers. For these women, their children's needs came first, even if that meant surrendering income and job positions.

Watson et al. (2002) found that adolescent girls continue to feel conflicted about their future careers contrasted against their commitment to marriage and family. Although literature was not found that expressly outlined the internal career limitations women are grappling with, these findings align with other conclusions of this study that self-confidence, drive, and having education and needed skills and competencies help

advance or facilitate their careers. More deeply examining internal career limitations is a direction for continued research.

One perceived external barrier included issues related to people and politics, such as perceived preferential hiring practices or people using them to advance their own agenda. Systemic, industry, and environmental challenges, such as lack of a clear career path, also were identified as external barriers. Importantly, participants had mixed views about gender bias and discrimination and whether this had limited their careers. Participants who worked in highly masculine, unionized, and male-dominated environments (e.g., manufacturing) reported experiencing more hazing and discrimination than those in other professions (e.g., teaching, human resources). A substantial literature is available about the influence of gender on career (Heins et al., 1982; Looft, 1971; Mendez & Crawford, 2002; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000), including discussion of systemic as well as internalized sexism and gender-related discrimination.

These findings indicate the importance of self-awareness and deliberate career planning as a means for revealing needs related to self-confidence, experience, skill development, and preferences related to work-life balance. If women engage in deliberate planning and definition of their own forms of success, they might begin to develop the sense that they are masters of their own careers and empowered rather than limited. Cornelius and Skinner (2005) similarly noted that women's career pathways may be the result of their choices rather than the result of discrimination or oppression.

Methods for addressing challenges. Little saturation of themes emerged within or across generations regarding the methods the women used to address their career challenges. Seven women across the generations (43.8%) stated they sought learning,

growth, and career advancement, such as seeking new or additional challenges or obtaining additional formal degrees. Three Boomers and one Generation Xer also mentioned changing their approach, which usually involved thinking about and discussing the situation at hand differently. No literature was found that discussed the approaches women used to overcome or address their challenges. Additionally, it is notable that few themes emerged for this area of inquiry.

The lack of data about this topic, both in the literature and in the primary data gathered in the present study, is notable. Connecting to an earlier finding that the women in the present study tended to meander through their careers, driven by a combination of familial and cultural expectations, influences from role models, personal interests, and reactions to such things as boredom or hostile work environments may provide some insights. It may be that rather than assertively address their challenges, women tend to avoid or circumvent challenges by choosing other career avenues. For example, the feminine mindset typically has been characterized using traits such as being compliant, conforming, and collaborative (Barnes, 2006; Eisler, 1994; D. Hill, 2006). This is contrasted against masculine approaches, which are characterized by assertiveness (D. Hill, 2006), taking risks, being confident, and taking responsibility (Vinnicombe & Bank, 2003). It follows that women may respond to challenges by conforming and being compliant and, when that becomes untenable, by leaving. These inferences need to be confirmed and further examined through ensuing research. These insights, if true, also lead to recommendations for women, educators, and coaches.

Recommendations

Recommendations were generated based on the study findings and are advised for girls and women; mentors, advisors, and educators; and OD practitioners. These are discussed in the following sections.

Girls and women. Study findings suggested that discovering or rediscovering one's passion and interests will lead to a more satisfying career. Therefore, it is recommended that girls and women take skills and interests assessments at the beginning of the career-making process to determine what types of careers align not only to their interests but to their desired lifestyle as well. They may also benefit from finding ways to test out and experiment with these careers options before committing to one. For example, it would be advantageous to seek out people who are doing the kind of work they are interested in, observe them, and interview them. Volunteering for the type of work they think they might like will also provide an opportunity to see what it is really all about. As discussed earlier, the literature strongly suggested that mentors can have a significant impact on women's career success. It follows that girls and women would benefit from considering who in their network is doing this type of work for a career. If no one, it is recommended they network with others until they find one or more people doing that work. Once these individuals are found, they should build a relationship with them and inquire about being mentored.

