

Career Activity: Discussing Midlife Transitions as Strategic Activity Systems

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A Dissertation
in the Department
of
Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

at Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

November 2023

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Abstract

Career Activity: Discussing Midlife Transitions as Strategic Activity Systems

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This study explored midlife career transition through facilitated dialogues. Transition seekers were interviewed to elicit systemic influences that shaped their career paths, instructed on active listening, then engaged in co-interviewing relatable completers. To capture changes in thinking, all participants wrote Future Career Autobiographies before and after interviews. Their career stories and dialogues were drafted as rich case studies, coded for concepts, then explained as evolving activity systems to highlight their changing strategies over time. In dialogues, participants who disclosed career dilemmas and related to each other had more interactions and problem-solving. Those who shared emotional losses had more relating, empathy and laughter. Without such experiences, seekers relied on probing, labelling and asking for negative stories. Completers expanded their roles with empathy, explaining, problem-solving and offering further contact. Seekers and completers who shared emotional stories became more confident or reconsidered their futures. Overall, participants shifted from passive desires for harmony to wanting colleagues for career help. They expressed new options for learning, collaboration, and kinds of work, and insights about self-blame, force-fitting, trust, building on the past, and talking with others. Participants had sought career change when they lacked balance between meeting needs versus working for others. Male seekers sought sensations and identity. Female completers sought to care for others and themselves. Career dissatisfaction related to exclusion; defining work narrowly in terms of tasks; passively relying on others for opportunities; expecting to trust or be trusted without evidence; acting without exploring widely or monitoring for changing circumstances; interpreting challenges as lack of belonging; and submitting to circumstances and the priorities of others. In contrast, career satisfaction related to belonging; performing according to personal values; and feeling encouragement despite anxiety. Satisfying transitions used training to combine enjoyed skills with a long-term interest, or experiences with a pressing problem. Helpful strategies included broadening scope to create opportunities and expand responsibility; surveying contacts to enter desired roles and overcome rejections; engaging with chance to create connections, explore options, practise skills and demonstrate ability; embracing personal development to overcome challenges; and pursuing change purposefully according to values. Guidance provided to conduct and analyze such dialogues.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge my supervisor, Saul Carliner, for his guidance and support. He assisted me with recruiting by connecting me to helpful organizations. He helped me understand how to use structure and rigour to bridge my intended audience to the ideas I wanted to express. He encouraged me to write and submit articles for peer review, and to submit to and present at conferences. He provided teaching and research opportunities.

I acknowledge Ann-Louise Davidson for her guidance and support. She exposed me to theoretical frameworks and challenged me to apply them. She exposed me to grant-writing and field work, and provided teaching and research opportunities.

I acknowledge Walcir Cardoso on my committee who offered frank feedback about what did or did not work.

I acknowledge Rosemary Reilly for assisting me with recruiting.

I acknowledge my participants who demonstrated courage by sharing difficult stories with me and each other.

I acknowledge Nadine Wright, our Graduate Program Coordinator, who helped connect me with a graduate fellowship.

I acknowledge my students who challenged me to connect them with new concepts and rewarded me with curiosity, persistence, and thoughtfulness.

Dedication

To Hiroko, whose career transition inspired me with respect and wonder, and whose patience and care have been remarkable.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Peter, a multimedia entrepreneur, watches his business and marriage crumble. He passes through a series of sales jobs sure he has no other transferrable skills. Now in his forties he's miserable, unable to recapture the feelings he had running his own business, and wondering if he is just a lazy person. Victor is a communications employee who remakes himself into an award-winning theatrical producer over the course of a decade of gigs from a major client. Now in his forties, he finds himself needing new and more stable sources of work. He networks in a new city and tries various theatrical projects but experiences alienation of his humanistic values and betrayal that leave him wishing for a new career where he doesn't have worry about protecting himself. Finally, Leonard is a scientist with several post-doctorates and peer-reviewed articles who finds himself feeling useless and burned out in his late thirties. Although he researches topics of mindfulness that greatly interest him, he lacks the kind of feedback he craves in terms of energy and direct impact on another human being. He pursues another graduate degree to shift into a people-oriented discipline but feels incompetent afterward and is unable to find work. He refocuses again with a coaching certification, feeling pressure to make it work to support his new family.

These men are midlife seekers of career transition. Midlife adults present a challenging demographic. They face challenges not only in developing new skills for jobs but also for learning about themselves, their career options and how to make transitions. The seekers have all made career changes already but rather than viewing those experiences as sources of valuable skills and data, they find themselves seeking guidance for what to do next. They are unaware of people in their communities who share their skillsets and have navigated similar career challenges to complete satisfying transitions. For instance, Wanda recovered from a business failure to become a consultant. Susan leveraged phone and interviewing skills into a change management career. Helen shifted from structured roles into career counselling to help people connect with desired work. These midlife completers of career transition are willing to discuss the successes and failures of their transition journeys if someone asks.

Importance of Work

Resolving career challenges is important because work, whether paid or unpaid, occupies a large proportion of life and is an expectation of being an adult (McMahon, 2017). The basic purpose of work is survival by earning income to buy food and shelter for the self and family (Blustein et al., 2017; Richardson, 2012). Further expectations for work depend on culture, with Western individualism focusing on individual meaning and autonomy, while other cultures prioritize serving a community, or caring for a family (McMahon, 2017). Work provides a source of identity, purpose and value, fosters learning through opportunities and challenges, and protects against isolation and mental illness through working relationships (McMahon, 2017) that also provide more work opportunities (Blustein et al., 2017). Work provides the potential for independence, prestige, and power (McMahon, 2017; Blustein et al., 2017). Despite these benefits, many people learn about work, their role in work, and how to make transitions by relying on limited life experiences and informal feedback (Swanson & Fouad, 2015) that impede meaningful change.

Importance of Environmental Opportunities

Choices of work depend on identifying and securing opportunities in a changing environment. In 2015, full-time work for Canadians aged 25-54 was at its lowest rate since 1980, with the workforce including more immigrants and almost double the number of senior citizens compared to a decade before (Grant & Cryderman, 2017). Underemployment (people employed in work with lower credentials or lower working hours than they are qualified for and desire) is a rising problem—governments celebrate record employment numbers but fail to acknowledge a growing underemployed workforce facing stagnant wages (Bershidsky, 2018). Underemployment is a particular problem for people with lower levels of education, resulting in many men and women working in retail sales (Grant & Cryderman, 2017). Despite an improving economy, many midlife American women remain jobless, underemployed or taking longer to find work, and explanations include taking time off for childcare, having a shrinking network of contacts, having fewer cutting-edge skills, and being more reluctant to relocate or take on different kinds of work (Cohen, 2016). In addition, the World Economic Forum blames the innovation-focused “Fourth Industrial Revolution” for automating many jobs out of existence and dividing the workforce into high-skilled workers who are in demand to serve the innovation economy, and low-skilled, low-pay workers stagnant in the remaining yet-to-be-automated work (Schwab, 2016). Midlife employment for American men declined from 98% in 1954 to 88% in 2017 with the worst impact for people with high school or less education who were replaced with automation (Krause & Sawhill, 2017).

Focus of Existing Research

Some research has focused on specific transition groups such as early retirements from military (Robertson & Brott, 2013; Robertson, 2013; Baruch & Quick, 2007), or from performing arts (Middleton & Middleton, 2017), or midlife transitions into teaching (Wilkins & Comber, 2015). However, research is lacking for career transitions focused generally on midlife adults.

Substantial research on career guidance has focused on a dominant approach of testing and categorizing young people for their first career choice (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Additional research has examined counselling as an alternative to testing by helping people examine their lives for patterns to aid with career decision-making (Watson & McMahon, 2015). However, research is lacking with respect to applying theory to the counselling approach to guide questions and analysis, or to assessing the impact of counselling based on changes in participant behaviour. Research is also lacking with respect to extending counselling to include hands-on learning experiences in which participants not only explore their own career paths with a practitioner, but also assist with gathering data and making meaning from role models available in their community.

Origins and Limitations of Career Assessments

Career guidance and counselling were developed to help people learn about themselves and about work through the application of psychology (McIlveen & Midgley, 2015; Meijers & Lengelle, 2015; Watson & McMahon, 2015). Their development coincided with a rapidly expanding industrial society in the West that embraced stability, predictability, linear processes, and hierarchy within a homogeneous, white-male working population (Watson & McMahon,

2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014). More specifically, differential psychology (the study of variations in behaviour, traits and attitudes between individuals and groups (VandenBos, 2015)) was used so that individuals could be measured and matched to occupations based on the expected norms of personalities in those occupations (Watson & McMahon, 2015). Approaches that measure individual traits are called quantitative career assessments. For example, the commonly-used Strong Interest Inventory, developed in 1927 and revised most recently in 2004, helps individuals choose occupations and areas of study, and helps employers with hiring and assigning employees (Case & Blackwell, 2008). The Strong inventory comprises a 30-45 minute test that asks individuals to rate 291 items on a 5-point scale to measure their interests in occupations, subjects, activities, leisure, people and style, with the resulting quantitative scores used to match people to occupations where many people share similar scores (Case & Blackwell, 2008).

Limitations of Quantitative Assessments

Quantitative assessments remain dominant because they are practical to use (Watson & McMahon, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014) but they can be applied without regard to the assumptions underlying the test and without helping a client to interpret scores (Watson & McMahon, 2015), which can be difficult to understand (Reid, 2015). For instance, the Strong inventory relies on administrators with special training to interpret scores and candidly discuss results with clients (Case & Blackwell, 2008). In addition, interpretation depends on comparing client results to an existing sample of employed test-takers. The 2004 sample for the Strong inventory was limited to able-bodied English-speakers in the United States, and was itself an update from the 1994 revision whose sample failed to reflect a decade of changes in the diversity of the workforce, and in the growth of occupations related to business, technology and teamwork (Case & Blackwell, 2008). Applied uncritically, quantitative assessments reinforce systemic barriers by measuring individual “traits” that were actually created by society’s limitations (Arthur, 2014), and encourage the individual to replicate their parents’ socioeconomic status (Gottfredson in Swanson & Fouad, 2015). For instance, the Strong inventory captures self-reported preferences (Case & Blackwell, 2008) so test-takers may report preferences that reflect their limited experience or cultural conditioning in gender roles rather than their potential. As such, testing focuses on identifying traits without accounting for the influences of relationships and environments (Watson & McMahon, 2015) that privilege some people with experiences that others never have.

Increasing Complexity Undermines Quantitative Assumptions

Over time, traditional guidance has been challenged to address the degree of change in modern society and its differential impact on a diverse population. Although some organizations, industries and countries retain traditional career ladders (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), for others, the nature of work has changed: stable, linear career paths cannot be expected as workers face increased globalization and expectations for longer hours, short-term contracts, and upgraded skills and adaptability (Patton & McMahon, 2014). The impact of increased change in the nature of work affects people differently based on class and gender, which means that some populations are more vulnerable than others and broader access to career guidance is necessary. Although professional classes change employers to improve their status, working-class people without credentials remain in an organization hoping for a promotion, or change jobs within the same socioeconomic class (Kim, 2013). Although men tend to change organizations without

discrimination, women navigate multiple career paths due to life disruptions (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) such as disproportionately shouldering unpaid care work for family and community (Richardson, 2012). As a result, for some career transition represents a freedom to build portfolio careers (embracing jobs with different clients instead of full-time employment (Handy, 1994, in Mallon, 1998)), while others face a frightening lack of stability and needed transition skills (Sultana, 2014) and make poorly-informed career decisions driven by fear (Fouad & Bynner, 2008). Navigating frequent change requires leveraging curiosity, persistence, and risk-taking to trigger unimagined possibilities and convert them into work (Stanley & Lehman, 2015; Patton & McMahan, 2014; Krumboltz, Foley & Cotter, 2012). To address these demands, workers who have given up job security in an increasingly globalized labour market need effective and accessible guidance on a lifelong basis (Cort, Thomsen & Mariager-Anderson, 2015). Midlife adults represent increased levels of complexity because their experiences and networks of contacts can reinforce limited conceptions of their abilities (Bimrose & McNair, 2011; Bimrose, Mulvey & Brown, 2016), and marriage, parenthood, eldercare (Richardson, 2012) and a standard of living can lead to a reluctance to take risks or change locale.

Postmodern Assessments Address Complexity

Postmodernism addresses complexity by rejecting a single right answer in favour of subjective interpretations of individual experiences shaped by dialogue (Solomon, 2000). Rather than linear cause-and-effect explanations, postmodernism examines ongoing systems that adapt to change, such as personal identity being an ongoing negotiation based on membership in multiple communities (Solomon, 2000). Postmodernism supports recent career research, which considers diversity in culture and gender, development over time, and the social and environmental factors that personality tests ignore (Watson & McMahan, 2015). Postmodern techniques include qualitative career assessments, which move away from fitting everyone into a single “grand narrative” based on scoring personality traits, and instead explore subjective, individual experiences that incorporate context (Watson & McMahan, 2015). Qualitative assessments engage participants as collaborators who reflect on their experiences and construct meaningful personal themes to guide future action (Brott, 2015), shifting power away from authoritative experts to the participants themselves (McIlveen & Midgley, 2015).

Limitations of Postmodern Assessments

Unfortunately, postmodern qualitative approaches face challenges due to cost, training and evidence. Subsidized guidance is often targeted to students or to the unemployed (Cort, et al., 2015) and government-subsidized practitioners may be pressured to focus on inexpensive quantitative testing, job applications (Cort, et al., 2015), and navigating government policies and accessing resources (Arthur et al., 2013). Although private practitioners may offer exploratory qualitative techniques, they tend to rely on costly individual counselling over multiple sessions (Colvin et al., 2011).

Career guidance practitioners may avoid qualitative techniques due to limited training and cultural and professional preferences for quantitative approaches (Arulmani, 2015). Without training, qualitative approaches are difficult to use because they shift guidance from categorization to facilitating learning by the participant (McMahan & Watson, 2015; Brott, 2015). Practitioners may be uninterested or unable to access, understand and use the theory informing such techniques, (Colvin et al., 2011).

Practitioners may distrust qualitative methods due to limited research evidence for their effectiveness (McMahon & Watson, 2015; Stead & Davis, 2015), which can lead to dismissing them as creative but unscientific activities to engage clients (McMahon & Watson, 2015). For instance, qualitative methods may rely on individual narratives (Savickas, 2012) without systematically exploring the many influences shaping that career path (Patton & McMahon, 2014), or providing evidence about the efficacy of a method beyond anecdotal reports of client satisfaction (Stead & Davis, 2015). In contrast, systemic, theory-driven approaches have been developed more recently. For instance, the *My System of Career Influences* booklet guides clients through a reflection of how individual, social, environmental and chance influences affected their career over time in order to prompt a more holistic approach to navigating change (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2015).

Participatory Approaches Address Agency of Participants

In contrast to being passive subjects of quantitative categorization, participants engaged in the counselling approach have increased agency by making meaning and learning from their own life experiences (McMahon & Watson, 2015). However, researchers have called for broader definitions of learning such as developing the ability to create and take advantage of opportunities outside an individual counselling session (Krumboltz, Foley & Cotter, 2012). Career advisors propose low-stakes informational interviews as a way to learn about opportunities and experience personal networking, and some academic instructors require students to synthesize and report their results with peers (Plakhotnik, 2017; Bolles, 2008; Mulvaney, 2003). Such interviews leverage an existing tendency to informally consult others for career advice (Cort, et al., 2015). However, seeking insight from existing contacts who are themselves unable to confront risk and change can impede progress (Motulsky, 2010), so new contacts are required who can specifically relate to the challenges of midlife career transition. Despite triggering social anxiety, interview activities have been rated highly by college participants (Mulvaney, 2003), and in contrast to mock job interviews, they require real-world data-gathering, analysis, reflection and sharing with others.

Statement of Purpose

This exploratory study created a postmodern, qualitative career assessment for mid-life adults. To address complexity, the design used two stages: an individual interview with a person seeking a transition; and a group assessment whereby that seeker helped with the interview of a relatable person who had completed a transition. To provide evidence of the efficacy of the design, participants were asked to describe their plans and career futures before and after participation. To support learning and encourage further exploration, participation was encouraged. Both transition-seeking and transition-completer participants were exposed to a facilitator modelling a systemic approach to exploring and proposing meaning from career stories, and encouraged to ask questions, evaluate, and make meaning from what they heard in order to elicit the knowledge, skills and attitudes that helped or hindered career transition for themselves and a relatable other.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How Did Participants Engage With and React to a Multi-Party Facilitated Conversation About Midlife Career Change Guided by the Systems Theory Framework?

The sub-questions are as follows:

- How did participants express their future differently after the dialogue?
- How did participants react to the dialogue?
- What was the structure of the dialogue?
- What was the nature of the researcher/facilitator's role?
- What was the nature of Seeker and Completer participation in the dialogue?
- What guidelines were missing or implied by participants?
- What was the source of participants and the associated limitations?
- What was the nature of participants and the roles they played?
- What challenges arose within the interaction activity?

Research Question 2: What Explanation of Midlife Career Change Emerged From Dialogues Designed to Elicit the Influences That Shaped Participants' Lifetime of Career Choices?

The sub-questions are as follows:

- What circumstances prompted career change?
- What role did individual needs play?
- What role did actions play?
- What role did peripheral activities play?

Significance

This study contributes to the literature by addressing gaps in career development literature. First, career services and research largely focus on youth making their first career decision (OECD, 2004). Mid-life underemployed adults represent an understudied population (Motulsky, 2010) who face substantial challenges and yet offer the kinds of rich life histories and drive for reflection and change that would benefit from postmodern qualitative approaches (Richardson, 2012) and real-world action. This study recruited midlife adults who were seeking or had completed career transitions.

Second, career development literature focuses on experts administering assessments. Quantitative testing relies on paid testing and scoring, and qualitative counselling relies on expensive and time-consuming interviewing of individuals to identify patterns and discussing

options using a highly-trained practitioner over multiple sessions (Colvin et al., 2011). Further research is required to address shifting agency from the expert to participants. For instance, collaborative, peer counselling can reduce cost, improve access, and encourage participants to make and report on commitments to peers (Colvin et al., 2011). Additionally, research is lacking on helping participants learn data-gathering and meaning-making not just for themselves as part of individual counselling, but also while interacting with relatable career transitioners in the world (Krumboltz, Foley & Cotter, 2012). This study used experiential learning to expose participants to data-gathering and analysis on themselves and others.

Third, qualitative literature tends to report story-driven approaches that rely on individual narratives prompted by trigger questions while lacking a systematic approach to addressing the many influences on career paths (Savickas, 2012). Recent literature calls for more systemic approaches to explicitly and systematically address career influences at individual, social and environmental levels using multiple theories (McIlveen & Midgley, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014), and to provide more credible evidence about the efficacy of qualitative tools used in those approaches (Stead & Davis, 2015). Limited research has reported on the use of systemic approaches with diverse populations in South Africa (Alexander, Seabi & Bischof, 2010; Maree, Ebersohn & Molepo, 2006; Tinsley-Myerscough & Seabi, 2012) and China (Yim, Wong & Yuen, 2015) but the reports are anecdotal and focus on youth with limited life experience. In contrast, this study adopts a systemic, theory-driven approach to qualitative career assessment to ensure systematic data-gathering from the rich life histories of midlife adults.

Fourth, research evidence is lacking on the efficacy of qualitative career assessments (Watson & McMahon, 2015, 2015a). The literature reports counselling approaches focused on individual meaning-making but they rely on conceptual or anecdotal evidence (Stead & Davis, 2015) or limit themselves to descriptive themes. In contrast, this study collected evidence of the impact of qualitative assessment methods on how participants make meaning about themselves and relatable others including how they articulate their career future.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter situates the study within the literature. First, I describe my process for searching literature. Next, I review key themes emerging from the literature. Finally, to ensure my study addresses those themes, I outline a conceptual framework to guide the research.

Literature Search

I conducted a multi-phased search, beginning with introductory literature and moving into more focused searches. My review began with literature from a recent graduate syllabus for a survey course on career counselling. I reviewed comprehensive texts on the historical development of career theory from Patton & McMahon (2014); on career theory and illustrative case studies in practice from Swanson & Fouad (2015); and on qualitative career assessments from McMahon & Watson (2015). I narrowed my search for a more targeted phase by searching Google Scholar and databases such as Academic Search Complete with terms such as “career transition” and “midlife career transition” and “midlife career change.” To address issues of privilege within career development, I further targeted searches by adding search terms such as “socioeconomic status” or “disadvantage.” To address alternatives of providing participants with access to career guidance or counselling, I added search terms such as “mentorship” and “support group.” I also reviewed tables of contents from journals on career and vocational counselling.

Themes Arising From the Literature

The following themes arose from the literature:

- career theories have shifted towards participant agency
- career assessments have shifted towards data-gathering and collaboration
- metaphors for career assessment shape delivery and accessibility
- career assessments can reinforce or address disadvantage in participants, and
- research on midlife transitions focuses on prediction or description rather than action.

Career Theories Have Shifted Towards Participant Agency

Career theories are hypotheses that explain behaviour and guide decision-making (Swanson, 2001), determine how career issues are conceived (Swanson & Fouad, 2015), and serve as tools to improve career adaptability (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012). Over time, career theories have shown a development towards addressing more complexity within individuals and their environments, and towards engaging more action from participants in data-gathering and analysis, as described below.

Quantitative Norms-Focused Paradigm. Early efforts at career guidance were informed by the industrial revolution and the use of empirical science for prediction and control, adopting differential psychology as a helpful framework (Watson & McMahon, 2015) and later embracing predictable career stages from developmental psychology (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Early career theories focused on an objective expert practitioner who used a predefined set of traits and developmental stages to categorize participants and determine their career needs. This kind of theory belongs to a quantitative norms-focused paradigm. Paradigms define truth, worthwhile

problems, and acceptable solutions (Kuhn, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The quantitative norms-focused paradigm expects a single, objective truth to be discovered through rigorous experiments, then applied to predict and control the behaviour of people without their subjective input, and is described by some as “positivist” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Quantitative norms-focused career theories began with matching theories, then addressed more complexity with developmental theories.

Matching Theories. Matching theories dominate practice with simple guidelines supported by psychometric testing and focus on uncovering traits, needs, abilities or preferences for matching against a list of occupations (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014). Matching theories assume an unchanging core, and do not address the impact of emotions, potential for change (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014), expectations of family, peers and society (Stead & Bakker, 2010), the cultural foundations for “traits” (such as self-fulfillment being a Western rather than Asian priority (Young & Collin, 2003)), and the challenge of having participants rate preferences despite having limited life experiences and distorted beliefs about their abilities (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Participants are assumed to have free choice despite facing social barriers from expected gender roles, limited socioeconomic status, and a need to work to survive (Richardson, 2012).

Matching theories progressed from Holland’s definitive match to Dawis’ ongoing adjustments and more recent job-hopping theories. The most popular tool, Holland’s Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments, focuses on being a simple way to match people to occupations whose members have similar personalities (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008), in order to improve career satisfaction, achievement, and retention (Patton & McMahon, 2014). A practitioner assesses a participant’s attitudes, skills, preferences and problem-solving styles using psychometric tests, career daydreams and current job satisfaction in order to categorize them as a mix of realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional (“R-I-A-S-E-C”), with one dominant and two secondary types expected to emerge from heredity and preferences by late adolescence (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014). Participants are expected to find work satisfaction when their types are consistent and differentiated in priority, their identity focuses on a few stable interests and goals, and their favoured behaviours are appreciated in their workplace (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014; Leung, 2008). In research, Holland’s theory moderately predicts satisfaction and performance, but is tied to American culture (Swanson & Fouad, 2015), and does not consider personal change or social barriers to choice (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

To move beyond one-time matching towards explaining how people and workplaces seek equilibrium by exchanging needs for skills (such that a satisfied person remains in a job, and a satisfactory person is retained or promoted) Dawis proposed the Theory of Work Adjustment (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). Work adjustment occurs when an individual improves her skills or reduces her needs in response to a lack of equilibrium in the workplace, or a workplace imposes re-training, transfer or termination (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014). A practitioner uses testing and the participant’s work experiences to rank their needs for achievement, comfort, status, altruism, safety and autonomy, then uses a cost-benefit analysis (Swanson & Fouad, 2015), to compare her needs to her workplace’s reinforcers, such as coworkers, promotions, status and variety (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Similarly, a participant’s abilities (cognitive, verbal, numerical, perceptual and motor (Swanson & Fouad, 2015)) would be compared to her workplace’s skill requirements (Patton & McMahon, 2014). The practitioner

would then assess the participant's adjustment style based on her flexibility (her tolerance for dissatisfaction before seeking change); her reactivity (her likelihood of changing her own skills or needs); her activity (her likelihood of demanding changes in workplace requirements or rewards); and her persistence (how long she tries to adjust before quitting) (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014; Leung, 2008). The practitioner would suggest adjustments for the participant such as reducing her needs, improving her skills, or requesting new requirements or rewards (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Research supports the link of equilibrium with remaining at a workplace, but does not support adjustment styles or use with non-Caucasians (Swanson & Fouad, 2015).

A period of recession and wide-scale job loss prompted a shift away from studying linear, organization-bound careers based on a single match after high school, towards individually-driven protean, boundaryless, postcorporate and kaleidoscopic careers (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Protean careers shift career management from organizations to individuals who preserve freedom and autonomy by creating their own opportunities and adapting their knowledge and skills to meet changing workforce needs (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Boundaryless careers prioritize individual learning by working across organizations or changing employers, and postcorporate careers prioritize working in small firms, project teams, and self-employment (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Kaleidoscopic careers are an adjustable mix of three personal priorities based on life circumstances: authenticity to the self, work-life balance, and stimulating challenges (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). These theories could be treated as matching theories whereby a practitioner tests a participant's protean, boundaryless, or kaleidoscopic orientations (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), or advises her to embrace these orientations in order to survive a rapidly changing economy (Arthur, 2014). However, although career mobility increased over the last four generations for professionals (Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng, 2015) some organizations, industries and countries retain traditional career ladders (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) and mobility is experienced differently based on class and gender. While professionals change employers to improve status, working-class people without credentials remain in organizations hoping for a promotion, or change jobs within the same class (Kim, 2013). Men proactively change organizations without discrimination, while women experience multiple career paths due to life disruptions (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

Developmental Theories. While matching theories take a snapshot of a participant's characteristics to help them make an informed choice about entering a career, they did not address change within a participant over time. With developmental theories, a practitioner assesses a participant's progress through expected stages of life to identify their stage, and the knowledge and skills she needs to move ahead (Savickas, 2015). However, developmental theories assume a progression through defined career stages, ignoring a participant's potential for changes that are continuous, backwards, autonomous, or outside of male career stereotypes (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Richardson, 2012) such as unpaid work women do for families and community (Richardson, 2012). In developmental theories, community exists as "feedback" that shapes a participant's ideas about her capabilities and appropriate life roles, but these theories focus on internal development and do not address how "feedback" may arise from cultural barriers related to stereotypical gender roles and racial minority status, or socioeconomic barriers such as limited educational opportunities, or affordable housing and transit (Stead & Bakker, 2010; Fouad & Bynner, 2008).

Developmental theories may explain stages as additive, like Super's, or subtractive, like Gottfredson's. Super's Life Space - Life Span theory examines how people find satisfaction by implementing their self-concept, or identity, using multiple life roles in a series of stages (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). First, a practitioner examines the roles in a participant's "life space" (such as child, student, homemaker, worker, citizen, and leisurite), the time she spends in each, how she ranks them based on her values, and how they interact (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). Then the practitioner assesses a participant's progress within a "life span" of age-related stages (Leung, 2008), as well as her career maturity, or how well she performs in her current stage (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Stages progress through growth (ages 4-13), where she builds habits for achievement; exploration (14-24), where she crystallizes interests, skills and values, identifies options, and implements choices through training and work; establishment (24-44), where she develops competence and advances through raises and promotions; then maintenance (45-65) where she keeps abreast of developments and contributes innovations, and disengagement (65+) where she reduces participation, prepares for retirement and leaves her career (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008; Super & Kidd, 1979). The practitioner then elicits a participant's self-concept, an identity shaped by feedback from parents, teachers, employers and others, based on her performance in roles at home, school, work, and community (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). The practitioner helps the participant implement her self-concept by identifying skills she needs to complete her life stage (such as improving her ability to judge her strengths and assess job options during exploration), or by using matching theories to identify her traits then contrast those results with the actual life roles and self-concept she imposes on herself (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Although life stages are expressed in terms of ages, a career transition may trigger revisiting stages such as exploration and establishment (Leung, 2008).

While Super's theory describes a constructive process, Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise focuses on how a participant eliminates careers based on limited feedback she receives about appropriate gender roles and the prestige and attainability of a particular career, which risks her reproducing the socioeconomic status and career dissatisfaction of the people who raised her (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Starting young, a girl may eliminate jobs for men (age 6-8), or with low social value, or that seem difficult to achieve (age 9-13), resulting in options that she expects will provide a sense of belonging, respect and comfort (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). As an adolescent (ages 14+) she may eliminate jobs that don't fit her personality, interests, skills and values, and then only search for her most preferred jobs using familiar sources, and choose based on her perceptions of the labour market and economy, and family obligations (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). A practitioner might expand her options by helping her explore why she prematurely dismissed some careers, then identify resources and qualifications to make them more accessible (Swanson & Fouad, 2015).

Constructivist Paradigm. Quantitative norm-focused theories "psychologize" career by measuring traits, self-concept, and goals but do not consider the privileges or constraints in society that shape them (Stead & Bakker, 2010; Richardson, 2012). In quantitative norm-focused theories, community is a source of feedback to identify a participant's aptitudes, needs for adjustment or stage of development. In contrast, the constructivist paradigm treats reality as something a participant constructs based on personal experiences and social interactions (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Young & Collin, 2003; Kelly, 1991). In this paradigm, a participant reflects on her life and work to find patterns that highlight her beliefs (Patton &

McMahon, 2014) and then forms a personal career theory (Patton & McMahon, 2006). A practitioner helps her share and interpret her stories (McMahon & Watson, 2009) and take steps to put her insights into practice (Young & Collin, 2003) by taking actions to improve confidence, and manage helpful relationships. Constructivism focuses on individual meaning-making but, without specific prompts, could fail to address how a person's life experiences and meaning-making from those experiences are constrained by social barriers of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and economics (Patton & McMahon, 2014; Young & Collins, 2003). For instance, although relationships "coauthor" careers through interactions (Richardson, 2012), people with privilege and power have access to different relationships than those without.

Highlighting the role of personal meaning-making, Savickas' Life Design Theory examines how a participant develops over time to implement her self-concept, but unlike Super's stages, Savickas uses a participant's life history of coping with uncertainty and trauma to co-create a story where she is a flawed hero planning a "next chapter" that will advance her career's "plot" and "character development" (Savickas, 2015; Leung, 2008). A practitioner would collaborate with a participant in several steps: construction (gathering her current challenge, goals, and stories about work); deconstruction (identifying her misconceptions, barriers, assumptions and omissions); reconstruction (assembling events, recurring episodes, significant figures and defining moments into a coherent story where she is a flawed hero chasing her goals); and co-construction (identifying her priorities, steps for development, and necessary actions) to achieve her "next chapter" (Savickas, 2015).

To address the impact of the world as a source of feedback, the social cognitive career theory examines how a participant encounters certain experiences, which trigger interests, career goals and actions; those actions trigger feedback, such as sensations, emotions, and consequences, which affect her perceptions of her ability (self-efficacy) and likely rewards from a related career (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). A participant rejects a career option when she perceives her ability to be low, her rewards to be poor or unobtainable, or her barriers to be high (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). Her perceived barriers and access to life experiences are affected by race, gender, culture, socioeconomic status, finances, emotional support, and the economy (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). Career dissatisfaction may arise from decreased self-efficacy due to new challenges; fewer available or desirable rewards; or increases in perceived barriers (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). A practitioner could expand a participant's options by comparing her objectively-tested interests and abilities against her subjective self-efficacy: if she is interested but has low self-efficacy, she needs more successful experiences; if she is skilled but uninterested, she needs to explore more potential rewards and address perceived barriers (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). The links between interests and self-efficacy, and between rewards and career choice are supported by research across gender, race and ethnicity (Swanson & Fouad, 2015).

Richardson broadens the focus of meaning-making with her theory of Counselling for Work and Relationships, which examines how a participant coauthors career with friends, family, colleagues, and supervisors while she is training, working for pay, caring for dependents, or volunteering in her community (Richardson, 2012; 2012a). A practitioner collects stories about a participant's relationships in paid and unpaid work, then identifies life events, such as transitions within those relationships, and turning points caused by events such as immigration or job loss (Richardson, 2012). For instance, transitions in a marriage trajectory (wedding or divorce), a parenthood trajectory (birth or loss of a child), or an eldercare trajectory (caring for

an aging parent) could trigger an exit from paid market work, and a transition in market work (retirement) could lead to a transition into care work as a tutor or community volunteer (Richardson, 2012). A participant's relationships doing paid and unpaid work not only reveal her different identities, but also how her career success or failure is co-created with the people she works with (Richardson, 2012; 2012a). Participants, even when lacking power, can identify personal, cultural and social barriers, and then take actions to enter or exit influential relationships, such as scheduling an information interview to start a market work relationship, or exiting an unsupportive marriage to end a distracting care relationship (Richardson, 2012; 2012a).

Critical Paradigm. In contrast to quantitative, norms-focused categorization, and constructivist meaning-making, critical theories uncover historically-generated social structures that preserve power for some while oppressing others (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). In this paradigm, practitioners and participants collaborate to uncover and challenge discriminatory barriers arising from gender, race or socioeconomic status that limit career options (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Barriers may not be readily apparent. For instance, Bourdieu (1986) describes kinds of advantages and disadvantages arising from access to capital (an accumulation of labour over time) in the form of money (economic capital), knowledge (cultural capital), and relationships (social capital). Bourdieu (1986) argues that people can experience hidden advantages when they have the time and exposure necessary to absorb or study culture and meet and engage with people to nurture connections that will advance their interests. These barriers can be reinforced when practitioners push a participant to exploit her most marketable "talents" regardless of her interests, values, abilities or needs, or to accept a neoliberal "reality" of powerless reactivity to labour market change (Arthur, 2014; Sultana, 2014). In contrast, practitioners can rethink "talent", and help a participant overcome weak credentials and career gaps shaped by her limited opportunities (Arthur, 2014). In addition, a practitioner could intervene with employers and focus their attention on what a participant with disadvantages or disabilities can do for them, and solicit needed supports up front from potential supervisors and colleagues to enhance inclusion (Nota, Santilli & Soresi, 2015). Unfortunately, critical theory's focus on social discourse can leave little room for a participant's personality or agency other than resistance to oppression (Stead & Bakker, 2010; Young & Collin, 2003), and can fail to appreciate the social justice benefits offered by counselling when it helps participants challenge their limiting beliefs and connect to empowering resources (Sultana, 2014). For instance, people can enhance economic capital through loans, cultural capital through study, and social capital through networking, and use them to further enhance economic capital in the long-term by improving credentials and career (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social constructionism and discourse analysis offer ways to critically examine how participants' meaning-making of their world is constrained by their social interactions and practices (Young & Collin, 2003). For instance, discourse analysis examines how thinking is constrained by language and explanations ("discourse") that reinforce power for some at the expense of others (Stead & Bakker, 2010). A discourse could define "career" to exclude patchworks of paid and unpaid work; or define certain jobs to exclude women; or define self-fulfillment as a career priority in America, compared to serving family and community in collectivist cultures (Stead & Bakker, 2010). For instance, Kitayama, et al. (2006) demonstrate how mainland Japanese associate satisfaction and success or failure with social harmony, while Midwestern Americans focused more on individual goal attainment. Practitioners deconstruct the discourses shaping a participant's career by looking at her assumptions, contradictions,

omissions, and dominant ideas, highlighting ideas that hurt her while benefitting others, and offering liberating alternatives (Stead & Bakker, 2010). Practitioners can also uncover the discourses shaping their own guidance services by asking who benefits from an approach such as testing and job-matching, how a participant might be disadvantaged due to her race, gender, mid-life age and working-class status, and what alternatives exist (Stead & Bakker, 2010).

Participatory Paradigm. The participatory paradigm further shifts power towards participants by uniting theory and research with practice (Argyris & Schon, 1989) and engaging participants in the design, implementation and analysis of actions to improve flourishing in the world (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). A practitioner might facilitate participants through collaborative cycles of identifying their needs, priorities, and resources for career transitions, developing plans and taking action, then reviewing how their actions improved transition skills and supports (Gauld, Smith & Kendall, 2011). Through participation, people can shift away from being labelled as “deficient” towards helping identify and remove barriers that create their “deficiency.” For instance, social services may encourage dependence, such as people living with HIV being reluctant to leave supportive living facilities to find work (Paul-Ward, Braveman, Kielhofner & Levin, 2005); people with intellectual exceptionalities remaining with friends in sheltered workshops rather than seeking outside employment (Timmons, Hall, Bose, Wolfe & Winsor, 2011); and people with chronic underemployment being pushed through continual self-improvement interventions (Tofteng & Husted, 2011). Alternatively, people living with HIV could be consulted to explore their career barriers, resulting in services to address nutrition, exercise, communication skills, insurance benefits, community housing, and practice jobs to lead them towards independent living (Paul-Ward, Braveman, Kielhofner & Levin, 2005). People with intellectual exceptionalities who are otherwise kept in sheltered workshops could be consulted along with families and workshop staff to develop recommendations to improve their community integration, such as involving families in job searches and networking instead of deferring to staff, prioritizing “on the job” learning in the community instead of sheltered workshops, and helping clients develop career decision-making skills, find non-stereotypical jobs, and make friends in the community (Timmons, Hall, Bose, Wolfe & Winsor, 2011). Finally, chronically underemployed people could be engaged with caseworkers and actors to dramatize scenarios of ideal employment services, resulting not only in plans for change, but also a play performed across the country to raise awareness of their challenges (Tofteng & Husted, 2011). Participatory approaches are not commonly described as part of practice literature. Although such approaches offer the promise of developing community capacity for change, they may conflict with existing policies and practices of service providers, and, without effective facilitation and leadership development, may fail to survive the end of the research interventions in which they were used.

Using a Framework to Consider Multiple Theories

Individual theories can fail to address the complex interactions of work and personal life over time (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Richardson, 2012; Patton & McMahon, 2006), and are limited by the assumptions of their individualistic American cultural roots (McMahon & Watson, 2009; Leung, 2008). However, a meta-theoretical framework could use multiple theories to consider the interactions of individuals, their social connections, and their environment over time (Patton & McMahon, 2014; McMahon, 2011; Patton & McMahon, 2006).

Patton and McMahon's Systems Theory Framework was developed within the constructivist paradigm to explain a participant's career by examining the "content" and "process" influences arising from her life story (Patton & McMahon, 2014). "Content" includes her individual gender, age, ethnicity, abilities, personality, interests, skills and sexual orientation; her social connections such as peers, family, colleagues and community; and her environment, such as politics, history, socioeconomic status, job market, and geography (Patton & McMahon, 2014; McMahon, 2011). "Process" refers to the interactions of her "contents", and the effects of her decision-making, adaptability to change, and chance events (Patton & McMahon, 2014). However, the framework raises challenges because it mixes approaches from the quantitative norms-focused paradigm (where experts use testing to fit everyone into a single "truth") and critical theory (where experts expose "truth" as a social structure imposed to protect the privilege of some and not others) by using constructivism (where experts collaborate with participants to develop subjective interpretations of "truth") (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Additionally, when used within its intended constructivist paradigm, the Systems Theory Framework focuses on reflection and interpretation to create insight (an explanation of the self and influences on the self that shaped career experiences and aspirations), rather than supporting skill-development for navigating career change in the world (Krumboltz, Foley & Cotter, 2012; 2012a).

Career Assessments Have Shifted Towards Data-Gathering and Collaboration

Just as career theories have shifted power towards participants, so have career assessments. Career assessments are the processes and instruments used to gather data from people to assist them with navigating their career options (Watson & McMahon, 2015). Assessments have shifted from an objective expert "diagnosis" of clients using quantitative measures (McMahon & Patton, 2015, p. 51) towards facilitating participants in learning about themselves through data-gathering and meaning-making in a variety of qualitative approaches. Unfortunately, qualitative approaches lack a body of research evidence to support their claims as an effective learning process.

Early Assessments Focused on Quantitative Prediction. Early assessments measured intrinsic traits and interests in individuals using valid and reliable instruments, then applied statistical analysis to categorize people into defined groups (Arulmani, 2015; Pryor & Bright, 2015; Watson & McMahon, 2015), which contributed to understanding how values, interests and personality impacted career choice (McMahon & Patton, 2015). Using quantitative categorization, individuals can be linked to matching career options (Pryor & Bright, 2015). The tests provide a one-time snapshot of an individual's traits (Arulmani, 2015).

The use of quantitative assessments is subject to some limitations. To provide valid results, they depend on standardized tests, conditions, instructions, scoring, and interpretation by a trained person (Arulmani, 2015). When matching test-takers to occupations, the tests rely on a sample of employed people who took the test in the past, and the sample can be limited in demographic scope or out of date with respect to occupations (Case & Blackwell, 2008). Tests also depend on participants having similar constructs about career and personality as the sample of people the test was validated against (Arulmani, 2015). Tests created using Anglo-American norms may not produce valid results with other racial and ethnic groups because, despite any language translation, the underlying constructs of individualistic goal attainment evaluated by the test may not work in the new culture (Arulmani, 2015). When quantitative testing is driven by businesses selling into new markets, validity testing in other cultures and standardization

prerequisites for accurate results may be lacking (Arulmani, 2015). Quantitative approaches may also provide scores without a theoretical foundation, discussion of social and contextual influences (McMahon & Patton, 2015), or the impact of emotion (Reid, 2015). For instance, Hirschi & Freund (2014) distinguished how short-term changes in positive emotion and social supports affected levels of engagement in career exploration.

Since quantitative measures rely on cultural constructs and norms of career behaviour captured at a certain time within a certain sample of employed test-takers, they do not anticipate or address issues arising from changing constructs or norms about career, or accurately categorize groups of people not reflected within those constructs and norms.

Postmodern Assessments Shifted Towards Subjective Learning From Complexity.

In contrast with a quantitative, norm-focused assumption of stable professions and social roles in which assessments can identify a “standardized biography” to follow, people can use postmodern approaches to explore multiple, subjective interpretations of career that incorporate a person’s multiple roles and identities in life as well as their ongoing adaptations within a system of influences (Solomon, 2000). For instance, people can engage in qualitative processes to explore their own past and construct a personal identity to guide them through unplanned changes and opportunities (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015). The qualitative approach embraces constructivist principles of subjectively interpreting life events, and social constructionist principles of examining how social forces shape those interpretations (Brott, 2015). Qualitative assessments can address dynamic changes in workforce diversity and personal contexts in order to develop highly personal definitions of career (Watson & McMahon, 2015). Qualitative assessments are learning processes that shift control to participants by engaging them in gathering information on themselves and others, reflecting on their experiences to identify patterns and intrinsic motivations, and constructing a personally-meaningful career story through dialogue (Brott, 2015; Meijers & Lengelle, 2015; McMahon & Watson, 2015). Stories are time-honoured ways of understanding and sharing the past and using it to plan for the future (Brott, 2015). However, to be effective, qualitative approaches require a guiding theory to interpret a participant’s career dilemma and choose helpful assessments (Watson & McMahon, 2015), failing which a practitioner may rely on her own preferences (Pryor & Bright, 2015) which may prioritize some information while ignoring others, or mechanically collect details but fail to construct meaning from them (McIlveen & Midgley, 2015). Qualitative assessments require tools relevant to participant needs, simple instructions and incremental steps, collaborative data-gathering and analysis, and debriefing to identify what participants learned about themselves (Brott, 2015). Participants require a skilled facilitator to support the learning process through probing, reflecting, clarifying and interpreting (Brott, 2015), which could be a specially-trained counsellor or another person with active listening skills. Participants can test what they learned about their career identity story by sharing it with others, and revising it based on feedback (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015).