The findings from this study also suggest that women, either by choice or by default, tend to assume primary responsibility for childcare and household duties. This often means juggling family and work. Girls and women who aspire to have both a career and a family are advised to be aware of this dual responsibility, learn about various work-life balance options, and consider what may work best for them. Options may include

working full-time and having full-time childcare or a stay-at-home spouse, leaving the workforce for a period of time, working part-time, starting one's own business, or searching for professions or companies that are family-friendly. Once a tentative plan is selected, the individual is again advised to network with other women who are taking that approach to explore the implications, costs, and benefits of her intended choices.

Ultimately, there is no one right answer to questions of career and family. Choices about career and work-life balance may be best made based on self-knowledge. Moreover, one's desires, priorities, and abilities likely will shift as one gains life experience. That is, what a woman thinks she will want to do may change once she gets married or finds a partner. What she thinks she will want to do may change again once she has a child. What she thinks she will want to do may change yet again if she has more than one child.

Mentors, advisors, and educators. Individuals who are in a position to influence girls and women should think about the available role models and mentors in the individual's life. Does she have one or more individuals who may serve as a mentor or role model consistent with her passions or skills? This is best done collaboratively in dialogue with the individual if she is a young adult or older. Parents, advisors, educators, and mentors should additionally consider how they may help women find mentors and role models who may help her along her path.

It is also recommended for advisors and loved ones to think about their own impact as a mentor and role model (whether or not it is intentional). Questions to consider include: What messages are you sending about these girls' or women's potential and possibilities? What messages would you like to send? Which girls or women may benefit most from your mentoring?

Educators, and especially those involved with college-aged women, can help encourage young women to seek guidance from others and knowledge about themselves—not just about careers, but about their lifestyles so they are better equipped to make work and career choices that are aligned with their values and interests. Advisors are in a unique position to provide valuable feedback to them about what they see as the women's strengths, natural talents and gifts, and encourage to the women to continually expand their self-knowledge. Having the conversation early about careers, work-life balance, and the implications of having a spouse and children is supported by this study's findings reported earlier that role models indeed influence career decisions very early in life.

Study findings suggest that women may respond to challenges by conforming and being compliant and, when that becomes untenable, by leaving. This suggests that women may need to be supported in being mindful and deliberate about whether they are acting according to their highest desires or whether this is a kneejerk reaction. Advisors, coaches, and loved ones can take actions to support women in doing so.

Organization development practitioners. The findings from this study indicated that organizations and the human resource professionals and OD practitioners who support them can have a significant impact on women's career choices and the employers for whom they choose to work. It is widely reported that organizations continue to struggle to find talented and qualified human resources. Additionally, more research and anecdotal evidence continues to suggest that in the future, the highly successful companies will be those who nurture the development, growth and contributions of their female employees (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2008). To that end, it is recommended that organizations scan their talent pipelines and be clear about the types of skills and

unique abilities they will need in the future to remain competitive. Based on that, they can begin planning and implementing programs to start attracting competent female candidates and taking advantage of the unique talents and qualifications of women. It is recommended that organizations review their human resources policies, career development activities, and especially their cultural messages on a regular basis to ensure theses are conducive to women. That is, it is important to consider whether policies facilitate the balancing of family needs or do they penalize women's career fulfillment and growth.

Limitations

A leading limitation of this study concerned its sample. First, there was a lack of similarity across the generations. Although 16 women across the generations were interviewed, the sample did not provide an "apples" to "apples" comparison. In particular, the highest educational attainment for 50% of the Traditionalist women was high school. In comparison, the highest educational attainment for 75% of Boomers, 50% of Generation X, and 100% of Generation Y participants was a master's degree. Additionally, Generation X and Y women primarily held white-collar professional positions, whereas all the Traditionalists and half the Boomers held what might be considered "pink collar" clerical and education roles. Although one might be tempted to generalize from this sample that Traditionalist and Boomer women tend to take pink collar positions, whereas Generation X and Y women are more likely to take professional positions, this instead reflects the limits of convenience sampling. The result of this limitation is that any differences in the themes across the generations may be the result of the diversity in the sample rather than differential experiences across the generations. Moreover, as the sample was predominantly comprised of married Caucasian women,

these findings have limited or no transferability to the general U.S. population or to other countries and cultures.