Qualitative Approaches Rely on Data-gathering From the Self and Others. The qualitative learning process can use a variety of assessments to teach participants data-gathering and meaning-making to inform their choices (Amundson & Smith, 2015). Data-gathering can start with activities such as forced choices, favourite experiences, family patterns, chronologies of life experiences, and semi-structured interviews. At a minimum, data-gathering involves the participant querying themselves, but can extend to questioning family members and significant others. Based on the elicited data, dialogue can be used to prompt for further detail.

Forced Choices. To gather data on values, stereotypes and decision-making processes, forced choices prompt participants to review a set of options and make decisions, such as sorting a set of cards that represent values, interests, skills, personality types, or occupations, while vocalizing their thinking process (Osborn, Kronholz & Finklea, 2015). Participants might initially sort career cards into Yes, No, and No Opinion piles; then resort piles into reasons for their choices or preferred ranks, or based on being a future self or if their perceived obstacles vanished (Osborn, Kronholz & Finklea, 2015; Pryor & Bright, 2015). Participants can elicit their personal decision-making constructs (Kelly, 1991) by comparing two negative “No” cards against a “Yes” card and identifying their reason for differentiating them, and turning that reason into a construct with opposing dimensions such as “creative” versus “rigid” (Pryor & Bright, 2015). The sorting process can gather data about other people by resorting cards based on perceptions of a significant other’s perspective (Osborn, Kronholz & Finklea, 2015).

Favourite Experiences. To gather data on skills and weaknesses, the Pattern Identification Exercise prompts participants to share their favourite experiences and provide detailed stories of when they went very well, and when they went poorly, and why those stories stood out for them (Amundson & Smith, 2015). The process results in a valuable skill: participants can independently evaluate their education and work experiences to generate an identity based on strengths and problem-solving with supportive evidence (Amundson & Smith, 2015).

Family Patterns. To gather data on family influences, a genogram prompts participants to diagram a three-generation tree of their family and label each person based on occupation, lifestyle, career expectations (Bakshi & Satish, 2015), dreams, qualities, and personal mottos (Di Fabio, 2015). The process can involve data-gathering from family members to collect the required information (Bakshi & Satish, 2015).

Life Chronologies. To gather data on critical life incidents and influential people, a lifeline prompts participants to diagram a chronological sequence of positive and negative life events when growing up, and the key people who influenced each event, with positive events above the line and negative events below (Fritz & Van Zyl, 2015).

Interviews. To gather data from interpersonal dialogue, semi-structured interviews prompt participants with a series of questions meant to elicit “small stories” from their lives (Hartung, 2015). Interviews may be metaphorical or systematic. For instance, the metaphorical Career Construction Interview uses six questions to ask for the participant’s perceived problem and goals; for three real or fictional role models and how they might solve the perceived problem; for favourite magazines, television and websites to identify interests and environments the participant is immersed in; for a currently favourite book or movie to elicit a story that reflects their current problem and ideal self; for a favourite saying or motto to identify guidance they use for decisions; and for their three earliest memories to reveal the central pain behind their current problem (Hartung, 2015). In contrast, the more systematic Career Systems Interview uses the Systems Theory Framework to guide a conversation through environmental influences (such as where a person comes from) and then through their social and individual influences (McIlveen, 2015). Participants who resist the wide-ranging questions are guided through the rationale of the Systems Theory Framework and encouraged to set their own boundaries (McIlveen, 2015).

Workbooks and Writing. To gather data systematically on a system of influences, a booklet like My System of Career Influences (MSCI) uses the Systems Theory Framework (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2015). The framework drives the design of sections that separately investigate individual, social, and environmental influences, as well as the impact of the past, present and future, the impact of change, and the impact of chance (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2015). Each section provides sample influences and prompts data-gathering by participants through sentence completion tasks for each influence, and a matrix to prioritize the impact of those influences (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2015). Similarly, the My Career Chapter writing exercise asks participants for examples of each influence from the Systems Theory Framework, then provides them with a matrix and asks them to rate how compatible their actual interests, skills, values, and health are with their social influences (such as workplace, peers, and family) and environmental influences (such as the job market and media) on a scale from -2 to +2 (McIlveen, 2015). Participants then complete a series of sentences for each individual, social and environmental influence to address its past, present, and future impact on the participant's career (McIlveen, 2015).

Qualitative Approaches Prompt Meaning-Making Through Dialogue With the Self and Others. A participant's "small stories" from the data-gathering process fuel a collaborative meaning-making dialogue, first to identify life themes (Brott, 2015; Pryor & Bright, 2015), and then to explore alternative perspectives, such as imagining how a third-party might interpret the participant's experiences, or trying what-if scenarios (Brott, 2015). Meaning-making creates a personal career story to guide a participant through future changes in a way that satisfies her needs (Brott, 2015; Hartung, 2015). Since meaning-making is subjective, the resulting story reflects the culture and experiences of those who collaborated in creating it, such as the participant, the practitioner, and significant others who provided feedback (McIlveen & Midgley, 2015). The career story drives the development of an action plan to overcome obstacles and secure resources to achieve desired career changes in line with the participant's values (Brott, 2015). In order to create meaning from data, qualitative assessments use different ways of triggering dialogue.

Forced Choices. To make meaning from forced choices, participants are prompted to label and describe each pile of careers, or construct a career story from a pile, which results in themes that explain their decision-making and how they see the world of work (Osborn, Kronholz & Finklea, 2015; Pryor & Bright, 2015). Participants can be prompted to examine a pile and explain how their social and environmental influences affected it, and how it relates to their life outside work (Osborn, Kronholz & Finklea, 2015).

Favourite Experiences. To make meaning from favourite experiences, participants are prompted to explain what their positive and negative stories say about them as people, which develops themes about strengths and skills that they can apply to their career challenge (Amundson & Smith, 2015).

Family Patterns. To make meaning from family patterns in a genogram, participants are walked through the labels of each family member and asked to explain how they influence the participant's view of self, work, gender roles, education, career, and achievement, and how they wish to embrace or change those influences (Bakshi & Satish, 2015).

Life Chronologies. To make meaning from lifelines, participants are walked through each life event, and asked why it was significant, who played a role, and how it influences the

participant's life and decisions (Fritz & Van Zyl, 2015). The discussion generates themes, which the participant uses to reflect on their career path and project a potential future lifeline (Fritz & Van Zyl, 2015).

Interviews. To make meaning from the “small stories” gathered in interviews, dialogue is used to identify themes. For instance, emotional words in stories suggest “boundary experiences” such as past failures to cope, which may be further probed for potential life themes (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015). In a Career Construction Interview, themes are developed to identify the participant's central preoccupation, motives, goals, strategies and view of the self (Hartung, 2015). In the Career Systems Interview, a participant's written My Career Chapter is used to trigger dialogue, such as a practitioner reading the story to the participant and asking for reactions and themes, or the participant reading their story to an imagined younger self, imagining that self's feedback, then writing a response that lays out a plan to overcome obstacles and achieve a desired future (McIlveen, 2015). The participant may share their story with trusted others to make further meaning through dialogue (McIlveen, 2015).

Workbooks and Writing. To make meaning from the My System of Career Influences booklet, participants diagram a constellation of their many career influences, reflect on their insights, and develop an action plan that includes sharing their diagram with others for feedback, and addressing the influences they discovered in the process (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2015).

Qualitative Dialogue and Meaning-making Can Integrate Quantitative Assessments. Philosophically, qualitative and quantitative assessments are incompatible based on subjective versus objective paradigms of truth, but pragmatically they can contribute to a collaborative learning experience about the self, career options, information-seeking and decision-making (Sampson, Peterson, Osborn & Hayden, 2015) when used within a theory-driven process of data-gathering and dialogue (McMahon & Patton, 2015; Sampson, Peterson, Osborn & Hayden, 2015). A guiding theory can be sourced from career theory, such as the Systems Theory Framework (Watson & McMahon, 2015) or learning theory, such as Cognitive Information Processing (Sampson, Peterson, Osborn & Hayden, 2015). For instance, the process may begin by quantitatively assessing participants for their readiness to make a choice, their sources of dysfunctional thinking, and their interests based on a Holland scale (Sampson, Peterson, Osborn & Hayden, 2015). Rather than depending on expert interpretation, participants can be prompted to subjectively interpret their Holland scores, compare them to their personal values and their life and work experiences to see how well they match, and how much satisfaction those experiences provide (Watson & McMahon, 2015). Based on the results, the participant develops a learning plan to address her barriers to making a career decision (Sampson, Peterson, Osborn & Hayden, 2015). To evaluate the efficacy of the learning process, participants can be debriefed to generate feedback for future adjustments (McMahon & Patton, 2015).

Quantitative assessments may not only be mixed into an interpretive process, but also inform the development of hybrid instruments that incorporate community data-gathering and dialogue. Arulmani (2015) describes how a Western quantitative assessment failed all of the children in a village, but a visit to their village revealed their actual capabilities. In response, the Strengths and Accomplishments Questionnaire (SAQ) was developed whereby participants self-rated their linguistic, analytical, spatial, personal, and physical abilities based on accomplishments recognized in their community (Arulmani, 2015). Opportunities and levels of accomplishment were compiled from local elders, teachers, parents, officials and NGOs with a

group discussion to ensure the accomplishments were available to the entire group to be tested (Arulmani, 2015). For instance, a linguistic ability scale might ask participants to consider essays and reports they had written and indicate levels of recognition they had achieved (Arulmani, 2015). Resulting patterns of accomplishment are used to prompt dialogue with the participant to explore career options with similar patterns (Arulmani, 2015).

Qualitative Approaches Require Evidence of Efficacy and Rigour. Qualitative career assessments shift agency towards participants (Brott, 2015) but can be seen as mere creative activities (McMahon & Watson, 2015) lacking evidence for efficacy (Stead & Davis, 2015) or rigour unless researchers employ instruments and processes to ensure accuracy and assess impact.

The Future Career Autobiography (FCA) is a qualitative evaluation instrument that measures changes in the detail and richness of a participant's narrative to determine the efficacy of a career intervention (Rehfuss, 2015). Before and after a career intervention, participants use 10 minutes to write a five-sentence paragraph describing their life and work five years into the future (Rehfuss, 2015). The pre and post FCAs are examined qualitatively with the participant for changes, increased details and clarification by circling verbs and key phrases, highlighting potential themes, and comparing word counts (Rehfuss, 2015). FCAs tend not to change based on desired quality of life or work experience (Rehfuss, 2015). However, FCAs do tend to change by shifting from general fields of work, interests or jobs to more specifics with significantly higher word counts; by shifting from vagueness, constraints, and fixations towards focus, direction, hope and openness (Rehfuss, 2015). Research not only shows changes in FCAs after interventions, but also shows lack of change in word counts for control groups, and for participants who took control interventions focused on stagnation rather than exploration (Rehfuss, 2015; Stead & Davis, 2015).

Qualitative assessments are also challenged with respect to accuracy and efficiency because they are subject to the bias of the person interviewing the participant, and create lots of data that requires time-consuming and skillful analysis that is difficult to scale to large groups (Arulmani, 2015). Reviewing research evidence, Stead & Davis (2015) found anecdotal cases and reports of positive results for various techniques, but in general a lack of rigour in showing credibility or trustworthiness through triangulation, dependability through consistency of findings, or confirmability using other sources (Stead & Davis, 2015; Brott, 2015). Reid (2015) argues that qualitative assessments require a theoretically-grounded process and a rigorous evaluation of effectiveness that address the following criteria:

- engage with real people in complex lives
- address relevant epistemologies (ways of knowing)
- address personal, social, and environmental influences
- address different cultures and forms of interpretation
- collaborate with participants
- be understandable and satisfying
- be supported by trustworthy research
- address ethical issues of specific groups
- evaluate impact on intellect, emotions, self awareness and self efficacy

- be credible and productive
- contribute to the participant's understanding of career and life
- adapt to time and resource constraints.

Metaphors for Career Assessment Shape Delivery and Accessibility

Career theories have shifted towards more participation, and career assessments have shifted from diagnosis towards a therapeutic or learning approach of data-gathering and meaning-making through dialogue. These shifts have changed expectations about the roles of career practitioners and participants with practical implications for training requirements, the time and resources required for interventions, and the scalability of interventions for large numbers of participants, which prompts consideration of alternative forms of delivery engaging participants in broader roles than simply receiving services.

The Metaphor for Delivery of Career Services Affects Training and Accessibility.

Delivery of career assessments has been variously described as diagnosis, therapy, or learning, which suggest how the practitioners and participants using them are expected to act, resulting in consequences for competencies, training, costs, and accountability.

The metaphor of diagnosis is associated with “vocational guidance” (Pryor & Bright, 2015) and quantitative, norms-focused testing (McMahon & Patton, 2015). Quantitative approaches can be highly scalable for delivery to large populations (Arulmani, 2015) and more efficient, cost-effective, and easy to measure than qualitative approaches (OECD, 2004). However, despite scalability, results may not be valid if delivery does not comply with required standardization of procedures and interpretation, or if the assessments are not tested to be valid with the demographics of the people taking the test (Arulmani, 2015). Results may not be helpful if testing is conducted without a guiding theory to explore and discuss the scores with participants (Watson & McMahon, 2015). Practitioners engaged in diagnosis may fail to seek “talent” in the under-educated and under-employed, and instead focus on prescribing remedial interventions, and pushing participants to seek jobs using currently-marketable “talents” regardless of interests, abilities or needs (Arthur, 2014).

Alternatively, interpretivist paradigms deliver “career counselling”, which has been described both as a therapeutic system (McIlveen & Midgley, 2015) and a process of learning (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015; McMahon & Watson, 2015). A therapy metaphor implies the need for expensive, highly trained practitioners using individual, face-to-face counselling interventions with time-consuming dialogue, interpretation, and reflection (Colvin, Oozier, & Sampson, 2011; OECD, 2004). As therapy, interventions may lack assessment for their ability to help participants achieve their desired changes, or the ability of the intervention to be adjusted based on participant feedback (Burns, 2013). In contrast, a learning metaphor suggests opportunities for using a systematic intervention, developing participant skills in data-gathering and dialogue, and assessing the efficacy of the intervention, and the transfer of skills by participants into authentic contexts in order to inform the ongoing improvement of the intervention (Gilbert, 1978). As career counsellors, interpretivist practitioners are expected to foster trusting dialogues with participants, discover patterns, and develop plans for change (Patton & McMahon, 2006; McMahon & Watson, 2009) while considering how their own

influences may bias their advice (Arthur, Collins, Marshall & McMahon, 2013; Patton & McMahon, 2006) and perpetuate social barriers (Arthur, 2014).

The people who deliver interventions are career practitioners who may lack the training and accountability necessary for sophisticated interventions. Career practitioners match individuals to vocations, identify their career stages and related needs, assist with adapting to work environments (Patton & McMahon, 2006) and with connecting clients with resources, rebuilding their confidence, and challenging their limiting beliefs (Sultana, 2014). However, practitioners face criticisms for being unregulated and under-trained (Arthur et al., 2013). Without training in theory, practitioners may rely on metaphors and mental models. Mental models are informal explanations based on experience that help with problem-solving but exclude non-conforming information (Jones et al., 2011), which can result in cherry-picking of data that confirms hunches (Swanson & Fouad, 2015), relying on trial-and-error, or focusing on one issue, like efficiency of delivery to a large number of participants (Swanson, 2001; Gilbert, 1978). In contrast, training in the use of formal theories improves the recognition and resolution of career challenges (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012) by suggesting explanations, questions, interventions and assessments grounded in that theory (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Swanson, 2001). Unfortunately, practitioners may be accountable to public-sector policies and budgets with standards, feedback and incentives that reward efficiency and number served rather than participants' accomplishment of subjective life improvements (Gilbert, 1978).

The Costs of Career Counselling Prompt Consideration of Alternative Methods of Delivery. To be cost effective and accessible, interpretivist approaches require easier tools for providing guidance and more efficient delivery either by changing the way services are delivered or who helps deliver them (Colvin, Oozier, & Sampson, 2011). One way to improve efficiency of delivery is to increase barriers by triaging help-seekers into appropriate levels of service such as online self-help materials, quick questions with resource staff, or one-on-one counselling with a highly-trained resource (Colvin, Oozier, & Sampson, 2011). Another option to enhance accessibility of delivery is to operationalize the participatory paradigm to build a career assessment competency in the community through support groups, mentoring, and collaborative counselling, which primarily address differing metaphorical functions.

Support groups provide therapeutic and learning functions by providing emotional support such as caring, trust and empathy; informational support such as questions and answers or explanations of how to solve problems; instrumental support such as helping find work, lending money or things, or inviting people to join a group; and network support such as linking to people with a similar background (Chen & Yang, 2015). Interacting with strangers in a support group can provide a more diverse and objective perspective than family and friends (Chen & Yang, 2015). Support groups may help during different phases of change, such as providing information and instrumental support at the beginning of a major change, then emotional and network support later when a participant experiences doubts (Chen & Yang, 2015). Support groups can help participants learn from others' experiences (Meier, 2002), and improve confidence in understanding and addressing a particular kind of challenge (Neville, 2014). However, support groups can devolve into a few dominant voices (Chung & Chen, 2018), or venting of frustrations rather than challenging ideas or changing practices (De Leon, Pena & Whitacre, 2010; Meier, 2002).

Mentoring provides a learning function through a voluntary and mutually-beneficial relationship where one person supports another in making a change in their life (Hooley,

Hutchinson & Neary, 2016). For instance, mentors may electronically answer questions from mentees such as how to choose a university program, or sharing specific experiences from the mentor's own program, while nudging the participant to reflect on their career goals, identify their barriers and plan to overcome them, and focus on making progress until the relationship ends (Hooley, Hutchinson & Neary, 2016). The most common pitfalls of e-mentorship were mentors who failed to respond in a timely way, or failed to connect their participants to helpful information or contacts (Hooley, Hutchinson & Neary, 2016).

Collaboration already exists in postmodern counselling in the form of interactive data-gathering and meaning-making dialogue, however agency for participants can be further extended through collaboration of multiple participants. Collaborative counselling not only reduces costs, but also develops skills by prompting clients to ask each other questions, consider multiple perspectives, practice confidential problem-solving with peer support, and demonstrate accountability by taking action and reporting back to peers (Colvin, Oozier, & Sampson, 2011). While biased interpretation is a concern when participants depend on a single expert to guide their meaning-making, the many biases of multiple participants from a community offer valuable alternative lenses to re-view the self in multiple ways. By focusing collaborative counselling on learning (rather than therapy) participants can practice skills in data-gathering and meaning-making with themselves, their practitioner, and their co-participants to generate multiple views of career transition and the world of work. Participants with skills can seek out and engage people in their community for further data-gathering and meaning-making after the intervention. For instance, participants can schedule information interviews with relatable career transitioners in their community, and share a brief chart of their competencies and achievements with their interviewee to prompt discussions of new contacts, more occupations to consider, or the creation of a dream job that meets a unique set of needs of their interviewee (Beasley, 2014).

Career Assessments Can Reinforce or Address Disadvantage in Participants

Previous sections examined career theories and assessments and the accessibility of those assessments based on their metaphors of delivery. This section examines the nature of disadvantage and how it affects the way participants approach career, how traditional career assessments affect disadvantaged groups, and how postmodern techniques can more constructively address disadvantage.

Disadvantage Arises From Systemic Barriers. Disadvantage may be linked to personal and contextual factors. For instance, people may blame themselves for being “bad at school” despite having dyslexia; having to focus on family illness, divorce, tragedy or expectations to focus on childcare or eldercare instead of learning; or having teachers who expressed low expectations or simply gave up on them (Bimrose, Mulvey & Brown, 2016). People growing up with lower socioeconomic status may have lower career aspirations for many reasons: having a family and peers who dislike education; lacking finances for post-secondary study; believing that career is an unchanging commitment limited by external forces rather than a dynamic process driven by motivation and achievement; and avoiding risk and exploration and making impulsive decisions (Harless & Stoltz, 2018). Economic migrants face language barriers and discrimination, and often rely on advice from family and friends who share similar disadvantages and cultural limitations about work (Bimrose & McNair, 2011). A lack of marketable qualifications can result in exclusion from work opportunities, the loss of further skill development within that work (Bimrose, Mulvey & Brown, 2016), and the loss of an opportunity

to integrate into a new community through work (Bimrose & McNair, 2011). Despite early challenges, some people who believed they were “bad at school” may discover as adults that they have a learning disability for which they can use coping strategies, or that they enjoy and excel at practical, on-the-job training (Bimrose, Mulvey & Brown, 2016).

Norms-Focused Guidance May Reinforce Disadvantage. Government-funded career guidance can reinforce a person’s low-qualification trap by focusing on matching them to jobs and requiring them to apply regardless of interests, talents, or competing life responsibilities (Bimrose, Mulvey & Brown, 2016; Bimrose & McNair, 2011). Norms-focused guidance may fail to address differences between the counsellor and a marginalized participant in terms of power, education, environment and culture that affect how they participate in assessments (Maree, Ebersohn & Molepo, 2006). For instance, differences in language impose barriers due to the need for translation, and ignorance of a participant’s culture may result in measuring them against Western norms and silencing their unique voices as they suppress their own differences to fit in (Maree, Ebersohn & Molepo, 2006).

Postmodern Counselling May Assist Disadvantaged Participants. Postmodern narrative approaches to career counselling can assist disadvantaged participants, provided that the assessment process does not reinforce disadvantaging bias. Narrative methods resonate with informal storytelling traditions and encourage people to use their own vernacular to share, make meaning of their experiences, values and beliefs, and develop personally-meaningful goals (Maree, Ebersohn & Molepo, 2006). Narrative techniques can also be used with people with mild mental disability such as by adjusting card sorts to present common life mottos to elicit their stories, fears and life themes (Nota, Santilli & Soresi, 2015). Narrative assessments challenge self-limitations by identifying life experiences that demonstrate a participant’s values, interests, adaptability, and strengths, and broaden their consideration of new transition possibilities (Harless & Stoltz, 2018; Bimrose & McNair, 2011). To avoid reinforcing bias during an assessment, counsellors must distinguish between their own worldview and that of the marginalized participant in terms of race, ethnicity, age, life stage, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle, social class, education, birth order, marital status and geography, in order to co-construct options the participant can relate to (Maree, Ebersohn & Molepo, 2006). Counsellors can address underlying individual barriers by helping participants engage in experiences to develop missing confidence, conscientiousness and perseverance in learning (Bimrose, Mulvey & Brown, 2016). Counsellors can address contextual barriers by confronting authorities about systemic factors that affect their participants, such as discrimination, legal status, housing, welfare benefits, and age (Bimrose & McNair, 2011).

Research on postmodern career counselling has demonstrated value for disadvantaged participants in Hong Kong and South Africa. In Hong Kong, a Chinese translation of the *My System of Career Influences* booklet was used with participants leaving high school, and while they struggled with the concept of a system of influences and felt the three-hour process was too long, they found the experience helped them commit to career choices that contradicted family expectations (Yim, Wong & Yuen, 2015). Post-apartheid South African students living with HIV/AIDS facing mass unemployment and school dropouts, created chronological lifelines and reframed negative life events in terms of what they chose to do rather than what happened, using their stories to set goals and create a collage of life themes (Tinsley-Myerscough & Seabi, 2012). Participants found the intervention a helpful move away from negativity that improved their self-understanding, self-esteem, hope and responsibility, and provided a group dynamic that

encouraged them to share stories during and after the session (Tinsley-Myerscough & Seabi, 2012). Similarly, South African disadvantaged students found a group narrative assessment empowering because they could listen to group members and contribute their own experiences when they felt comfortable (Alexander, Seabi & Bischof, 2010).

Research on Midlife Transitions Focuses on Prediction or Description Rather Than Action.

Previous sections have examined career theory, career assessments, and delivery of those assessments in general and to disadvantaged groups, but have not yet addressed midlife transition. Research on midlife career transition is limited (Peake & McDowall, 2012). The literature may be categorized in several ways: as conceptual or empirical; as focused on a specific career group; or by paradigm, such as quantitative approaches focused on prediction, or qualitative approaches focused on thematic description.

Conceptual Literature Lacks Evidence. Just as career assessment literature has been challenged for being conceptual or anecdotal (Stead & Davis, 2015), career transition literature can also focus more on proposals than evidence. For instance, McNair & Watts (2013) suggest a mid-life career review as a valuable way to reflect on needed career change as a matter of public policy. Krumboltz, Foley & Cotter (2012; 2012a) argue that career counselling should focus less on developing insight within a session, and more on encouraging participants to create unplanned opportunities in their lives and to report back on the real-world impact of their counselling experiences. Conceptual approaches may operationalize a theory, such as Clemens & Milsom (2008) outlining a process for using cognitive information processing to counsel military personnel through career transition, supported by an anecdotal example. Conceptual approaches may also suggest unusual mashups, such as Barclay, Stoltz & Chung (2011) integrating a smoking cessation model from psychotherapy with Super's stages of career development to suggest a process for guiding counselling for career change.

Empirical Literature May Focus on Particular Groups. Empirical career transition literature may focus on a group such as a profession or locally-disadvantaged participants. For instance, the U.S. military represents a profession with large numbers of mid-life career transitions, such as personnel retiring into the teaching profession (Robertson & Brott 2013; Robertson, 2013); marine corps non-commissioned officers retiring into civilian work (Johnston, Fletcher, Ginn & Stein, 2010); and navy admirals retiring into industry (Baruch & Quick, 2007). Teaching has been explored as a destination profession not only for the military but also for others recruited from existing careers (Wilkins & Comber, 2015). Other common careers for midlife change include athletics (McCoy, 2018; Lavalley, 2005), performing artists (Middleton & Middleton, 2017), and management consultants (Hoyer & Steyaert, 2015). Less common are studies of career transition focused on disadvantaged groups who lack post-secondary education. Chinyamurindi (2012) examined how traditionally-disadvantaged people in post-apartheid South Africa used accessible distance learning to support their career transitions, and McAtee and Benschhoff (2006) examined the differences between two groups of rural women laid off from manufacturing jobs: those who searched for another job, and those who enrolled in college for retraining.

Empirical Literature May Focus on Quantitative Prediction. Quantitative approaches seek to predict career change and the nature of the transition. Some quantitative studies focus on predicting change in career but with more focus on trends than disadvantaged groups. For instance, Hess, Jepsen and Dries (2012) surveyed 284 people in insurance, finance,

manufacturing and the public sector to predict change in employers or careers, and used regression analysis to determine that career change while remaining within an employer is likely when a person has high career exploration concerns and high employer loyalty, while career change outside an employer is likely when a person has high career disengagement concerns and low loyalty for employers. Carless and Arnup (2011) used multiple years of the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia survey to identify the following predictors of actual career change: having conducted a job search in the last four weeks, being younger, male, with more education and more limited job tenure, having higher job insecurity and dissatisfaction, and having higher scores for openness and extraversion. Donohue (2007) surveyed 200 people self-reporting both an intention to change career and activities taken to start the change, and 249 career persisters using the Career Attitudes and Strategies Inventory, and found that high ratings for skill development and risk-taking predicted intention to change, while high ratings for job satisfaction and career worries predicted intention to persist. Similarly, Donohue (2006) surveyed 212 career transition intenders and 249 career persisters in a range of Australian occupations, finding that career persisters had a self-reported current occupation that was congruent with their Holland codes, while career transition intenders desired new careers that were more congruent with their Holland codes than their current work. In contrast, McAtee and Benschhoff (2006) examined a disadvantaged population when they surveyed 90 women laid off from manufacturing in a rural community who either sought new jobs or entered college for retraining, and applied Schlossberg's (2011) career transition framework to determine that more white women with some college experience sought out training, while women who were non-white, had lower education or faced lower supports such as low finances, sought out another job.

Some quantitative studies focus on predicting the nature of career change but may be restricted to a particular group. For instance, Robertson (2013) surveyed military personnel transitioning into teaching and used correlational analysis to link longer transitions with lower income and more support from friends and family. Baruch and Quick (2007) surveyed 334 U.S. Navy admirals who had transitioned into industry and established the following predictive links: proactive career searches related to shorter periods of transition and unemployment; supportive family, colleagues and networking activity related to more positive and satisfying transitions; positive feelings during transition related to more new career success; and protean career approaches related to more positive and faster transitions.

Qualitative Research May Focus More on Description than Explanation. Qualitative studies may provide reviews of literature, a thematic analysis driven by a theoretical framework, or a more generic analysis of emerging themes. Some studies focus on literature reviews for midlife career transition, such as Middleton and Middleton (2017) compiling literature on career transitions for different kinds of performing artists, or Muja and Appelbaum (2012) collecting diverse literature on cognitive and affective processes that may explain decisions to participate in an MBA program.

Some qualitative studies use a conceptual framework to focus and guide their data-gathering and thematic exploration in order to contribute to theory, but largely rely on populations privileged with post-secondary educations. For instance, Peake and McDowall (2012) used chaos theory to examine the midlife career transitions of seven university-educated people and highlight the role of unplanned events, false starts, and chance. Motulsky (2010) used feminist relational theory to examine the midlife career transitions of twelve university-educated women who had also completed a career workshop, to highlight how the strength, number and

positivity of relationships helped or hindered them in career transition, and how remote relationships with people who had experienced career change were more supportive than closer relationships with people who had not. Johnston, Fletcher, Ginn and Stein (2010) used Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory to examine the midlife transitions of marine corps. personnel into industry and explain themes arising from focus group interviews in terms of economic, cultural, institutional and psychological concerns. Reflecting a therapeutic metaphor of career counselling, Hoyer and Steyaert (2015) used psychoanalytic concepts of unconscious desires to examine the midlife transitions of 30 management consultants, and reveal their desire to show a continuous and controlled identity across changing contexts while admitting discontinuities that suggest an unconscious desire for ambiguity.

Some studies rely on thematic development without a guiding framework, which risks eliciting descriptive themes without contributing to a theoretical explanation of a phenomenon. In addition, studies can focus on transitioners privileged with post-secondary education. Wilkins and Comber (2015) examined 24 "elite" midlife adults who transitioned from a professional career into teaching to elicit the following themes: being drawn into teaching based on previous exposure; wanting to make a difference in others; finding the internship helpful; feeling that their previous career helped them with professionalism, taking criticism constructively, communicating and explaining clearly, and being validated with students through real-world experience; finding school milieu cumbersome and uninterested in their previous career experiences; aspiring to more responsibility but feeling confident in having already proved themselves in a previous career; maintaining their motivation by focusing on student progress; and drawing on resilience from a former career to survive self-doubt. Robertson and Brott (2013) surveyed military veterans transitioning into teaching, and coded open-ended questions to elicit themes about the importance of early preparation for transition, taking a flexible and risk-taking attitude, experiencing rewards in teaching, enjoying serving others and reflecting on accomplishments, and experiencing struggles in their new milieu. Teixeira and Gomes (2000) interviewed seven university-educated midlife career changers, finding themes about choosing a first university program based on social pressure, prestige and security rather than personal interests; not enjoying the program, but hoping it would change while avoiding exploring alternatives; not enjoying the profession and feeling tired, irritable, and restricted; embracing change based on a critical incident or insight or drifting away in interest; facing opposition from family; feeling relief or confidence after the change; needing financial support from savings, family, temporary work or scholarship; and seeing their change as a process of maturation into someone who can make further self-directed change.

Some studies address disadvantaged participants, although mixing levels of privilege in a sample could obscure concerns particular to disadvantage. Wise and Millward (2005) interviewed 10 midlife career changers in their early to late 30s with first careers ranging from a shop assistant to an accountant, and used interpretive phenomenological analysis to develop themes of continuity, values and context that attempted explanation in addition to description. In terms of continuity, participants valued change as a source of relief, rejuvenating challenge and something they needed and would do more confidently in the future, but also valued the continuity of their existing personal contacts and experiences, which they wanted acknowledged by new employers (Wise & Millward, 2005). In terms of values, career change was driven by a desire to be true to the self and avoid future regrets through learning, growth, and purpose, which resulted in feeling more confident about their self-worth and putting their values into action (Wise & Millward, 2005). In terms of context, participants valued support from spouses, role

models and colleagues but claimed they would have changed without it, and viewed financial sacrifices as temporary setbacks to achieve their values and motivations to succeed. (Wise & Millward, 2005). With a focus on disadvantage, Chinyamurindi (2012) examined 20 South Africans disadvantaged by race or gender who were using distance learning to pursue career change, and found several themes: seeking personal growth and improved status that had been denied under apartheid, including the escape from unemployment, part-time work, and uninteresting work; feeling uncertain about their decision and their ability to provide for their family; and seeing distance learning as an accessible, inexpensive way to get a qualification and improve their lives.

Conceptual Framework

A review of the literature reveals key gaps: collecting credible evidence of the impact of qualitative assessment methods; addressing the challenges of complexity and diversity by using a postmodern meaning-making approach informed by a systematic theoretical framework; supporting increased agency of participants by incorporating experiential skill-development into meaning-making; addressing accessibility of interventions through collaborative approaches; and addressing potential sources of disadvantage in midlife career changers.

To address these gaps, the following key areas required systematic collection and analysis of data:

1. actual career pathways and midlife transitions of participants within a complex world
2. theoretically-informed, qualitative career assessments used to guide systemic data-gathering and meaning-making from those transitions
3. accessible interventions that engage participants in authentic learning of the data-gathering and meaning-making processes of the assessments

To address these key areas a three-part conceptual framework was used: the Systems Theory Framework, Activity Theory, and Community of Practice.

Systems Theory Framework to Elicit Systemic Data

To explore career pathways and midlife transitions, the Systems Theory Framework was used to guide interviews that elicited individual, social and environmental influences as well as the impact of time and chance (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

Activity Theory to Analyze Transition and Assessment as Activities

This study explored the roles of participants within two socially-valued activities: first, the ongoing navigation of a life-long career pathway including seeking and/or completing transitions; and second, engaging in a qualitative career assessment process that included sharing, inquiring, making meaning, and applying knowledge with others. To develop explanations of the two activities, Activity Theory was used as a complement to the Systems Theory Framework. Activity Theory characterizes complex endeavours as socially-valued activity systems that change over time in responses to stresses (Engeström, 1987), which contrasts with post hoc snapshots of participants' current career states (Vygotsky, 1980).

Engeström (1987) describes activity systems as having six elements: the Subject is the person or organization driving the activity; Instruments are the tools, mental models, or

ideologies used by the Subject; Rules constrain the activity; Community is the social context of the activity; and Division of Labour is other people who help the Subject accomplish the activity. The Outcome is the desired result, and the Object is the problem space (the motivating concern and raw materials) in which the Subject uses Instruments to achieve the Outcome.

Engeström (1987) envisioned activities as encompassing multiple levels: at the simplest level, an individual Subject might rely on habit as an Instrument to overcome resistance as an Object, to achieve an Outcome (Engeström, 1987). For instance, a person might rely on talking with family and friends about career issues to grapple with dissatisfaction and hopefully produce desirable change. A person might also rely on dropping off resumes at offices to connect with employers and trigger an interview request. Higher level activities might consider a goal-directed Subject using a mental model to solve a defined problem to achieve a desired solution (Engeström, 1987). For instance, people might develop a mental model of job search based on past experience. One person might scan job listings and send out resumes to connect with employers and trigger an interview. Another person might use informal chats with colleagues and friends to develop opportunities to secure work. In each of these cases, the person seeking transition may fail to consider the impact of their activity system: how do their habits, mental models, defined outcomes, perceived rules and the people they interact with constrain their approach and results? Activity theory also describes how separate but interfacing activity systems interact such as a participant's career activity engaging with neighbouring activities of school admissions or corporate recruiting (Engeström, 2001).

Activity Theory analysis requires characterizing a real situation and participants as an activity system; describing its development over time; and noting contradictions that result in changes (Engeström, 2001). Engeström (2001; 1987) describes four major kinds of contradictions. Primary contradictions are stresses between use-value (functionality) and exchange-value (worth in trade), such as a person devoting their skills to a hobby at the expense of their career. Secondary contradictions arise between different elements, such tensions arising between a Subject and their Instruments when the strategies they use for choosing jobs undermines personal satisfaction. Tertiary tensions arise between a narrow form of the Object and Outcome and a more advanced or broadly conceived form, such as between an activity that focuses on getting a job for survival and an expanded version focused on achieving a satisfying career that accommodates childcare responsibilities. Finally, quaternary tensions arise between neighbouring activities, such as between a participant's career activity and a graduate school admissions activity that denies them admission based on undergraduate grades.

Community of Practice to Analyze Learning Through Interaction of Novices and Experts

Finally, to explore learning through data-gathering and meaning making between transition-seekers and experienced transition-completers, the theory of Community of Practice was used. A community of practice is a self-organizing “[group] of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise” (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, p.139) regardless of where individual members might be located (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Community of Practice has been used to describe how people transition into specific kinds of paid or unpaid work through increasing levels of participation and interaction with more experienced members, whether as apprentices in a profession or participants in a support group like Alcoholics Anonymous (Lave & Wenger, 1991). A community of practice explains how people learn, transform their identity, and develop membership within a group based on shared practices

(Wenger, 2010). For this study, the group comprises adults engaged in the pursuit of navigating midlife career transitions. Although community of practice supports authentic learning, it does risk enculturating members with commonly-used practices and rules rather than prompting a more critical approach of considering alternatives to achieve desired results (Davis, 2012). For this reason, the conceptual framework incorporates the Systems Theory Framework and Activity Theory to prompt a systemic exploration of each participants' roles and influences over time rather than simply collecting transition tips.

Career Transition as a Practice. Career transition incorporates its own set of shared practices that can be elicited, captured and shared through interaction with experienced community members. Practice means producing community know-how, resources and externally-valued goods and services, as well as exercising judgment and reflection, and addressing emerging issues (Hager, 2012). Protean, boundaryless, and postcorporate career theories focus on how people incorporate transition as a practice for navigating opportunities (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Similarly, informational interviews and charts of personal competencies supported by work experience (Bolles, 2008; Beasley, 2014) have been described as practices for generating transition opportunities. Zukas (2012) described how some participants who made frequent workplace transitions developed the data-gathering practice of contacting locals before arrival to build respect and learn local ways to smooth their transition. Constructivist career assessments are practices of data-gathering and dialogue to create a meaning-driven approach to transition (McMahon & Watson, 2015). Experienced transitioners represent an informal group united by uniquely relatable experiences. Motulsky's (2010) study of midlife transition for women noted how their family, friends and colleagues who had not confronted risk and change for themselves impeded change for participants, while more remote acquaintances who had made transitions, even in unrelated fields, were more understanding and helpful.

Community of Practice Addresses Pitfalls in Traditional Learning. Community of practice addresses the pitfalls of traditional learning approaches by being grounded in useful social practices. Training and resources that share only tips and successful behaviours fail to transfer the tacit knowledge that is required for exercising judgment in complex situations (Davis, 2012), and can result in people failing to use skills and wasting their training investment (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). In contrast, a person's use of learning improves when learning experiences are useful, close to reality, include role models, and offer ongoing practice, feedback, and peer support (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Similarly, Knowles et al., (2014) outlines principles to improve adult-oriented learning: ensure adults know why they should learn; are ready to learn when facing challenges; can incorporate self-direction and prior experience in learning; and can connect their learning to achieving a desired potential. Repeated, authentic practice also reduces real-world performance anxiety (Finn et al., 2009; Oudejans & Pijpers, 2010; Coryell & Clark, 2009), which is associated with social practices such as the information interviews (Mulvaney, 2003) used in data-gathering. Community of practice supports adult learning principles by focusing on individuals engaged in useful practices such as transition activities, making personal meaning related to their competence such as feeling more capable to transition again in the future (Wenger, 2010a; Lancaster, 2012), learning through the decision-making stories of peers and valuing practices exemplified by those role models (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and creating community tools and resources such as case studies of transition (Wenger, 2010a).

Fostering Learning Through Communities of Practice. Fostering learning in communities of practice requires defining boundaries, and triggering social interactions within those boundaries and across boundaries with other communities. First, communities are defined by boundaries in the form of a common purpose and requirements of membership such as what is important, who belongs, what should happen, and what resources are appropriate (Wenger, 2010a). For instance, the boundaries of a midlife career transition community would define membership based on age and a common purpose of addressing career tensions by engaging in a transition. Boundaries define who belongs and how deep their participation goes such as participating peripherally, committing to deeper membership, sharing across boundaries with other communities, or exiting membership (Wenger, 2010). For instance, a person might avoid transition in favour of loyalty to an organization or vocation, or use transition peripherally to move between similar jobs, or embrace continuing transition within a boundaryless, portfolio career, or commit to retirement.

Second, learning occurs through social interactions within and across community boundaries. People with a shared practice learn through collegial conversations, storytelling and contrasting diverse perspectives (Snyder & Wenger, 2010). Interaction includes networking, visits, and political action which requires recruiting members, coordinating events, managing conflict, and using supportive technology (Snyder & Wenger, 2010) to provide spaces for sharing such as wikis, blogs, social media, video conferencing, file sharing and forums (Polin, 2010). A limited form of community of practice might focus on sharing among people who make transitions to or from similar vocations using stereotypical approaches, such as transitions from military into teaching. However, learning within one community leads to isolated expertise (Wenger, 2010)

Using Brokering to Create a Transition Community of Practice. Differences in values, beliefs and practices among communities can require translation to allow them to communicate (Carlile, 2002), but can trigger innovation when members have common ground, respect for differences (Wenger, 2010), and shared objects and interactions (Wenger, 2000) that push them to confront their differences and negotiate shared meaning (Davis, 2012). For instance, informational interviews are informal interactions in which people in different careers can communicate about shared values, skills and interests in order to explore new career options. Communities require assistance in creating cross-boundary interactions through the use of brokers, conveners and shared objects. Brokers may be career-changers who translate between members of their old vocation and their new one (Brown & Duguid, 2001), professionals who translate expectations, such as tutors who liaise between workplace advisors and students doing internships (Kubiak et al., 2015), or conveners who foster learning partnerships across different practices (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). For instance, a convener could be a practitioner engaging meetings of people who are pursuing or have completed midlife career transition but in different vocations, and may engage in brokering activity to assist them with communicating across vocational boundaries. Brokers and conveners who connect people across communities may feel vulnerable if they lack a single community for their own sense of identity and accountability (Kubiak et al., 2015). Cross-boundary efforts require their own recognition and rewards because they might not be rewarded within a participant's own community (Wenger, 2010a). Such rewards may be intrinsic for participants who enjoy helping, sharing and reflecting. Communicating across boundaries requires shared objects such as values, language, process, frameworks, or portfolios that support coordination (Kubiak et al., 2015), as well as repositories and templates (Star, 2010; Star & Griesemer, 1989). For instance, power charts are shared

objects in which people display tables of their competencies and achievements at a level of abstraction that makes their value clear to people outside their career (Beasley, 2014). Postmodern career assessments are shared processes of data-gathering and meaning-making that can incorporate helpful templates and a repository for career transition case studies.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter describes how the study was performed. First, I restate the research questions for reference. Next, I provide the methodological framework guiding the study. Then, I describe participant selection, data sources and collection, and data analysis. Finally, I address credibility and trustworthiness.

Restatement of Research Questions

Research Question 1: How did participants engage with and react to a multi-party facilitated conversation about midlife career change guided by the Systems Theory Framework?

Research Question 2: What explanation of midlife career change emerged from dialogues designed to elicit the influences that shaped participants' lifetime of career choices?

Methodological Framework

To address the research questions, this exploratory study adopted a three-part conceptual framework in Chapter Two: Systems Theory Framework to elicit systemic data on individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences on each participant's career; Activity Theory to systematically analyze participants' career transitions and dialogues about transition as social activities; and Community of Practice to inform the design of an activity in which novice and expert participants are convened to engage in that dialogue.