A second limitation of the study is that it did not ask the participants about their overall views regarding their beliefs, values, and attitudes about work-life balance, particularly as it relates to having children. For example, through the course of analysis, the researcher began to wonder how many of the women thought such things as, "Whatever I do for work, it's only going to be until I start a family, anyway, so it doesn't matter that much." Although the study did pose several questions about how the participants selected their careers (e.g., "What was the motivation behind each transition?"), it did not dig deeper into the participants' ideas about the society's and employer's relationship to creating work-life balance. This limited the conclusions that could be drawn about this important topic in the lives of wage-earning women that could be explored in a future study.

Another limitation of this study was that it precluded diving deeper into the participants' narratives to understand the inconsistencies between what they planned or imagined versus the realities of their journey. For example, this sample tended to measure success and fulfillment, in part, by how closely their work matched their interests or whether it aligned with their true passion. However, few if any of the participants' actual career choices, especially early on in their careers, aligned with either their passions or interests. This dichotomy could be explored further to discover how women's career journeys could perhaps be supported more effectively. Additionally, most of the study participants did not return the post-interview questionnaire which was designed to gain insight into the impact of the narrative intervention on the participants. This limited the researcher's ability to glean any valid conclusions about the narrative intervention as an

effective tool for understanding women's career journeys. This limitation could be controlled for in future research.

The final limitation stemmed from the way the data were collected. In most cases, the interview was conducted by telephone and important nonverbal cues may have been overlooked by the researcher. With the exception of the demographic questions, the interview protocol (by design) consisted entirely of open-ended questions, which had few, if any, qualifiers to help guide or direct a participant's response (e.g. "What did you think was possible for you?"). For most of the participants, this study was the first opportunity to think about and consider their career journey, interests, and passions. This may have impacted what they shared and what they omitted. Some participants, as reported earlier in this study, felt uncomfortable when asked why they chose a certain career and most had tremendous difficulty responding to this question: "What metaphor or image comes to mind that describes your career journey"? These limitations, if controlled for, could potentially provide richer data on the most personal questions.

Suggestions for Continued Research

Study findings suggested that role models and mentors had a strong intended or unintended influence on what careers women chose for themselves, especially early in life. In contrast, past literature primarily examined the benefits of mentoring and networking only after a woman is on a career path. These seemingly disparate views need to be examined more closely to understand the impact of early role models and mentors on girls age 16 and under, versus models that examine mentoring during a woman's working years.

If mentors and role models have a significant influence on early career decisions, it would be important to understand the proportion of the following influences when

picking a career, such as what might be called (a) role model compliance (my mom is a nurse, my mom's mom is a nurse, I am a nurse); (b) role model rebellion (my mom stayed home, there's no way I'm staying home); and (c) role model modification (my mom was XYZ and, after much exploration, I am XAW). Understanding what factors lead to role model compliance, role model rebellion, and role model modification could also generate valuable data on which to base early career counseling for girls.

Study findings indicated that for women, finding meaningful, interesting work about which they were passionate generally took a back seat to either meeting their immediate financial needs or balancing relevant priorities in their lives, especially family. Literature was not found that expressly stated how women in each generational cohort perceive their roles in society today and how they would prioritize "meaningful work" in their lives; therefore, studying women's perceptions about their roles in society today, how they view their right to pursue meaningful work, and the role (and responsibility) of society and employers have in relationship to work-life balance is an opportunity for continued research.

Further research also is needed regarding women's career paths. For example, participants expressed that internal attitudes such as lack of confidence undermine their careers. Literature was not found that expressly outlined the internal career limitations women are grappling with; therefore, more deeply examining internal career limitations is a direction for continued research. Study findings also suggested that women may respond to challenges by conforming and being compliant and, when that becomes untenable, by leaving. These inferences need to be confirmed and further examined through ensuing research.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. Sixteen women wage-earners were interviewed to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generation. Specifically, the internal and external barriers to and facilitators of women's career advancement, success and fulfillment were examined. Interviews were transcribed and content analysis was applied to the data. The women reported five influencers on their career choices: mentors or role models, work-life balance considerations, passions and interests, financial needs, and hostile work environments. The process of career planning and exploration the women described was rather consistent across the generations and included a period of exploration, failure of their initial plans leading to continued exploration or limbo, and their avocations and careers ultimately seeming to unfold naturally.