To support inquiry using my conceptual framework, I adopted the constructivist paradigm, which treats reality as something participants build based on personal experiences and social interactions (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Young & Collin, 2003; Kelly, 1991). The constructivist paradigm informs the design and use of qualitative career assessments and the personal meaning-making approach of the Systems Theory Framework. However, the paradigm is often used to create purely observational and interpretive research, which may provide little directly-experienced value for participants (Gonzalez & Lincoln, 2006) and amplify existing negativity by contributing another report of known problems (Anderson, 1989). To address this pitfall, researchers can draw on multiple paradigms as “bricoleurs” who employ diverse research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). To address how constructivist interpretation in data-gathering and meaning-making could be employed as activities facilitated by a researcher in a Community of Practice, I borrowed aspects from the participatory paradigm. The participatory paradigm unites theory and research with practice (Argyris & Schon, 1989) by engaging participants with researchers in a productive, dialogic encounter (Lather, 1991) that can address the design, implementation and analysis of actions to improve flourishing in their world (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). By collaborating with community members, researchers help participants address their own priorities by making a constructive difference they directly experience (Gonzalez & Lincoln, 2006; Lincoln, Lynham, Guba, 2011), while building abilities that last after the research ends (Nias, 1993). Such an approach advances social justice and equity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) by having researchers facilitate action to empower participants (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011) to voice their needs (Chase, 2011), and engage in learning experiences to better understand their own challenges, and develop networking and leadership skills to create the change they seek (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005; Lather, 1991).

Selection of Methodological Approach

In this study, I deployed an intervention in the form of multiple semi-structured dialogues with participants about career transitions. Purely observational research was not an option because it does not incorporate interventions, and experimental research was not an option because it does not allow for messy real-world contexts, social interaction of participants, revisions of procedure, or participant input (Barab & Squire, 2004). I embraced formative evaluation which is a process of testing new products or processes with a target audience for the purpose of identifying what works and what needs revision (Barab & Squire, 2004). However, formative evaluation does not require the design to be informed by theory, does not share control over design, revision and analysis with participants, and does not use findings to develop new design theory to create a flexible solution that can adapt to diverse contexts in the future (Barab & Squire, 2004). Design Based Research was created to address those weaknesses: researchers create a design grounded in theory, then engage participants in collaborative iterations of usage, analysis and revision in order to develop a flexible design theory (Wang & Hannafin, 2005). Design-based research embraces mixed methods and multiple sources of data, and includes an initial evaluation of a design's consistency with theory and practical feasibility (Wang & Hannafin, 2005). Design-based research documents process, context and adaptations to provide guidance for applying the resulting design principles in new contexts (Wang & Hannafin, 2005). The process of design-based research incorporates nine principles (Wang & Hannafin, 2005):

1. start with research to identify a guiding theory
2. set practical goals with a plan that identifies resources, phases, and methods— but remain flexible
3. research real-world settings to incorporate social factors, culture, interaction and distractions in the learning environment
4. collaborate with participants and integrate their beliefs, strategies, and constraints and ensure the intervention works without the designer
5. research systematically: use multiple methods, formative evaluation and continual analysis during data collection to document the process of design, revision and theory development
6. refine the design continually based on accumulating data to better meet goals, address unexpected influences, and re-consider literature
7. develop design principles grounded in the data that explain effective practice of the design, and include strategic guidance for adapting the design to different contexts
8. validate the design by testing in different contexts

When using design-based research, Bakker (2014) suggests that research questions should be revised to address a knowledge gap, be practical and theoretically-relevant, be anchored in the literature, be manageable, and describe the proposed research as descriptive, evaluative, or design-oriented. Sub-questions should result in answering the main question (Bakker, 2014).

Overview of Intervention

This study deployed an intervention to assist adults with eliciting systemic career influences and the strategies that were used to navigate those influences as part of midlife career transition. The intervention is grounded in several guiding theories: qualitative career

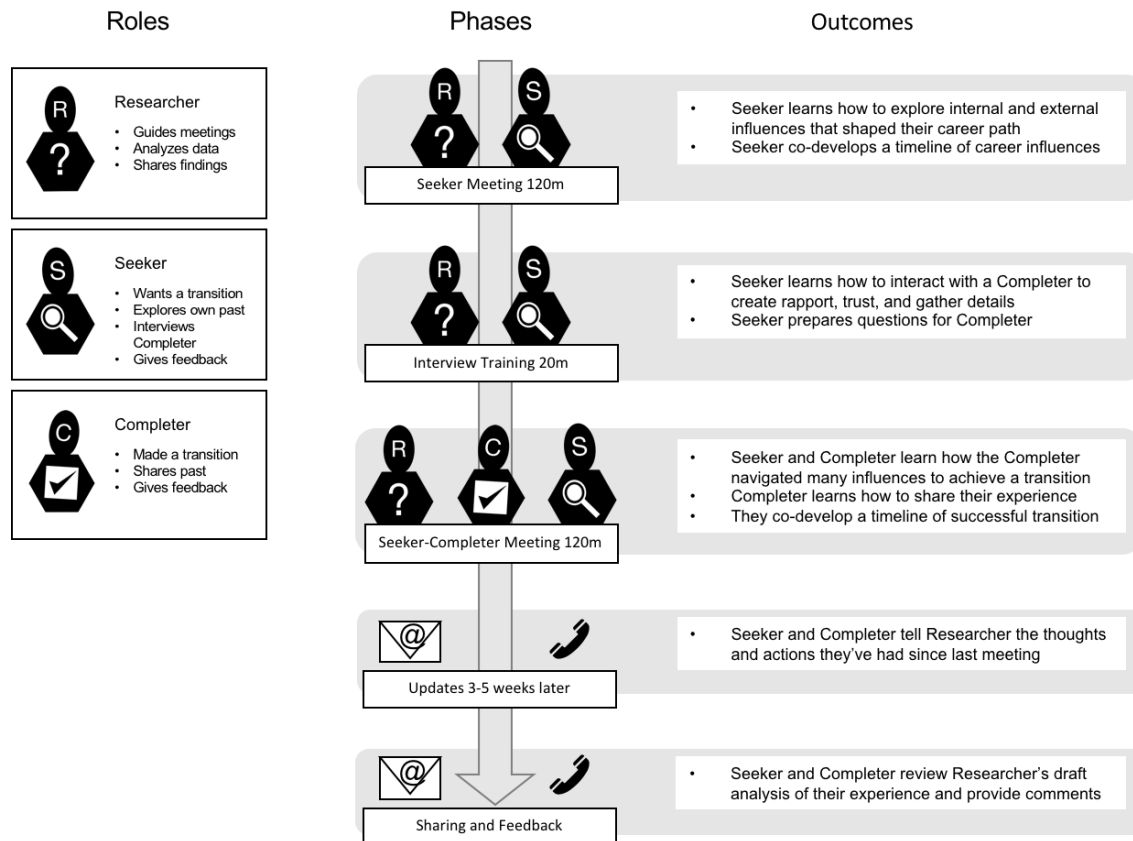
assessment, in which participants explore past experiences to develop a narrative that explains their values and guides their future action; Systems Theory Framework to guide that exploration through individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences; and Community of Practice, in which novices learn from experienced participants through stories and practice of skills (and in which experienced participants reflect on their own pasts and potential future based on interaction with novices).

The intervention worked as follows (as illustrated in Figure 1):

1. Each participant seeking transition (a "Seeker") participated in a career interview with me to experience a career assessment guided by the Systems Theory Framework;
2. Each Seeker received a brief instruction in active listening from me to learn tips on how to gather career influences and strategies from a relatable person who has achieved a career transition (a "Completer");
3. Each Seeker used their experience being interviewed and their training in active listening to assist me with co-interviewing their Completer, which reflected a novice learning from the stories of an expert within a Community of Practice;
4. To determine changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes of both Seekers and Completers during the intervention, I used pre-tests, debriefing during the interview, and post-tests;
5. To help explain midlife career transition in terms of career influences and strategies for navigating them, I used the data from Seeker and Completer interviews to create anonymous case studies, which became tools for the Community of Practice of career transition;
6. To help explain facilitated dialogues about midlife career transition between Seekers and Completers, I used the data from the group interviews to create anonymous case studies, which became tools for the Community of Practice of career transition;
7. To determine transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes into use, I made follow-up inquiries with Seekers and Completers. I intended follow-ups to be made within weeks but they actually were attempted several years afterward.

Figure 1
Overview of the Intervention

Midlife Career Transition – Research Process for Seekers and Completers



Participant Selection and Recruiting

I recruited two kinds of participants: adults who wished to make a midlife career transition (“Seekers”) and adults who had completed a midlife career transition (“Completers”).

Seeker participation helped explain the following:

1. the kinds of people seeking midlife career transition and why
2. the individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences affecting Seeker career paths and their strategies for navigating them over time
3. how they engaged with me as the facilitator and with a Completer as a source of a transition story
4. how their experience affected the way they saw their career future and their plans to move forward

Completer participation helped explain the following:

1. the kinds of people who complete midlife career transition and why
2. the kinds of people who volunteer to be interviewed by Seekers

3. the individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences affecting Completer career paths and their strategies for navigating them over time
4. how they engaged with me as the facilitator and with a Seeker as a novice exploring their transition story
5. how their experience affected the way they saw their career future and their plans to move forward

Selection Criteria

I used purposive sampling to request participants based on the following:

1. Participants had to be able to speak, read and understand English so they were able to observe and build rapport (Gabor, 2014) and use active listening (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Lambe, 2005) based on training, job aids, and modeling of those skills during the interview by me
2. Participants had to be employed so they would be able to explore career transition rather than feel pressured to secure any job
3. Participants had to be aged 35 to 60 at the time of their transition
4. Seekers had to be seeking a transition and Completers had to have achieved a transition.

To limit conditions that might distort a preliminary study of career transition dialogues, participants were asked to exclude themselves based on the following:

1. receiving counselling services elsewhere at the same time
2. suffering from serious mental illness or addiction
3. having intellectual disabilities

Researchers exercise power by choosing participants and issues to explore, which may reinforce dominant views while concealing unique differences in participants (Viruru & Cannelle, 2006). Failing to consider all stakeholders can exclude marginalized voices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and undermine conclusions (Lather, 1991). Researchers need to seek out multiple perspectives and consider why some are common and others are dismissed (Britzman, 2000). To improve inclusion of diverse populations, my recruiting material noted that I was "Seeking a wide range of participants based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, rural or urban, vibrant or economically-depressed locations."

Recruiting Process

I targeted several avenues for recruiting participants:

1. social media such as LinkedIn groups and academic groups focused on career counselling, and human resources
2. community organizations focused on unemployment and job placement
3. community organizations focused on supporting disadvantaged groups
4. educational institutions such as vocational schools, community colleges, continuing education and other educational and training organizations
 - a. placement offices
 - b. alumni services
5. career guidance and counselling professionals

- a. in private practice
- b. in local, provincial/state/territory government units
- c. in educational institutions
- d. in social service agencies

Number of Participants

I sought an initial sample of three or more pairs of Seekers and Completers.

Ethics Approval

I obtained ethics approval from the university in August, 2019.

Sources of Data

This section outlines the risks in data collection, and then presents each data collection instrument with an explanation of how it mitigates those risks. In data collection, there is a risk of settling for generalizations shared by participants in interviews and missing the more concrete day-in-the-life examples and contradictions that lurk in their environments, or arise from other collection mechanisms that help them express their ideas and influences such as text, image, film, painting, and maps (Chase, 2011). Researchers must seek the structural constraints such as ideology, power and sexism that affect how their participants construct their beliefs and limit their options (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Anderson, 1989).

Demographic Instrument

Interviews in qualitative research can be enhanced by collecting information on demographic factors (Fontana & Frey, 2005). I asked participants for basic demographic information as well as a rating of the importance of certain demographic factors for their career transition. See the template in Appendix E.

Curriculum Vitae

To gather additional information for matching purposes (such as training, education, work and volunteer experiences) I asked participants for their latest curriculum vitae (CV).

Qualitative Timeline

To ensure I collected concrete details during interviews that addressed individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences in accordance with the Systems Theory Framework, I used a note-taking template (which I shared with participants during the dialogues) and recorded our audio and video for later transcription and review. Although the developers of the Systems Theory Framework created the My System of Career Influences booklet as a data-collection instrument, it uses a series of fill-in-the-blank prompts to develop a snapshot of current influences rather than a timeline of navigating a career path (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2015).

In contrast, I needed a template that captured a career timeline and its details. Proctor's Event Perceiver Grid (EPG) is a suitable instrument because it was developed as a family therapy tool that was easy for novices to use and understand: a matrix that collects a timeline of

life events down the first column, and prompts for perceptions of the events in adjacent columns (Proctor, 2014; Proctor & Proctor, 2008). Career counselling, with its roots in psychology, has previously adapted family therapy instruments, such as the genogram, which was originally developed to examine family influences on a participant and was adapted to focus on career-related influences (Bakshi & Satish, 2015). For this study, I adapted the EPG into a qualitative timeline as follows: I used the timeline column of events to note a participant's life experiences such as entering or exiting education, paid and unpaid work, and relationships, and the adjacent columns were used to prompt for and categorize details based on being individual, social, environmental and chance influences according to the Systems Theory Framework. See the template in Appendix I.

Career Pathway Instrument

To convert the notes of the qualitative timeline into a brief case study for participants to review, I reorganized the notes chronologically and checked the categorizations, then provided the result as a career pathway instrument. See the template in Appendix J.

Future Career Autobiography

To assess the impact of participating in qualitative assessments, I used the Future Career Autobiography (Reh fuss, 2015) whereby participants took 10 minutes to write a five-sentence paragraph describing their life and work five years into the future. I asked them to complete the instrument before and after interviews in order to elicit differences, if any, in the quantity, quality and detail they used after their experience. See the template in Appendix H.

Debriefing Instrument

To address the nature of the experience for participants, and to inform revisions of the process and instruments, I used a Debriefing Instrument that prompted participants to rate aspects of their experience, and note what they would change, what surprised them and what their plans were for moving forward. The instrument incorporates qualitative assessment evaluation criteria from Reid (2015). See the template in Appendix K.

Follow-up Instrument

To determine how participants used knowledge and skills after the intervention, the Follow-up Instrument was used to discover what if any activity was taken with respect to career transition. See the template in Appendix N.

Data Protection and Storage

All data was collected and stored in electronic form, labelled only with the initial and birth year of participants, and stored on a password-protected computer.

Data Collection

In early 2020, a coronavirus pandemic triggered worldwide public health restrictions that restricted travel and physical proximity, and caused the university to bar in-person data collection. As a result, I requested an updated ethics approval to allow me to accept oral rather than written consent so I could collect it through a videoconference, and allow me to create a

brief YouTube video to explain the study. For interviews, I used Zoom videoconferencing software, which millions of pandemic-restricted people had learned to use for working and learning from home. Zoom supported three-way videoconferencing, real-time sharing of word-processing documents, automated video recording, and transcription of audio into text. To collect data from surveys and exercises, I implemented them in the cloud-based LimeSurvey software operated by the university.

I collected data using a six-step process as described below:

Step 1. Researcher Provided Information to Candidates

For each candidate who responded to my recruiting request I provided a Consent Form (Appendix D), an Explanation Protocol (Appendix F) as well as a link to a YouTube video (Appendix G) to explain the study.

Step 2. Researcher Conducted Consent Meetings

For each candidate who wished to proceed, I requested a brief videoconference to review the purpose and structure of the study, confirm that the candidate had read the consent form, answer any questions, and ask for oral consent. No data was collected or used from those meetings. For each consenting candidate, I asked for their curriculum vitae, and sent them a link to LimeSurvey software to request answers to the Demographic Instrument (Appendix E).

Step 3. Researcher Matched Eligible Participants

I assessed participant eligibility by comparing their data from Demographic Instruments (Appendix E) and curriculum vitae to the inclusion and exclusion criteria set out in Question 7(a). I then matched participants as follows:

1. created a spreadsheet with one column listing kinds of matching criteria and adjacent columns for participant data
2. for matching criteria, I input the criteria from the demographic survey questions as well as an additional item for keywords from curriculum vitae
3. for each participant, I input their survey answers, coded their curriculum vitae for keywords, and entered those keywords
4. for each Seeker, I noted how many criteria they had in common with each Completer
5. I matched Seekers to Completers based on having the most criteria in common
6. where multiple Seekers would be matched to the same Completer, I matched based on overlapping keywords from curriculum vitae

The details of the matchings, which depend on the personal characteristics of the participants, appear in Chapter Four after my descriptions of the participants.

Step 4. Researcher Conducted Seeker Interviews

To help each Seeker explore the impact of systemic influences in their own career path, I conducted an exploratory career assessment as follows:

1. I scheduled a Zoom videoconference with a Seeker
2. Prior to the interview, I emailed the Seeker a request to complete an online Future Career Autobiography (Appendix H) to establish a baseline articulation of career aspirations
3. I began the interview by explaining the process and then displaying the Qualitative Timeline (Appendix I) to be used for note-taking, explaining the kinds of systemic influences in each column and naming examples for each one
4. I interviewed the Seeker by exploring their current work, and the preceding series of changes in their work history in reverse chronology
5. I took notes using the Qualitative Timeline (Appendix I) which was displayed during the videoconference, and categorized notes into the columns of systemic influences as I went
6. During the interview, compared life events on the Qualitative Timeline (Appendix I), and offered patterns for the participant to accept, reject or refine
7. To prepare for the Seeker-Completer meeting, I prompted the Seeker to consider questions to ask their Completer
8. After the interview, I emailed the Seeker a request to complete an online combination of the Future Career Autobiography (Appendix H) and Debriefing Instrument (Appendix K)
9. After the interview, I used notes from the Qualitative Timeline (Appendix I) to create a simplified Career Pathway (Appendix J), which I emailed to the Seeker with a request for reflections on how the various influences affected their pathway

Step 5. Researcher Conducted Active Listening Training

To prepare the Seeker for co-interviewing their Completer, I conducted brief active listening instruction with each Seeker as follows:

1. I scheduled a videoconference prior to the meeting with their Completer
2. Prior to the training, I emailed the Seeker a request to complete an online Data-Gathering Ability Instrument (Appendix M) to establish their pre-interview perception of ability
3. During the training, I explained and demonstrated rapport building, active listening, and probing questions using the Active Listening Protocol (Appendix L) which I emailed to the participant to be used as a memory aid
4. After each demonstration, I asked the participant to demonstrate the technique, and I provided feedback
5. After the instruction, I emailed the Seeker a request to complete an online Data-Gathering Ability Instrument (Appendix M) to establish their post-interview perception of ability

Step 6. Researcher and Seeker Interviewed Completer

To help the Seeker explore the impact of systemic influences in the career path of a relatable person who completed a career transition, I facilitated a three-way interview as follows:

1. I scheduled a videoconference with a Seeker and their paired Completer

2. Prior to the interview, I emailed the Seeker and Completer a request to complete an online Future Career Autobiography (Appendix H) to establish a baseline articulation of career aspirations
3. Starting the interview, I asked the Seeker to introduce themselves to the Completer
4. I explained the process to be used then displayed the Qualitative Timeline (Appendix I) to be used for note-taking, explained the kinds of systemic influences in each column and named examples for each one
5. I interviewed the Completer by exploring their current work, and the preceding series of changes in their work history in reverse chronology while regularly prompting the Seeker to contribute questions
6. I took notes using the Qualitative Timeline (Appendix I) which was displayed during the videoconference, and categorized the notes into the columns of systemic influences
7. I compared life events on the Completer's Qualitative Timeline (Appendix I) and with the Seeker's past interview, and offered patterns for both participants to accept, reject or refine
8. After the interview, I emailed the Seeker and Completer a request to complete an online combination of the Future Career Autobiography (Appendix H) and Debriefing Instrument (Appendix K)
9. After the interview, I emailed the Seeker a request to complete an online Data-Gathering Ability Instrument (Appendix M) to establish their post-interview perception of ability
10. After the interview, I used notes from the Qualitative Timeline (Appendix I) to create a simplified Career Pathway (Appendix J), which I emailed to the Completer with a request for reflections on how the various influences affected their pathway

Step 7. Researcher Asked Seekers and Completers for Update

I emailed Seekers and Completers asking them for an update on their career activities since our last contact.

Review Step. Researcher Asked Seekers and Completers to Comment on Drafts

After drafting case studies, activity theory analysis and implications I emailed copies to Seekers and Completers to review and contribute their thoughts.

Data Analysis

Analysis methods are subject to risks. Researchers may use stringent coding and pattern-matching to appear more scientific (Anderson, 1989), searching only for what is easily measured (Eisner, 1993). Such an approach may fail to explain results (St. Pierre, 2011), oversimplify participants (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005), and miss systemic differences based on race, gender, and sexual orientation (Scheurich, 1997) and thus reinforce oppression (St. Pierre, 2011). In contrast, researchers can capture the messy reality of participants (Geertz, 1973) and how they were shaped by history and society (Saukko, 2005). Researchers can also seek differences, competing pressures and uncertainties within each participant (Britzman, 2000) and among

participants within a group (Saukko, 2005). Researchers can go beyond identifying patterns towards explaining them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) with warrants and reasoning (Eisner, 1993) while ensuring that participant voices are heard in their own words and in resources that meet their needs (Lather, 2000).

To improve the depth of analysis, I used a multi-phase approach that incorporated the Systems Theory Framework (to ensure I addressed individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences), constant-comparative grounded-theory-style coding (to identify concepts that explained each of those influences), and Activity Theory analysis (to explain how those concepts interacted within activity systems) as detailed for each research question below.

Research Question 1: How Did Participants Engage With and React to a Multi-Party Facilitated Conversation About Midlife Career Change Guided by the Systems Theory Framework?

Case Studies. First, I created interaction case studies as follows:

1. For each Seeker-Completer pair, I reviewed their Seeker-Completer interview transcript to draft a case study of our interactions.
2. Each case study was written with the same structure in which I reported a chronological series of interactions. My basic questions to elicit the Completer's jobs, career choices, and the influences that guided those choices were not reported. Instead, I reported times when (a) one participant referred to another or asked a question of the other; (b) a participant referred to the meeting or its process; (c) I prompted the Seeker to ask a question; or (d) I compared or contrasted participants based on their stories, or offered a synthesis for them to react to.
3. To situate the interactions within the overall interview and the kinds of events and words that prompted them, I reported each interaction in terms of the stories shared just prior to the interaction, and then the interaction itself with illustrative quotes from the participants.

Concepts. Next, I analyzed the case studies for concepts of participant interaction as follows:

1. I copied the case studies into the first column of a spreadsheet.
2. I open-coded each statement in the case studies.
3. I grouped similar open codes into categories and then converted the categories into concepts by naming their opposite extremes. For example, in some interactions participants compared themselves to each other. Those codes were grouped into a category of relating, which was converted into a concept by identifying the extremes of resonating and distinguishing.
4. To improve rigour, a definition was written for each emerging concept so that it could subsequently be checked against all of the case study statements again.
5. I drafted an explanation of each concept with examples for each extreme taken from the case studies and a reporting of the frequencies of occurrence. I then summarized the interaction concepts in a table for ease of reference.