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Appendix A: Invitation Requesting Participation in a Study

Dear Wage-Earning Women:

I am conducting a study as part of my thesis, in partial fulfillment of my master's degree in Organization Development from Pepperdine University. The aim of this research is to learn about women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generation. Specifically I intend to examine the internal and external barriers to and facilitators of women's career advancement, success and fulfillment.

I am looking to interview women who meet the criteria listed below and who would like to participate in a one-on-one 60 minute interview to share their career journey with me. All data will be kept confidential. Only aggregate data will be reported in the thesis. Data collected will not be attributed to participants; answers are anonymous.

Participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate you may withdraw at any time, without penalty.

The possible benefits of this research for the participant are increased insights into one's career journey, the choices one has made, and the impact of those choices. Participants may also experience some fun during the process!

Participant Criteria:
1. Women who have performed paid work outside the home, in any role and in any industry, for at least 5 years.
2. At least 75% of this paid work has been performed in the U.S. or for a U.S. based company.
3. Belong to one of the following generational cohorts
   a. Traditionalists (born between 1927-1945)
   b. Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964)
   c. Generation X (born between 1965-1980)
   d. Generation Y (born between 1981-2000)

If you or someone you know meets the criteria above and would like to participate in the study, please contact me via telephone (248) 346-2915 or email (natalie.swann@pepperdine.edu) to learn more about the study and to schedule an interview.

Sincerely,

Natalie Swann
Candidate, Master of Science in Organization Development
Pepperdine University
Gradziadio School of Business and Management
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263

Appendix B: Interview Script

Thank you for joining me today and for your interest in my study. I am conducting this interview as part of my thesis, in partial fulfillment of my master's degree in Organization Development from Pepperdine University. The aim of this research is to learn about your career journey and the highlights you enjoyed and obstacles you faced along the way. If at any time during the interview you feel uncomfortable, or don't want to continue, or don't want to answer a particular question, please let me know. Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Before we begin, I want to reiterate that your responses will be kept confidential. With your consent, I will audio-record this interview so I can focus on our conversation. The recording will be used only to create notes of our conversation. Once transcription of the recording is validated by me, the audio recording will be erased. Your responses to the interview questions will be identified in the paper by a participant code only.

Purpose of my Study

The purpose of this study was to examine women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. Four research questions have been defined:

1. What were their career decisions and milestones?

2. What internal and external career facilitators have women experienced?

3. What internal and external career barriers have they faced?

4. What were their methods for addressing perceived barriers and challenges?

Definitions

Career journey: what I did, when I did it, positions, decisions, and shifts experienced. And the motivations for doing these, and how I make sense of these (understanding the events and positions held).

Career Narrative: is essentially a story about a person's career. The career holder is both the author and main character of the story and the story is both a retrospective story and a progressive story. It conveys how the person came to be what she/he is today and the future she/he expects to have in a career. The career story also provides an interpretation of how and why she/he chose the different occupations, how they are connected, resulting in a cohesive career story.

Demographics

1. Year you were born:
2. Place you were born:
3. Total number of years of full-time or part-time paid work (outside the home):
4. Current Occupation:
5. Industry:
6. Company size:
7. Marital status:
8. Number of children under age 18 living with you:
9. Ethnicity:
10. Did your mother work outside the home for at least 2 years when you were between ages of 0 - 12?
11. If yes, what was her occupation?:

Career Dream
12. Tell me the story of "what you wanted to be when you grew up?" Go back in time, revisit that little girl's dream . . .
    a) What careers did you dream about?
    b) What attracted you to these career(s)?
    c) What did you think was possible for you?