Activity Systems. Next, I used the emerging concepts to explain our interaction dialogues by fitting them to activity systems as follows:

1. I constructed an activity system that explained our dialogues, which included fitting the interaction concepts to the element of Instruments because they represented actions we used in the activity.
2. I then analyzed each interaction case of a pair of participants as an activity system, reporting frequencies of use of each instrument and identifying phases, tensions and successes within the activity.

Outputs of Activities. Next, I examined the outputs of the activities to provide a measure of how the activities may have affected participants.

1. For the Future Career Autobiographies (FCAs) of each participant, I copied their text into a spreadsheet in the first column. In adjacent columns I listed the individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making concepts that had emerged from the career case interviews. I then deductively coded each statement in the FCAs by placing a number 1 in the relevant columns. I added up the frequencies for each influence. I then noted changes in frequencies for each kind of influence between pre and post FCAs and wrote a qualitative statement to describe the nature of each shift. I then calculated the overall change in word count from pre to post FCA.
2. For the survey results, I pasted participants' suggestions, surprises, and plans into separate spreadsheets in the first column. I reviewed their answers and coded them based on kinds of responses. For instance, suggestions related to value, reactions, and requests. Plans related to people and options. Surprises related to insights or reactions.
3. I reviewed the results of Data-gathering Ability instruments that measured changes in abilities of Seekers. However, the small to non-existent differences in self-ratings did not appear worth analyzing.

Cross-case Analysis. Next, I performed a cross-case analysis of the interaction activity systems as follows:

1. For each element of activity theory, I fitted relevant evidence. For the Outcome element, I compared results from Future Career Autobiographies and surveys. For the Object, I compared the structures that emerged during the dialogues. For the Subject, I compared how I as the researcher matched participants and facilitated interactions. For the Instruments, I compared how participants interacted. For the Rules, I compared expectations of participants to guidance I had provided for the activity. For Community, I compared my recruiting sources for participants as well as issues arising from the videoconferencing setup. For Division of Labour, I compared participant profiles, and the roles they chose to play in each phase of the dialogue.
2. Finally, I compiled a table of all the contradictions that had arisen from the interaction cases and identified patterns.

Research Question 2: What Explanation of Midlife Career Change Emerged From Dialogues Designed to Elicit the Influences That Shaped Participants' Lifetime of Career Choices?

Case Studies. First, I created career navigation case studies as follows:

1. I transcribed the recorded audio of each interview
2. For each participant, I reviewed my interview notes from their Qualitative Timeline and their interview transcript to draft a case study of their career pathway. Each case study was written with the same structure. The participant's career path was narrated as a chronological series of steps up to the time of the interview. Each step addressed entry into or exit from a significant work, training or life experience that affected career. Each step was described in terms of the individual, social, environmental, chance, and decision-making influences that guided entry or exit into that experience.

Concepts. Next, I analyzed the case studies for concepts of career navigation as follows:

1. I copied the case studies into the first column of a spreadsheet. Adjacent columns were labeled with the Systems Theory Framework categories of individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences to ensure I addressed each category.
2. I defined the meaning of each of those influences. Statements were coded as the individual influence when they related to the participants' own thoughts, needs and feelings. Statements were coded as the social influence when they related to relationships participants had with other people. Statements were coded as the environmental influence when they related to circumstances of the locale or culture in which the role occurred. Statements were coded as the chance influence when they related to events outside the control of the participant. Statements were coded as the decision-making influence when they related to how a participant chose to navigate a life or work event.
3. I open-coded each statement in the case studies, placing the codes in the appropriate influence columns.
4. I grouped similar open codes into categories and then converted the categories into concepts by naming their opposite extremes. For example, some case study statements related to individual experiences of feeling that a role was or was not who someone was. Those codes were grouped into a category of identity, which was converted into a concept by identifying the extremes of belonging and exclusion. To improve rigour, a definition was written for each emerging concept so that it could subsequently be checked against all of the case study statements again.
5. I drafted an explanation of each concept with examples for each extreme taken from the case studies and a reporting of the frequencies of occurrence. I then summarized the concepts in a series of tables for ease of reference.

Activity Systems. Next, I used the emerging concepts to explain career navigation by fitting them to activity systems as follows:

1. I examined each element of an activity system (i.e. subject, instruments, object, outcome, rules, community, and division of labour) and then wrote a definition of criteria for which concepts would fit those elements. For instance, the Subject of an activity system would

incorporate concepts related to "subjective interpretations of career experiences." As a result, I fitted the Individual category concepts of identity and arousal to explain the Subject.

2. For each participant, I constructed an initial activity system that summarized the kind of result they pursued, and how they did so in terms of their subject needs, rules and instrumental actions, and their interactions with their community and the people who were part of it. I then reviewed their case studies to identify times when they changed the kind of results they were pursuing and their strategy for doing so. Each of those times represented a time when they changed their activity system. I then defined each of those activity systems and the stresses or contradictions within the systems that had led to changing them into new versions. As a result, each participant's career path was explained in terms of the strategies they applied and changes in those strategies when they faced various kinds of stresses.

Cross-case Analysis. Next, I performed a cross-case analysis of Seeker activity systems and then Completer activity systems as follows:

1. For each element of activity theory, I compiled a table of all the contradictions Seekers had experienced with that element. For instance, for the Subject element I compiled a table of all the times a participant's identity had caused tension in their career path.
2. I then considered career successes the participants had experienced and compiled a table that indicated how concepts for that element had contributed to success. For instance, for the Subject element I noted how concepts of identity and arousal played a part. I noted patterns and reported the frequency of those patterns based on how many cases demonstrated them.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

This section describes how the study addresses potential pitfalls in data collection and analysis.

Addressing Pitfalls in Data Collection

In qualitative paradigms, researchers are an instrument of data collection, and they may judge their participants, rely on fallible memory and notes, and edit their reports to reward heroes and punish villains (Fine, 1993). Their interviews can be compromised by an imbalance in power with participants, or by participants who hide information or try to please the interviewer (Fontana & Frey, 2005). To address these issues, researchers can prompt participants to share specific stories, explore memories, and treat divergence from expectations as a newly uncovered voice rather than error (Chase, 2011). Researchers can encourage participants to share descriptions, experiences, opinions, feelings, and even senses (Viruru & Cannelle, 2006). Interviews can also be conducted in groups so that social interactions trigger more memories (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

To address pitfalls in data collections, this study recorded the audio and video of all sessions, and the researcher took contemporaneous notes to capture data and observations. The notes were taken using instruments that prompted me to address the individual, social, environment, chance and decision-making details related to the Systems Theory Framework.

To address issues of power and benefits of group interaction, the Seeker-Completer interview included regular prompts to encourage interactions among Seekers and Completers such as asking their own questions, offering meaning, and responding to meaning-making. Additionally, participants completed pre- and post Future Career Autobiographies to reflect on their group experience to update their future plans. Surveys provided participants with an opportunity to note how the experience affected them and provide input for future implementations.

Addressing Pitfalls in Data Analysis

This study addresses rigour in overall data analysis as well as data analysis specific to qualitative career assessments.

Overall Data Analysis. Interpretivist qualitative research relies on the researcher's construction of findings, and in order to validate the accuracy, credibility or trustworthiness of those findings, a researcher can use triangulation, member-checking and auditing (Creswell, 2012). Triangulation compares data between people, kinds of data, and methods of collection to determine whether the different sources support an identified theme (Creswell, 2012). Member-checking asks participants to check the completeness of descriptions, accuracy of themes, and fairness of interpretations (Creswell, 2012). To address the impact of researcher bias on interpretation, Peshkin (1998) advises researchers to keep a notebook of observations and strong feelings that might be a source of bias. Finally, in addition to authenticity-related validity, researchers describe catalytic validity as measuring how well research helps participants understand their situation and take action for change (Scheurich, 1997).

To address the accuracy, credibility and trustworthiness of the overall study, the following measures will be used:

Triangulation. This study used triangulation as follows:

1. I used and compared multiple records of data including audio and video recordings, transcripts, and my contemporaneous notes
2. For each participant, I used and compared multiple sources of data including their curriculum vitae, their multiple Future Career Autobiographies, statements during a Seeker interview (if applicable), statements during a Seeker-Completer interview, statements in surveys about plans, surprises and suggestions
3. For each emerging concept, I tested its application across the longitudinal career path of a participant, as well as testing it across the sample of participants. I revised concepts that were too idiosyncratic, too broad, or overlapping.

Member-Checking. This study used member-checking as follows:

1. during interviews, my note-taking was shared in the videoconference as a live document and participants were encouraged to interrupt, correct or refine based on what they saw
2. during interviews, I used active listening to paraphrase what I heard and to offer proposals of meaning-making for participants to react to, accept or refine
3. during interviews, I prompted participants to ask questions, share meaning, and make corrections of each other
4. during interviews, I invited participants to provide their reactions with respect to what they had learned and experienced
5. I provided participants with draft Career Pathway Instruments for review

Memo Notebook. I kept memoranda throughout the study to address my reactions, thoughts, biases, and assist with the process of coding, conceptualizing and analyzing.

Catalytic Validity. To measure catalytic validity, Future Career Autobiographies and survey results about future plans were compared to determine changes in participants.

Career Assessment Analysis. The proposed study is a qualitative career assessment. Qualitative research can be evaluated to determine whether it provides a credible, transferrable, dependable, confirmable voice for a participant's career story, with supporting evidence (Brott, 2015). Credibility refers to how well an assessment represents the beliefs, feelings and values of a participant, and could be checked through seeking alternative interpretations or exceptions in their experiences (Brott, 2015). Transferability refers to how well the themes identified by the assessment apply across a broad range of events and settings within the participant's life and not just isolated experiences (Brott, 2015). Dependability refers to the consistency of interpretation in the assessment, which can be addressed with documented procedures and structures for data-gathering and interpretation (Brott, 2015). Confirmability refers to how well assessment findings can be verified, meaning participant data is provided to support interpretations, and interpretations are consistent with the data (Brott, 2015).

To assure the rigour of the proposed qualitative career assessment, the following measures were:

1. For credibility, each emerging concept was challenged by seeking possible alternative explanations, and seeking exceptions within the life events of the participants
2. For transferability, each emerging concept was tested by assessing how well it described and explained the whole series of life events elicited from each participant and not just one isolated event or person
3. For dependability, the instruments and protocols outlined in this study were used to conduct the assessments and analysis using a consistent process
4. For confirmability, each emerging concept was supported with specific participant statements as supporting evidence

Researcher Biases

This bias statement was determined through personal reflection. As a qualitative researcher, I was the instrument of data collection and analysis and my attitudes and experiences could potentially bias selection, data-gathering, analysis, and discussion.

My Sources of Bias

As a white male from a middle-class upbringing with post-secondary education in journalism, law and education, my background was shaped by the privilege of accessing those resources without barriers related to gender, race, or access to loans. I have also identified a number of biases described below.

Bias for Self-determination. I am biased towards self-determination and fulfilment rather than meeting the needs of a family, community or industry. This bias arises from having a parent whose decades of service with a multinational corporation were dominated by stress, anger, and fear. I have made multiple career transitions, having studied journalism, law, and

education; having practised corporate and licensing law; having worked in a startup as a lawyer, business analyst and content developer; and having taught post-graduate classes in education.

Bias for Career Satisfaction. I am biased towards seeking career satisfaction rather than choosing or retaining a career based on financial survival, wealth or status. Before leaving a lucrative career in law, I interviewed colleagues to find out why they continued in their work. During my post-law exploration, I engaged in numerous information interviews. I engaged career coaching services for myself, and later interviewed the coaching services' clients to identify what lasting value they received and what ongoing skills and action they took.

Bias for Agency and Action. I am biased towards learning about career options through agency and action rather than accepting expert categorizations based on personality, social conventions about a hierarchy of careers, or self-limiting thoughts arising from past difficulties. I was an enthusiastic supporter of mid-life career shifts from low-pay, high stress work in a lower socio-economic class to an energizing and satisfying career in a higher socio-economic class for both my first (late) spouse and my second spouse. I am primarily distressed by the lack of exploratory action taken by people facing career challenges, an issue not only highlighted in literature but also in my own interviews of career services clients who failed to perform a single information interview.

Addressing Bias During Interpretation

During the process of drafting case studies and conducting interpretive analysis, I monitored my reactions to participant statements and choices and compared them to my sources of bias. I noted at times that I judged participant actions positively or negatively, and that such judgments reflected my expectations for the study and my own struggles with making constructive career choices. I noted my reactions and judgments and regularly revisited my drafts to improve their focus on describing or explaining, and reduce the impact of my own biases.

Chapter Four: Results

Chapter Three outlined the methodology of the study. This chapter presents the results. First, I describe the results of recruiting and matching participants. Next, I present a series of pairings that incorporate three cases each: the career path of a Seeker (a person pursuing midlife career transition), the career path of their paired Completer (a person who completed a midlife transition), and their interactions with a facilitator during a group interview. Each pairing concludes with survey data from the participants.

Description of Recruiting, Participants and Matching

This section reports the challenges of recruiting methods and matching processes, and the resulting participants.

Challenges of Different Recruiting Methods

The recruiting strategies of social media campaigns, professional referrals, and trusted faculty referrals varied widely in success. Social media campaigns produced no recruits. Professional referrals from alumni and career services at colleges and universities in central North America produced four expressions of interest but only one Completer. Faculty referrals were made by professors at with connections to community organizations. Faculty referrals from charitable organizations that provided social and employment services resulted in 14 expressions of interest and two Seekers. Faculty referrals from organizational development listservs (a topic-focused email distribution service) resulted in five expressions of interest, and one Seeker and three Completers.

Description of Participants

Six participants completed the intervention. Although men and women indicated interest in both roles, all consenting Seekers were male, and all Completers were female. All six participants were White, fluent communicators in English, who held a university degree. The three Seekers were men ranging from mid-30s to mid-40s in age, residing in eastern North America. Peter was a former multimedia entrepreneur working unhappily as a business development manager. Victor was a former communications professional who'd become a contract-based theatrical producer and desired more stable career options. Leonard was a scientist attempting a transition into life coaching. The three Completers were women ranging from mid-50s to mid-60s in age, residing in eastern or central North America. Wanda transitioned from juvenile clothing entrepreneur into change management consulting. Susan transitioned from telemarketing, phone support and consulting into change management. Helen transitioned from translator to secretary, then to head-hunting, career advising, coaching and yoga instruction. Nancy did not participate because she didn't match to anyone.

Challenges With Matching Resulting Candidates

The matching process was limited by a pool of similar candidates, candidates who provided misleading self-reports about the impact of systemic influences on their careers, and incomplete curricula vitae.

First, the small pool of participants presented few systemic differences. All participants were White and university-educated, and self-reported that sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, childcare and eldercare were not important for their career transition. Although two people indicated that education was not important, they both had postgraduate degrees. Although four people indicated that rural or urban location were important, all participants lived in major cities at the time of seeking or completing transition. As such, there was no basis for differentiation based on those survey items.

Second, participants were systematically different based on their self-selected role in the study. Although potential candidates included male and female Seekers and Completers, the final participants were all male Seekers, and all female Completers, which precluded matching based on gender-related issues such as unpaid care work.

Third, self-reported survey data conflicted with emerging interview data. For instance, although participants indicated that childcare and eldercare were not important, or that relationship changes were not important, subsequent interviews showed that those issues played important roles in career navigation.

Fourth, curricula vitae (CVs) were marketing documents that supported different kinds of matching, but lacked essential contextual information about career paths. CVs included information such as credentials, skills, interests and values, and participants could be matched based on shared career goals and interests (such as coaching, yoga and mindfulness) or shared values and skills (such as exploring personal experiences using interviews). However, CVs lacked important context for matching based on shared experiences. For instance, a Seeker and a Completer had both built and lost a business before facing career transition, and yet the Seeker's loss only emerged during the Seeker interview, and the Completer's loss emerged from her initial email applying to the study.

How Participants Were Paired

The general process of matching was described in Chapter Three. This section provides more detail based on the participant descriptions. The six participants were matched into three pairs using survey data, keywords from curriculum vitae, and biographical data emerging from preliminary interviews and participant emails.

Matching Leonard to Helen. Seeker Leonard had four potential matches for Completer. Based on survey results, Leonard had the most answers in common with Helen (n=3). Survey answers revealed that Leonard was seeking a role as a professional and life coach, and Helen was currently performing a role as a coach and yoga instructor. Additionally, Leonard had keywords in common with Helen, which emphasized a focus on mental health and balance. Although Helen matched more highly with other Seekers due to ratings of systemic factors, Helen was the only strong match for Leonard. As a result, Leonard was matched to Helen. Qualitatively, their match reflected similar values of mindfulness as well as similar specific career roles of coaching. A summary of matching criteria is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Matching for Seeker Leonard Based on Survey, Curriculum Vitae and Biography

Source	Helen	Wanda	Nancy	Susan
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Demographic Factors	age transitioned new career coach, yoga low current work high unpaid care work	√ √ √		√	√	
Systemic Factors Important for Transition	(none)				(none)	
CV keywords in common	mindfulness, work-life balance, yoga, music therapy, meditation	mindfulness, mental health, career counsellor				
Matching Items		4	1	2	0	

Matching Peter to Wanda. Seeker Peter had four potential matches for Completer. Based on survey results, Peter had the most answers in common with Helen (n=7) and Wanda (n=6). Additionally, Wanda had business and sales-oriented keywords in her CV that were similar to Peter's CV. Finally, Wanda shared information in her application to the study, which revealed that she had built and lost a long-term business before seeking career transition. A similar story emerged during Peter's Seeker interview. As a result, Peter was matched to Wanda. Qualitatively, their match reflected similar entrepreneurial values and experiences of loss and forced change. A summary of matching criteria is shown in Table 4.2. During the Seeker-Completer interview, after Seeker Peter introduced himself, Completer Wanda said, "I think you made a good match between us. Many things [he] said resonated with me."

Table 4.2
Matching for Seeker Peter Based on Survey, Curriculum Vitae and Biography

Source		Wanda	Helen	Susan	Nancy
Demographic Factors	age transitioned entrepreneur fulltime work low unpaid care work	√ √	√	√ √ √	√
Systemic Factors Important for Transition	age education level rural or urban locale local economy planning or chance	√ √ √ √	√ √ √ √	√	
CV keywords in common	sales, markets	selling, retail, marketing			

Biographical information	transition triggered by loss of own long-term business	√			
Matching Items		8	7	4	1

Matching Victor to Susan. Seeker Victor had four potential matches for Completer. Based on survey results, Victor had the most answers in common with Helen (n=7), followed by Wanda (n=4) and Susan (n=4). However, Helen was best-matched to Seeker Leonard, and Wanda was best-matched to Seeker Peter. Victor had keywords in common with Susan, which emphasized a common focus on valuing people, and using interviewing to learn what those people had to share. As a result, Victor was matched to Susan. Qualitatively, their match reflected similar values of respectfully seeking out the experiences of people, as well as similar methods of employing interviewing. A summary of matching criteria is shown in Table 4.3. Following his Seeker-Completer interview, Victor remarked, "I also thought it was astute for you to pair us... [I] saw a lot of similarities in the way that she works, what she does and what she values."

Table 4.3

Matching for Seeker Victor Based on Survey, Curriculum Vitae and Biography

Source		Helen	Wanda	Susan	Nancy
Demographic Factors	age transitioned			√	
	low current work	√			
	low unpaid care work	√		√	
Systemic Factors Important for Transition	age	√	√		
	education level	√	√	√	
	rural or urban locale	√	√		
	local economy	√			
	planning or chance	√	√		
CV keywords in common	humanistic, compassionate, interviewer			respect, empathy, listening, focus groups, interviews	needs assessment
Matching Items		7	4	4	1

Pairing One: The Fallen Entrepreneurs

This first pairing presents the case studies of Peter and Wanda who shared an entrepreneurial background. Each participant suffered the catastrophic loss of their own business and faced a need for career transition. First, I present Peter's career pathway. Second, I present Wanda's pathway including her successful transition. Third, I report how Peter, Wanda and I interacted during their group interview.

Seeker Case: Peter

Peter was a 44-year-old White male Seeker living in an eastern city in Canada. He received my recruiting poster through an email distributed by a charitable organization that provides employment and other services. The agency received my poster from my supervisor who was a trusted advisor to them.

Narrative of Peter's Career Pathway. Peter's career began as a 25-year-old multimedia entrepreneur. By the time of the interview, he was employed as a sales account manager for an engineering company. In this section, I describe his career pathway chronologically in terms of major life events (such as entering or exiting a work or personal relationship) and their individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences.

I always knew that I wanted to start a business and be a boss.

Peter described being an entrepreneur as “all I've known all my life” because he had been born into an entrepreneurial family where his parents and grandparents operated retail businesses. However, Peter did not consider them to be role models because he never wanted to work in retail. Instead, he started an expensive multimedia business by borrowing money and committing to a lease because he “knew deep down inside it was going to work.” He described his approach as relying on courage rather than balancing “head” and “heart.” Despite having no customers or track record, he received a \$50,000 loan from his family and a bank loan for \$250,000, which he used to purchase equipment and secure a three-year office lease. Peter successfully tapped into a market for his services, explaining his success in terms of chance: “the good stars were aligned.” Over the next 15 years, Peter experienced financial success and worked with a team that shared his love of the business. For Peter's spouse his success supported moving three times, enjoying vacations and his paying for everything: “there was no limit... she never had to work.” His spouse focused on childcare. Many years later, she would confess to being jealous of Peter because he “got to travel... got to work... was able to be free, and she was home taking care of the kids.”

During the 15 years he operated his multimedia business, Peter also started “five to 10” parallel businesses. He admitted that the parallel ventures distracted his focus from his main business and the changes in its industry that led to its downfall. Additionally, he believes that he trusted the “wrong” people when he started the businesses. When they let him down, his parallel businesses faltered. He described his approach during this period as going “all in” to each business and “pull[ing] out quickly when I needed to.”

Peter admitted that he didn't notice or engage with changes coming in his industry because he “wasn't focused and was all over the place.” After 15 years, his main business progressively declined, and he moved his equipment from the office to his house. His business decline reflected not only changes in his industry, but also his struggle in producing enough cashflow such that “I still had a ton of debt... I was making sales but... it was like a vicious circle.” He maintained several customer relationships until the end, but experienced growing “money problems” that affected his marriage, noting “that's when things started to shift in our relationship.” In the end, he tried to salvage his business and “drag it as long as I could” until he lost everything and his finances collapsed. He wondered if having “more tools” would have allowed him to “foresee that the industry was going to change, and I would have been more prepared, and I wouldn't have lost my company.”

When I closed my business, I was like, shit, what am I going to do now?

After the loss of his business Peter was unable to get "a decent job with a decent salary." He "believed I was worth a lot, but in reality, I wasn't worth a lot, so I can't even get a job." By a lot, he meant a salary of \$200,000 to \$250,000. To support the family, his spouse was able to secure employment such that their "roles were reversed and she was working, and I was home taking care of the kids." Peter decided to return to school because, "I was looking for hope, answers, skills, something." He thought, "maybe I need to sharpen my tools or get some new tools" and at the same time, he could "finish what I started. I didn't complete my Bachelor (degree)." A post-secondary diploma was something that no one in his family had accomplished. A four-days-per-month executive MBA was available locally at a reputable university. He admitted, "I didn't give it too much thought, to be honest... It's [university], it's [business school]... something's going to come out of it... I'm going to trust life and trust the process, as they say." He enrolled in the program and later explored reasons for doing an MBA as the topic of his Master's thesis, which asked "Why do entrepreneurs go back and get an MBA?"

Although, as an entrepreneur, "I wore all the hats... hiring, firing... accounting... production... equipment repairing, shipping," Peter concluded that sales was "the only kind of transferrable knowledge I was able to take with me." During his MBA, he met a classmate who was an executive of a renewable energy company. Peter told him "if one day you have something for me, let me know." In North America, the market for renewable energy was expanding. "Four or five months went by, and he's like, Yeah, I think I have something for you" because the company was expanding into North America, and a job opportunity arose that required sales skills. Peter took a role as a sales account manager at the company. He admitted, "I didn't know jack about wind turbines" but "it was a good job because it paid me over \$100,000 a year. I got to travel a lot." At the same time, he was experiencing marital difficulties and was open to business travel because "it took my head off things." However, "when I got there, I was unhappy. I was like, shit, what am I doing here? ... I'm losing my business, I'm separating from 12 years marriage, I'm back to school... I'm starting a new job where I haven't worked anywhere in 15 years. It was a tough year." However, he reflected on the shift from entrepreneur to working within a large corporation and "I had a change in perspective. I told myself, if I'm able to do this, I'll be able to do anything I want... everything else will be easy."

Peter traveled to Europe for training in his new job, but problems with his spouse remained. The downfall of his business and the industry that supported it had caused serious "money problems" that had triggered the shift in his relationship. Before his downfall, "I was always the one paying for everything and she didn't really work a lot, when we had the kids." However, he noted, "The marriage was unhappy for a couple of years" and he added that she later told him "I was always jealous of you because you got to travel. You got to go to work" and "she was envious that I was able to be free and she was home taking care of the kids. That led to us separating, I think." Peter received support from his father and his martial arts teacher: "They saw that I was miserable...I was dead inside." While completing his new job training in Europe, he met with a friend who said, "You can't go on like that." Peter felt that the end of his marriage was "long, long coming. I just had to do it. I was just too miserable... when I came back from training... the same day... I told her it's over" because "I couldn't take the mental abuse anymore."

The renewable energy company was a "really good job, really good company" and the travel made it "really fun" by providing a distraction during the end of his marriage. He admits, "I learned more there than at the MBA because it's all the stuff I hated to do, and I never did,

when I had my company... all the preparation, all the process.” However, the market for the industry required extensive preparation and complex multi-party negotiations that resulted in much longer sales cycles than he was used to: “The sale cycle is 3 to ten years... it wasn’t motivating. It was a lot of effort but I didn’t see anything at the end of the day.” Peter missed the experience of regular results: “I don’t want to work in the store and sell shirts every day, but I’d like to sell something every month at least. I need a result... a turnaround that’s fairly entertaining and keeps me going.” Peter also lacked belonging with the organization: “Let’s be brutally honest. I didn’t feel like I belonged... it was a whole bunch of engineers... my boss was 10 years younger.” Additionally, he lacked a pathway to promotion: “I didn’t see how I was going to move up.” During his three years at the company, no sale closed, and the company began restructuring and replacing its leaders. Peter said, “Every day you didn’t know if you had a job” and he decided to leave because “I didn’t want to be fired.” Peter felt the experience had helped him learn how to adapt and “navigate into any kind of company” but added, “will I be happy? That’s another question.”

From a large multinational company, Peter next stepped into a family-run retirement home business. He said, “It was cool because it was new and it was a small company.” Peter had known the business owner for 30 years, and a mutual friend connected them for the job. The owner needed help sourcing materials for his next project. He had experience in sales but wanted Peter to “take on all the purchasing” required to establish the retirement homes, “from the phone lines to the tiles to the paint to the beds... everything.” The owner expressed confidence in Peter’s adaptability: “You have experience in sales but I need purchasing. I don’t think you’ll have a problem.” Peter accepted the role, noting “I was happy to step out of the process of [a multinational] company.”

The retirement home business was family-run, including a boss and his brother, father, and mother. The boss provided mixed messages such that Peter lacked the authority and freedom to “do my job right.” Peter noted, “He was telling me, go, you need to take your room, you need to take the decisions. But he would micromanage everything... he had to approve everything. He had to change things 500 times and he drove me crazy.” The boss also had different priorities in the workplace: “There’s no heat during the winter. We had to wear coats. Whereas at the other hand, we had a personal cook... it wasn’t for me.” At that time, China had become a major supplier of manufactured products. To fulfill his duties to purchase everything needed for the project, Peter sought a contact for a Chinese supplier and relied on a Chinese classmate from his MBA class. When Peter traveled to China to meet the recommended supplier, he was confused by the unfamiliar culture: “They treated us, for two weeks, me and my boss, like royalty. They made us visit factories... They paid for restaurants, they wanted to pay for anything.” Peter asked his classmate, “We don’t understand, why are they doing all this?... They don’t expect nothing in return, right?” She said, “That’s how they do it.” Unfortunately, the company failed to deliver: “they said they wouldn’t charge us a fee and they did charge us... They sent a container and... the whole container was wrong.” As a result, Peter’s boss said, “I’m done with China and I’m done with [Peter]. It’s his fault.” However, Peter felt that was unfair: “There was no way for me to foresee that.” As a result, Peter and his boss agreed to end their relationship: “He said, listen I think we should end this now. And I’m like, I agree with you. This is not working for me either. I was miserable.”

Over the following year, Peter did some work with his brother for no pay but didn’t secure employment. He persisted with searching for and applying to job postings on the

LinkedIn social network. His attempts to rebrand his sales skills for a “client success” role didn’t result in interviews because he lacked the required level of experience for the posted jobs. He noted, “I had applied to so many jobs... I was fed up.” He looked for a way to find an alternative branding for himself: “What can I do that resembles sales but is not sales?” He tried to think of a solution: “I was banging my head against the wall... It’s the perfect opportunity for me to reinvent myself, to do something I want.” For instance, “I’ve been doing martial arts for years. I like nutrition” and he had an “opportunity to go work in the gym with a friend.” However, Peter rejected those options: “Am I going to be able to make a living out of that? It’s going to become something I’m going to hate.” But rejecting those options meant, “I fall back into getting a job, getting a good salary. But then I’m unhappy.”

After a year of unemployment, Peter was convinced that the only path to “make a good living and get a good job was sales, because I can make people believe I can sell.” He explained, “I’m in this field because there’s nothing else I know how to do... there’s no way for me to get a job doing something else.” His strategy of monitoring postings on LinkedIn eventually led to an interview for a sales account management position at an engineering firm. The engineering business was seeking to expand into a larger nearby city and although it was far from Peter’s home, he would only need to be onsite 1-2 days per week. Peter worried that his age would make him overqualified and expensive: “they have to give me more money than if they get a 20-year-old” but he also saw his experience as an asset: “I have the maturity, the experience, the people skills. I believe that I have that over somebody younger.” Additionally, he thought that his new employer appreciated his 15 years of entrepreneurial experience and that, “I could navigate through the waters of getting a company going.” When Peter got the offer after his long stretch of unemployment, he appreciated feeling wanted: “these guys, they took me in. I met them and two days later, I had an offer... it was nice.”

At the time of the interview, Peter struggled with his current sales development role: “I kind of want to do it, but I’m still wanting to do something else. I wouldn’t say no to another position right now, even though it’s a nice challenge. I need challenge.” Although sales was a transferrable skill from running his own business, he didn’t enjoy doing sales for someone else. He said, “When I was selling for my company... people trusted me... They say, how am I going to know you’re going to be here in a year from now? Then there’s the snowball effect, and then it just goes... Now I’m doing sales but it’s not me.” Selling for someone else required following their process. Peter said, “I was telling that to my girlfriend... I’m not an animal you can put in the cage. I need to be free. I need to roam. I need to breathe... I don’t think I’m made to be in a machine.” Although he claimed “I don’t mind to be managed the right way. The tools are okay, the CRM I’ll use it. I’ll do this. I’ll do that,” he still complained that “I’m just working for a paycheck to pay my bills, which really doesn’t motivate me.” Although he described the role in terms of sales, he was also expected to take on leadership. He noted having a conversation five months after starting work where his boss expressed surprise at Peter’s confusion about taking leadership, asking, “where wasn’t I clear about that? You were hired for that type of thing.” Peter complained about the “top-down” control in the organization asking, “How do you navigate through such a strong company culture? It’s very hard. That’s why I wasn’t able to see that’s what they wanted me to do... become a leader.” Peter struggled with becoming a leader inside a structured organization, saying it “excites me... but make sure nobody’s putting a break on how I want to do things, and make sure people trust what I’m going to do.” He said, “It’s like, take your place, show who you are... but you have to fight for it, really hard. And I don’t want to have to fight for it.” The job offered nice co-workers, but Peter wanted more: “I want to be supported. I

want to have a collaboration” and not “because that’s their job.” He believed that his girlfriend would want him to commit to the job and “prove to everybody that I can do it” because she “likes more the stability. She has never experienced entrepreneurship and living month to month.” Peter felt a need to prove himself: “I need to step up to the plate and I need to show them that I can do it.” However, although Peter saw a potential upside, “Stepping up to what they want me to do and me taking my place, it’s a great opportunity,” he also saw potential failure: “Deep down inside me, I don’t want to take it on. I don’t want to do it.” He admitted, “I don’t know if I can do it. It’s not that I’m second-guessing myself, but I don’t know.” Lacking a sense of other options he said, “I don’t have a knife under my throat but what else am I going to do?”

During this period, Peter had explored other options in terms of entrepreneurial side projects: “I always thought, okay I need to start another company, this is the only way.” Peter desired a different relationship with work: “almost like if I tell you how you feel when you’re in love... It’s not about the money. It’s not about what I’m selling. It’s not about all these things, just about that gut feeling inside.” Peter connected that gut feeling with entrepreneurship: “I really only had this feeling when I had my company...It’s my company. I build it. I’m going to go get the clients... I’m going to be part of the project. I’m going to deliver. I’m going to collect the money... It’s like I’m part of something.” The struggle between remaining in his sales job and wanting escape led to judging himself: “maybe I’m lying to myself, and maybe I’m just being lazy and I don’t want to work.” He wondered, “Do I have issues? Maybe, I don’t know.” He described himself as “dangerous because I’m very all-or-nothing.” Peter’s girlfriend did not share his entrepreneurial drive: “She kind of grounds me and I like it, and sometimes I don’t like it” because “I kind of appreciate it but at the same time, I don’t want to go against the grain too much. Then I’m not going to feel like myself anymore.” In contrast, Peter reported that a younger co-worker said, “I don’t understand what you’re doing here because you’re under-utilized. You could be doing so much better.” Similarly, his family pushed him to go into business with them: “my brother has been begging me and dying for me to work with him... My parents always wanted me and my brothers to do something together. We never did.” Peter feared that his brother was “not very stable... I don’t know if my type of work ethic and his type of work ethic will work together. I think we will end up hating each other. And not talk to each other.” Despite his desires, Peter faced a lack of resources: “I don’t have the resources anymore. I don’t have the money... I lost everything... I’m naked and I’m starting from zero.” Although Peter had contacts that might open new opportunities, he avoided them: “I have connections I can go to but... I didn’t ask for any favour. I’m scared to ask now... maybe I am like a wounded animal and also doubting myself, if I can even do that distance.”

Completer Case: Wanda

Peter was paired with Wanda, a 63-year-old White female Completer living in an eastern city in Canada. She received my recruiting poster through a computer listserv (a subscription service dedicated to a particular topic that receives emails from members and then distributes them to all members) dedicated to her Master’s discipline of organizational development.

Narrative of Wanda’s Career Pathway. Wanda’s career pathway began as an entrepreneur making and selling juvenile clothing. By the time of the interview, she was a consultant focused on assisting organizations by addressing interpersonal change management. In this section, I describe her career pathway chronologically in terms of major life events (such as entering or exiting a work or personal relationship) and their individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences.

It was all about creating income and being able to stay home with my kids.

Wanda's story began when she found herself at home with "two little kids," an art-history education and a desire for her own income. She decided to start a home-based juvenile clothing business that would eventually encompass "manufacturing, retail and distribution." Wanda wanted additional income because "my husband is a musician, which is fantastic... he worked hard, but he didn't necessarily have a regular job." She wanted to work from home because she was home-schooling her two small children. She had a couple of friends who were interested in helping, she was able to source juvenile clothing in bulk from Pakistan as well as local manufacturing capacity, and she benefited from "a huge boom in the industry" at the time.

The success of her business triggered negative marketing where competitors "started fighting back... with really hard-hitting ads and crazy research studies and it really kind of decimated the industry." In response to the devastating challenge, Wanda "held on and I varied it and I thought about the future." She still relied on "a great accountant, from the birth of the company" but "I pretty much took control of the company from my partners," replacing them with a new partner who had been a biochemist and "approached things very scientifically... she ended up doing operations... and I did pretty much everything else." The industry was contracting but Wanda "fought back and we created this incredible niche industry." She explained, "I started taking [juvenile clothing] to juvenile trade shows where they had never seen or imagined such a thing." She "convinced people to put them in their stores and... the industry just started taking off again... I was probably part of that." She described the return to growth as "a miracle and a joy" that led to having "clients all over the world" such that "we had to get a manufacturing plant." She reflected, "People would say, oh, you're never going to make money doing [juvenile clothing]. Well, we grew and grew and grew." She said, "I think the success of my business was because I didn't really rely on experts."

With the growing success of Wanda's business, "I traveled a ton... Having your own business is extremely stressful... but I truly loved it." She said, "for years, I had my hands on everything that was happening." At this time, she was managing 50 employees and "mostly I learned how to ask for help... I wanted my staff to be smarter than myself so they would help me figure out stuff." Her growing business meant Wanda was no longer able to homeschool her children. She said, "I couldn't be home with my kids" but "they were all part of [the business]." She enrolled her son into public school. Unfortunately, he "went to drug school.... That school was right next to my office... but he still got into trouble." He "got into criminal activity... he's basically an addict... addiction is not anybody's personal failure, but when... you've put so much love into your kid, it's very hard to learn that lesson." Wanda felt that "I lost him. He slipped through my fingers," and "I think that at that point, I really lost confidence." She explained, "it felt like such a personal failure... I was this successful business person... encouraging... attachment parenting and at the same time I had this kid doing drugs." During this period, Wanda's mother became terminally ill, and Wanda chose to be her "primary caregiver," which required extensive personal travel. Her lived in the United States so Wanda "was traveling back and forth. I put her in the upstairs apartment in my warehouse in the U.S. and I took care of her, and allowed her to die at home." On the business side, Wanda's trusted accountant died of ALS, and she needed to find new accountants and financial advisers. Faced with so many challenges, Wanda felt that "my life and my business were so enmeshed that I could respond to urgencies... I had employees that helped... but it was basically responding to crisis." Her relationship with advisors changed. She used to "listen to people and then decide on my own what to do" but after

losing her confidence, "I would argue with people... but I acquiesced to what the consultant would say, or my partner." As a result, when her new accountants advised her to do "all these very expensive things" in terms of responding to government policies by investing in manufacturing and middle management, "I kind of went along with it and... I was completely over my head." She explained, "instead of understanding every single process of what was going on, I left it to experts. And I don't think as a business owner, you can do that... you have to ask questions all the time."

After 27 years, "We had these incredible products... We had a great customer base. We had great distributors. We had a really good reputation in the market. I had a staff to die for. Unfortunately, despite the business being more "organized and functional" than ever, a series of events undermined Wanda's ability to continue. First, the replacements for her trusted accountant had made undetected calculation errors resulting in years of "accumulating catastrophic losses." The error was not found until her accountants were replaced a second time. Second, based on expert advice on government policy, Wanda had made costly investments but due to "a fight between political parties," the government refused to pay expected amounts in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Wanda later admitted, "I wouldn't have thought about how the experts failed me. I didn't think of it like that, which sounds dumb." Third, there was a "big mix-up" with one of her distributors who "was getting heat from his bank and couldn't wait to be paid back, and so they started a lawsuit." Finally, "My partner's husband ... was afraid. He wanted her to divest of the debt" that was accumulating in the business. The lawsuit and her partner's unwillingness to continue "was like the final death blow" that forced her to sell off the assets of the business. Wanda said, "It's really sad for me... I felt a terrible loss of purpose." Describing her business, she said, "it was me; I was it" and the loss "was really odd and disorienting... I had to divest myself of the persona." After the sale, working for the new owners was "a really hard experience, and I didn't feel like I was able to help them."

During this period, Wanda's best friend was running an Ontario-based non-profit that does "great work" focused on "prevention of bullying, child abuse and violence." The organization was "working from project to project that's funded by government ministries, by labor unions, by various stakeholders," and "they are looking to get out of that trap... and break into being seen as a credible expert in their field and get hired as consultants across Canada." Wanda's friend asked her "to come in and work with them." Wanda performed a variety of services: "I've done strategic development... organizational interventions... social media... And now I'm constructing their website so that they can start charging for their services." Her website design was "from a template... I've done a few of those before, both in my own business and for other people... I am not a designer." At the same time, the new owners of Wanda's business were experiencing logistical problems but "they didn't come to me and ask me how to do it. And that made me crazy, feeling like I couldn't help them." She reflected, "I didn't know why I couldn't help them, so I decided that what I really wanted to do is ... figure out how to help people run their businesses better, and I don't want to work with them with spreadsheets, necessarily." Instead, she wanted to focus on people and "strategic objectives. I like that stuff."

Reflecting on how she began her transition Wanda admitted, "Stress really narrows your vision." She said, "I'm not used to thinking about it in terms of how I could have saved myself, how I can help other people avoid what happened to me." She said, "I was used to more thinking about how am I going to package myself? How I'm going to use what I have... regardless of the failures?" Wanda's business failure shaped how she wanted to provide consulting. Although she

had engaged experts "to prevent our bankruptcy at the end," she wanted to offer something different as a consultant. She wanted to be "somebody who helps *you* do it, who helps *you* see it, it's like a good coach will ask you questions that make you solve your own dilemmas." Upon reflection, she said, "I find myself wishing that I had had that myself. I think it would have made a huge difference to me." Wanda wanted to "use my skill and expertise but... I don't feel like an expert. I feel like a small business person who learned how to do many, many, many things." She said, "I didn't feel like I had enough to give, I felt like I needed to understand the processes of working with people. I needed to have some theory. I needed to have some... mentoring and some practice." Her city offered several local options to enhance her education such as a traditional executive MBA as well as a degree focused on organizational development. Wanda noted, "I was looking around for something to do. And I heard about [the organizational development degree], and it's thought of as kind of like an alternative to an MBA and it's about working on the process with people, to help people work better together." The program supported her belief that "individuals and organizations, they have their own solutions. So, my job as a consultant is to help them find their solutions, which I think is why I did [that degree] instead of the executive MBA."

The Master's program had been "represented as... a transformational collaborative experience" but Wanda had found that, "it's not really... It's still hierarchical. It's still the experts are in charge," which "drives me nuts." She admitted, "I'm incredibly vulnerable to it but resistant at the same time, because I feel like they know what they're doing, they're the experts." During this period, a professor in the program secured funding to conduct research on coaching and was hiring research assistants. Wanda learned about the opportunity from a classmate, "because we've done a couple of projects together, which were good." The classmate "was working in it and brought me in." Wanda took the position because "it was an opportunity to make some money while I finished my degree, and it's all about coaching. So, I love it." Wanda enjoyed the collegial working experience. The project was informed by the professor's expertise, "but at the same time I bring myself to it," and "I like the feeling of being able to contribute to something that we're all growing together." She explained, "it's really great to work with [a prof] in a totally different way as a colleague, rather than as a student that somebody's dumping information into." Also, during this period, Wanda's friend died of cancer, but Wanda continued working with the non-profit because it was "a very interesting synergy" with her Master's study, "so I feel it's really part of my education."

At the time of the interview, Wanda was "doing a process consulting project" with a local youth protection organization that was a "super high pressure... caregiving organization" with "a high rate of attrition." Her access had been limited by changing public health restrictions, so "due to the [COVID-19] pandemic, my final project and thesis has been delayed" by at least six months, and she had only "just got access back into the system." The organization "wanted to examine [staff] retention and online onboarding." She said, "of course retention is always about... many other factors. Some within their control and some outside of their control... I love it." She explained, "it really satisfies my brain, too. I love figuring it out. It's really fascinating. I've read a lot of associated theory... my brain is lighting up in all places." A key attraction was that "I love watching people work through the puzzles, and just creating an environment in which they can solve their own puzzles." Reflecting on her current projects, Wanda noted that they "just tick all my boxes. I love working with people. I love encouraging them, empowering them." She said, "I've seen it just so far in the work that I've done... it was incredible, the changes that can happen."