Career Story

13. Next, I'm going to ask you to consider your career journey in its entirety. Think about your first paid position (after high school or college) and all of your employment experiences up through today. How would you depict that graphically? Please take a moment now to represent it in art--it could be a journey with stops along the way, or any metaphorical image that comes to mind. Use whatever metaphor that you feel represents your personal career journey. Your 'art' can take any form, any shape, or any structure. Please indicate the following on your illustration:
    a) the number of years in each position,
    b) the decision points or milestones on your career journey, and
    c) the motivation behind taking each position or making each transition

Please keep in mind, it's not about *art* or how good you are at drawing, so relax and have fun! It's really about gaining insight and understanding. Once you have completed your illustration, I will ask you to share it with me so I, too, can learn about your unique journey.

14. Tell me how you chose your current career.
    a) What attracted you to this career?
    b) Did you have a career plan? If yes, please describe your plan.
        i. If no, what are the events that led you to where you are today?
    c) Who are the people who most influenced your career choice(s) or journey?
    d) How did your 'dream career' change over time?

15. Tell me about the highpoints and successes you enjoyed along your career journey. What facilitated or enabled your career journey?
    a) Internal (i.e. ambition, talents, skills, education, etc.)?
    b) External (i.e. people, circumstances, etc.)?
    c) What impact did these facilitators have on your career journey?

16. Tell me about the challenges, obstacles, or barriers you faced on your career journey.
    a) Internal factors (i.e. ambition, talents, skills, education, etc.)?
    b) External factors (i.e. people, circumstances, etc.)?
    c) How did you address these obstacles?

Perceived Career Success
17. How do you define *success*?
18. How successful has your career journey been?
19. Are you as successful as you'd like to be?
    a) If no, what would success look like?
    b) What is holding you back from achieving this?
20. Compared to your coworkers, how successful is your career?
21. How successful do your 'significant others' feel your career has been?
22. Given your age, do you think that your career is on 'schedule,' or ahead or behind schedule?

Perceived Career Fulfillment
23. How do you define *fulfillment*?
24. How fulfilling has your career journey been?
25. Compared to your coworkers, how fulfilling is your career?
26. Given your age, do you think that you have attained a sufficient amount of fulfillment in your career?
27. Are you as fulfilled by your career as you'd like to be?
    a) If no, what is holding you back from being fulfilled?

Reflection Questions
28. In what ways has your career met or failed to meet your expectations?
29. When you reflect on your career, is there anything you would change about your path? Do you have any regrets?
30. What patterns, if any, do you see when you reflect on your decisions points and milestones?
31. What are you most proud of (accomplishment, decisions, achievements, etc.)?
32. What advice would you give to a young woman who wants to be fulfilled in her career?
33. Is there anything else you believe is important to share?

Future Story
34. Next, I'm going to ask you to consider your future career journey. What is next for you on your journey? If you'd like to, please depict your answers to these questions

graphically, adding on to your original illustration or creating a new one for the future. Please take a moment now to consider and respond to these questions:

a) Are you in your "dream job" or profession right now?
b) What are some of the careers or roles you'd like to try next?
c) What goals, if any, do you have for your career at this time?
d) What do you need to get there?
e) What do you think is possible for you today?
f) Did the reflections you shared above change your ideas about your future story?

Post Interview Follow-Up Participation

35. Would you like to share your after-thoughts about today's interview with me via a follow-up email?

a. If yes, may I have your email address please?

Appendix C: Post-Interview Follow-Up Questions

(sent by email 1 week after the interview)

Dear [Name of participant],

Thank you for participating in my study examining women's career journeys and how these journeys vary by generational cohort. I appreciate your participation and enjoyed the experience of learning about your unique career journey.

The purpose of the follow-up questions is to gain insight into the impact sharing your career journey with me utilizing a narrative (story-telling) approach and a creative illustration had on you.

Please send me your responses, via email, to the questions below. If you would like to have your career journey drawing published (anonymously) in my thesis, please include a scanned version of your drawing in your reply.

If you no longer want to answer a particular question, or prefer not to participate in the follow up process, please disregard my email. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

1. What was the impact of the career narrative interview process on you?

2. Describe some of the insights you've gained as a result?

3. Would you like to have your drawing published (anonymously) in my thesis?