Interaction Case: Peter, Wanda and a Facilitator

I met with Peter and Wanda in a three-way Zoom meeting in late July, 2020 for a Seeker-Completer interview. The Seeker-Completer interview represented the kind of discussion a Seeker could use to engage people that interested him and explore his options for career transition. His previous Seeker interview and training meeting with me had exposed him to the interview style and helpful active listening techniques.

I hosted from an apartment in Toronto, and Peter and Wanda joined from their respective homes in eastern North America. The meeting lasted about one hour and 50 minutes and resulted in two case studies: first, the Completer's case study reported previously focused on content in terms of the work and life events Wanda shared during the meeting; second, this case study focuses on process by reporting the interactions of participants.

To simplify the case and focus on the participants, my basic questions to elicit the Completer's jobs, career choices, and the influences that guided those choices are not reported. Instead, reported interactions focus on times when (a) one participant referred to another or asked a question of the other; (b) a participant referred to the meeting or its process; (c) I prompted the Seeker to ask a question; or (d) I compared or contrasted participants based on their stories, or offered a synthesis for them to react to. To help the reader situate the interactions in terms of the overall interview and the kinds of events and words that prompted interactions, each interaction is reported in terms of the stories shared just prior to the interaction, and then the interaction itself with illustrative quotes from the participants.

Interaction 1: It Feels a Little Strange. At the beginning of the interview Peter introduced himself: "I'm the seeker in this journey of what I want to do with the rest of my life... This came in by fluke, and I thought it would be interesting." I explained how the meeting would work and asked for questions. Wanda, the Completer, responded, "It feels a little strange to me to not know anything about [Peter]. I would love to know something about him because I know he'll know everything about me." In response, Peter provided a summary of his career path that reflected the details from his Seeker interview, and stated his career dilemma: "Since 2015 when my company closed, I've been searching for myself, and searching for what I want to do, and the only thing I know how to do really that's transferable to today's need and with a decent salary is sales. So, I think that's why I'm changing all these jobs and not really being fulfilled." Wanda responded, "Thank you. And I think you made a good match between us. Many things [he] said resonated with me."

Interaction 2: Comparing Master's Projects. After introductions, Wanda described her current work as a university research assistant and as a consultant helping a non-profit transition into a consultancy. She engaged Peter by name when she mentioned her graduate study: "I also went back to school, [Peter]... I'm doing human systems intervention. I'm doing a process consulting project." Peter probed for details such as, "What's the title of your paper?" and he confirmed the acronym of Wanda's client for her project. Wanda described her project focus as exploring problems with staff retention and said, "of course retention is always about something else, right?" to which Peter replied, "Yeah, of course." Wanda noted that her topic of retention involved "many other factors... so fascinating, I love it." In response, Peter noted, "It sounds like an interesting project, and it shows that it comes from the heart." Wanda agreed that "it really satisfies my brain, too." Peter's follow-up jumped to other work Wanda had mentioned, a description of helping a non-profit shift to consulting and present their re-orientation on their

website. He asked, "And you do also, so you do web creation?" Wanda clarified that she was only using a template and "I am not a designer." Peter followed up with, "Or a programmer." Wanda agreed.

Interaction 3: There's Just So Much. Wanda described how she had struggled with the loss of her business and how that had inspired her choice of Master's program. She paused to ask, "I hope I'm not saying too much, is this okay?" I said, "[Peter] did you want to pick up something there?" Peter replied, "Wow there's just so much."

Interaction 4: As You Know. Wanda described the growth of her business from a home-based supplement to her husband's irregular income to a major player with a manufacturing plant. Peter interrupted to say, "You didn't expect it to grow to where it went that quick." Wanda said, "I hoped." Peter said, "You hoped." Wanda described the joy and stress of a growing business, saying "I loved what I did. It was very stressful. As you know, having your own business is extremely stressful." Peter replied "Yes." Wanda went on to describe how she coped with business growth by delegating and taking on a new partner, saying "We brought really different lenses to what we were doing. And that was super helpful." Peter responded, "You balance." Wanda responded, "Right, yeah."

Interaction 5: Let Her Go Ahead. Wanda explained how she had faced crushing competition and fought back to make her business even bigger. I invited Peter to engage but he did not. Wanda described the reasons for her downfall including the death of her accountant and government tax policy changes, but ultimately in terms of her giving up oversight of business operations and "being out of control of the company." I invited Peter to engage and he said, "So many things, again. I want to let her go ahead." Wanda responded, "Sad story." Peter said, "I can ask a lot of questions and say a lot of things but no, it's okay. We're good."

Interaction 6: When Did You Feel That? Wanda explained why she had started giving up oversight and control of her business to experts, saying she had lost confidence in herself when her kid "got into trouble, and that was a huge blow for us." Peter interrupted, beginning with a summary of what he had recently heard and moving to a series of questions:

You said it when you started saying your story. You said that you had the business and you were so happy, right? And you loved it, you loved what you did, right? So at what point do you think that-- and I can totally understand that feeling, I was there too-- but at what point did you-- because it happened to me, because I kind of diversified because I saw one of my main business going, my industry dying also, and I kind of diversified but I kind of left what I was supposed to constantly, what I was supposed to concentrate on. I didn't-- I thought about, okay, this is going down, I need to do something else. And I, and I should have concentrated on what was there, and I didn't. That's my lesson. So, at what point did you did you feel like that? Also, when did you feel that first of all? And at what point did you start losing that trust in you and saying, okay, I need to do this, I'm going to leave all that stuff to other people, and I'm going to concentrate on this now? At what point did that happen?

Wanda responded that "I didn't really leave it to other people... I would argue... but I acquiesced to what the consultant would say or my partner, who had this totally different lens than I did. She is like into the nitty gritty. I'm very, the big picture." Peter responded, "There's a bird's eye view." Wanda said, "Yeah."

Interaction 7: A Terrible Loss of Purpose. Wanda explained how her business had "incredible products" and "staff to die for" but she had to stop when her partner's husband wanted to quit, and a distributor started a lawsuit. She said, "I felt a terrible loss of purpose because when you're aligned with what you do, you never lack for purpose." Peter responded, "It's like it's your baby, right? It's like a child." Wanda responded, "Yeah, it was me, I was it."

Interaction 8: Other People's Catastrophes. Wanda described struggling with managing her business success at the same time her son fell into crime and drug addiction, and her mother became terminally ill and relied on Wanda's care. She said, "it was basically responding to crisis... not a bird's eye perspective as you said, [Peter]." With respect to her story, Wanda said, "I hope it's helpful for people" and laughed. I prompted Peter for questions. Peter initially demurred but Wanda asked, "Does it help you, Peter, to hear about other people's catastrophes?" Peter responded, "I think it's incredible. I always like to hear about entrepreneurs and, you're right, we have a lot of similarities, and yeah, it's super interesting. At the same time, I admire what you did. And it's incredible."

Interaction 9: Hoping You're Going to...Tie This Chart Together. Half-way through the meeting, I asked participants about their experience. Wanda said, "I'm not paying so much attention to the chart as I am on trying to answer the questions... but I'm hoping that you're going to be able to tie this chart together and share it with me and then... things will make even more sense than they do now." Peter said, "Yeah, I think from the conclusions that you have pulled when we did this together [in the Seeker interview], and you said, 'from what I'm hearing this, this is what I see,' I hadn't seen it in that way before. So, it's kind of a new way to see my *parcours*, and the different perspective how to see things. It's very interesting."

Interaction 10: Mentors or Coaches. Wanda described what she loved about her new career as a consultant in terms of "creating an environment in which [clients] can solve their own puzzles." She noted, "I find myself wishing that I had that myself... to work with somebody who would actually not come in as an expert but come in--" Peter interrupted, "As a mentor." Wanda responded, "A mentor, but not really a mentor. As somebody who helps *you* do it, who helps *you* see it. It's like a good coach will ask you questions that make you solve your own dilemmas." Peter responded, "Yeah, absolutely."

Interaction 11: Completer's Realization. Wanda described how she had experienced success applying her facilitation approach to clients. I synthesized her attitude to expertise: "Now I know why you say you don't want to be an expert, because you don't trust experts." Wanda replied, "That's an interesting point." Peter said, "Yeah." Wanda said, "Sorry to stop you there." Wanda and Peter both laughed. Wanda said, "I only thought about it in terms of 'I don't know anything' but you're correct."

Interaction 12: I Think You Were Lucky. Wanda explained more about her philosophy of helping people work out their own solutions, noting "Everybody's business is so different. Like [Peter]'s and my businesses are worlds apart, yet they have the same variable, which are the people within them." She later said, "which I think is why, [Peter], I did the HSI instead of the executive MBA."

Peter responded:

I think you were lucky to find that, to make that difference... I didn't know what to expect but if I would have had a choice... the MBA, HSI... maybe I wouldn't have done

the same... I didn't give it too much thought, to be honest with you... .. It's [university], it's [business school]... something's going to come out of it... Trust life and trust the process, as they say.

Wanda asked, "When you did the executive MBA, did you feel it would give you the credentials that you needed to go out and sell yourself as a consultant? Peter responded, "Not only as a consultant, but even to get a job... Actually, my thesis title was, *Why Do Entrepreneurs Go Back and Get an MBA?*" Wanda laughed and said, "that's great."

Peter said, "You're right that it would give me more credentials, because before that I couldn't get a decent job with a decent salary... at the same time, I needed some tools in my toolbox because I couldn't foresee the future with my company... maybe with having done the MBA before... I would have been able to save it... I was looking for hope, answers, skills, something." Peter then described how his business died while he was studying: "I was working from home for six months and then doing the MBA at the same time... it was like a vicious circle just never ending... I'm making sales but I'm using the sales tax to pay my debt, but I still need to pay the tax." Wanda responded, "Got it. It sounds terrifying." Peter said, "I'd love to talk to you more outside of this. I think it would be interesting." Wanda responded, "Sure, sure. Yeah, it would be very interesting to talk."

Interaction 13: Stress Really Narrows Your Vision. I offered a contrast of the participants' graduate study experiences. I described Peter as "looking for something that was missing, some tips or things to help you with your situation." I contrasted with Wanda as someone who had reflected on her life experiences to realize that experts had let her down, and that there was a need for someone who could provide the kind of facilitation she could have benefited from. Wanda responded, "I never thought of it like that. I thought, how do I use all these years of experience?" Peter said, "Yeah, yeah."

I offered that Wanda's life and work experiences represented resources to draw on when assisting clients. Wanda responded, "It's not just a compassion that I would bring to people but also that deep understanding of how these things can happen." I offered that her choice of HSI related to an ability to help people navigate their similar diverse challenges. Wanda responded, "I'm not used to thinking about it in terms of how I could have saved myself, how I can help others avoid what happened to me.... I was used to more thinking about how am I going to package myself? How I'm going to use what I have. But it's true... thank-you for helping me to think about it like that... I didn't put those things together... stress really narrows your vision, I think. And it's really interesting to be asked those sorts of questions, or see it in those columns" [referring to the career influences chart]. Peter agreed. Wanda said, "It creates a kind of coherence. It means that you can look back and see how what you are doing resonates with the rest of your life... I can move forward more authentically if I factor those things in."

Interaction 14: I Don't Think I'm Angry Enough. Wanda contrasted her enjoyment of collegial work with a professor with her ambivalence to expertise: although she chafed at classroom hierarchy, she still felt vulnerable to trusting the expert in the room. I offered that her vulnerability was interesting given that she must be angry with how experts had contributed to the downfall of her business. Wanda responded, "I don't think I'm angry enough. I don't think so. I never think about being angry with them. And I didn't patch the whole thing, like experts, until here, I guess, which is really funny." Peter laughed. Wanda continued, "I wouldn't have thought

about how the experts failed me. Really, I didn't think of it like that. Which sounds dumb, but I didn't."

Interaction 15: I'm Still Miserable. I asked participants about their experience of the meeting, which triggered interactions based on concerns expressed by Peter. His first concern was feeling lost about next steps: "I think it's interesting... how she utilized all her experiences... to something she's doing today, which I had never really thought about before. How can I take my 15 years of being an entrepreneur? I always thought okay, I need to start another company, this is the only way, right?" Wanda responded with a shocked exhalation and shook her head as Peter continued, "But no. And so that's what I learned... I need to find a job that fulfills me, but how do I do that? Zero clue. I don't have the answer. I'm still miserable... maybe you were lucky to... find something that you were able to connect those two parts together and give the next chapter in your life. But, so yeah, very interesting."

Interaction 16: How to Put it on a Resume? Peter's second concern was how to present a transition on a resume: "I hope I can do the same, maybe start reflecting on that. But how to put it on a resume?" Wanda responded by sharing her own experience: "An exercise... another one of my professors gave me -- because he likes me and he sees the potential, which is a wonderful feeling-- he made me do a new resume. But in order to do it I took some stacks of sticky pads, and I cleared a whole wall of my house and I put down every single bloody thing I'd ever done." Peter responded, "You did a Kaizen." Wanda said, "Is that what it is?... I used it to try to capture some of what I've done in my new resume... It took me weeks--" Peter interrupted, "of course." Wanda continued, "It was a very chaotic experience and exuberant, too." Peter responded, "I'm sure it was... so it was about a new resume about--?" Wanda said, "Trying to present myself more as a consultant... he wanted to get me a job at [FIRM NAME]... he's very kind." Peter responded, "You don't fit in that box, right?" Wanda said, "I think I can work anywhere with anybody." Peter responded, "Of course, me too, I feel the same... but it's just my resume now screams *sales*, because that's the only kind of transferable knowledge I was able to take with me... I've been doing all my life, basically, sales, whether it was retail... for myself, big companies, small companies... Anyhow, yeah, that's good. It's interesting. Thank you."

Interaction 17: You Weren't Maybe a Salesman. Wanda prompted Peter's third concern about transferrable skills when she said, "It's hard to sell something that you don't feel passionate about." Peter responded:

What do you do when you don't have a choice? When you have to have a job and you have to work, then I believe you can sell anything. But you're right... when it was your company, when you were going out and selling, I'm sure it was from the heart... When I was selling for my Company... people trusted me... And then there's the snowball effect. And then it just goes right? ... Now I'm doing sales, but it's not me

Wanda responded, "You weren't maybe a salesman. You were what you were doing." Peter said, "Exactly. I wasn't, exactly." Wanda said, "That's interesting, How entrepreneurs get pegged as salespeople." Peter asked, "What else can you transfer... I wore all the hats... I was hiring, firing, was doing HR, was doing accounting... doing the invoices... had my hands in production... getting the money... equipment repairing, shipping... What do you transfer from that?" Wanda responded, "I always think about that in terms of tweaking systems. I was a good systems person because I would go into each system." Peter said, "Yeah, exactly, or master puppeteer..." Wanda continued, "How can I help them do this better? How can I improve the

system or the outcome or the process?" Peter responded, "But when you come into a company and they're looking for this specific type of person, you don't have the experience in that field... You don't have that one skill that you've been doing for 10 years. You're not a specialist, so therefore you don't fit."

I offered a contrast between Wanda's use of her diverse entrepreneurial experiences to present herself as a seasoned consultant, versus Peter's attempt to package himself narrowly. I noted, "I remember from our interview, you said 'I'm an animal, and you can't cage me.'" Peter laughed. I continued, "It sounds to me like you're trying to put yourself into a cage... relying on the chance of jobs coming up on LinkedIn... packaging yourself as a salesperson... Am I getting that right?" Peter responded, "1,000%"

Interaction 18: We Need to Find the People. I prompted Peter's fourth concern about talking to more people when I described the study as providing Seekers with "a form of training wheels... to encourage [them] to have more of these conversations" with Completers. Peter responded, "Yeah, I think it's super interesting. We need to find the people, and the time, and they have to be willing to share." I noted that the current meeting with Wanda was an example of everything Peter had said. Peter responded, "But [Wanda] is not somebody I'm trying to get a job from."

Wanda clarified the role of an information interview by sharing her own experience with someone from her program who had graduated a year ahead of her:

I had a coffee chat with him one day and he said something very similar... you have to decide what kind of organizations do you want to work with... As a consultant or... an employee? ... Start shaping yourself, by asking people that you find are doing interesting things to have a coffee with you... Just start talking to them about who you are and ask them about themselves. Every time you present yourself, you'll see that you present yourself a little bit differently... a more accurate picture of yourself. Plus, you're hearing all the possibilities from other people, what incredible work they're doing that you never heard of... It helps reflect back to us who we are and also opens up possibilities and it's also connections for work... you are building a more robust network... it's not just based on what you can get from somebody, or what they can get from you but how you're exchanging, offering learning.

Wanda also noted the willingness of people to participate: "People love to do it with you too. That's what shocks me. I think back to being in the midst of my business, those busy years. If somebody contacted me and said... 'I would love to meet with you and talk more about how you did what you did' I responded to them. You probably responded to them, too." Peter responded, "Yeah, yeah."

Peter struggled with the content of such meetings: "I kind of visualize myself having coffee with someone and talking but for me it's kind of hard to just talk. It's new for me. It's just basically having coffee with someone and exploring, and having a discussion based on active hearing and all that stuff." He added, "You have to find people that you have things in common with or people that look like you want, that have kind of your path." Wanda responded, "I don't agree ... I tend to want to ask questions of people who are doing what I'm doing. But I also want to know about everybody else, too, because there are things that I never even thought of that people are doing." Peter said, "Yeah, absolutely. You're right. Very interesting."

Interaction 19: Thank-you for Listening. At the end of the meeting, I thanked the participants for their time. Wanda, as a Completer, responded, "That was like [laughs] wow. Thank you for listening so carefully to this. At times it sounded like a crazy discombobulated story to me. It's got so many factors."

Interaction 20: Don't Hesitate to be in Touch. The last interaction offered further discussion when Wanda said, "[Peter], please don't hesitate to be in touch with me" and Peter responded, "I will for sure."

Survey Results From Meeting

This section presents the results of surveys used before and after the meeting with Peter and Wanda to determine how the experience may have contributed to change. First, I present their future career autobiographies (FCA) and then their perceptions of the experience.

Future Career Autobiographies. Peter and Wanda wrote descriptions of their future careers before and after their interactions.

Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Peter. Peter wrote the following for his pre-meeting FCA:

In 5 years, I truly hope to be doing something I love... I want to have meaning, value, recognition, gratitude and relation with my occupation; Need commitment with the company on every level; Would want to be part of decision making and directions; I'd be happy with being an employee or a boss, I think I came to terms with not being an entrepreneur again.

Peter wrote the following for his post-meeting FCA:

I hope to have find a fulfilling activity to call my job, away from sales ; Aligned with my values and convictions ; Or perhaps, be working for myself as an entrepreneur on a new adventure

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Peter. Peter's second FCA (34 words) was shorter than the first (65 words), representing a 31-word or 52-percent decrease. In both versions, Peter expressed hope for change, a desire for meaning, and an openness to a role as an employee or boss. His second FCA no longer detailed requirements for recognition, decision-making authority, or commitment. Meaningful work was no longer defined as something he loved but was instead expressed as something fulfilling. He added a desire for dynamism in the form of adventure, as well a desire to choose a direction that was aligned with his values, which were no longer specified. Changes in the career influences in his FCAs are shown in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Peter

	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
Words	65	34	-31	
Influences				

Individual	6	4	-2	reduced details of fulfillment needs, abandoned decision-making and power, but reopened entrepreneur option
Social	1	1	0	shifted from commitment from employer to alignment with values
Environmental	0	0	0	doesn't address his environment
Chance	0	0	0	doesn't address chance
Decision-making	1	2	1	added purpose of avoiding sales and including entrepreneur as an option

Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Wanda. Completer Wanda wrote a future career autobiography (FCA) before and after her Seeker-Completer interview. Wanda wrote the following for her first FCA:

I hope to be working as a consultant in 5 years from now. I will have built up enough of a reputation that I will get contracts regularly. I will be working with a network of consultants that I am in the process of building now. I will still be living in the house where I live now, and I will be travelling several times a year to visit family and explore faraway places. I will be saving for retirement, as well as enjoying my current life.

Wanda wrote the following for her second FCA:

It still feels pretty clear to me that I will be working as a consultant in five years. I will be benefitting from the network that I am continuing to expand around me that will both lead to new work and also help me find people to work in collaboration with on different projects. I think what has changed is my thinking in that I recognize how relationally oriented I am - somehow, I have not in the past years understood how much that is at the core of who I am and what I do. I will definitely move forward with more confidence and a better understanding of my strengths. And also a sense of coherence and integration rather than abruptness. And the rest is the same-- living in my house and traveling.

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Wanda. Wanda's second FCA (133 words) was longer than the first (87 words), representing a 46-word or 53-percent increase. In both versions, Wanda expressed a desire to work as a consultant, and to travel and save for retirement. Her second FCA no longer mentioned the need to build her reputation to gain regular work. Her hopefulness to work as a consultant shifted to being a more certain "I will be working as a consultant." Her description of networking with colleagues shifted from building a network and working with them to a more specific continual expansion of her network and collaboration with them. Her description of work shifted from regularity of contracts towards a more specific new work and different projects to collaborate on. Her second FCA added that she would be able to progress more confidently as a consultant following the meeting because her change in careers was no longer an "abruptness" -- she could see the coherence of her relationally-oriented core throughout her career path. Changes in the career influences in her FCAs are shown in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Wanda

	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
Words	87	133	46	
Influences				
Individual	2	4	2	stronger identity, confidence
Social	2	2	0	shifted from building reputation to networking for new work and new collaborations
Environmental	2	1	-1	removed mention of regularity of work
Chance	2	3	1	expanded chance to include collaboration not just for new work but for new kind of projects
Decision-making	2	1	-1	no longer mentioned retirement

Perception Surveys. Peter completed a survey about his comfort with interviewing before and after his active listening training. Additionally, Peter and Wanda completed surveys before and after their interactions.

Ratings for Active Listening Training. Peter rated himself highly before data-gathering training and indicated an overall improvement in each category from four to five after the training, as shown in Table 4.6. Peter suggested no changes, and commented, “really interesting information and easy to apply.”

Table 4.6
Self-ratings of Comfort With Data-Gathering Techniques Before and After Training

Participant	Rapport		Active Listening		Probing	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Peter	4	5	4	5	4	5

Ratings for Transition Meetings. Peter rated his Seeker meeting, and Peter and Wanda rated their Seeker-Completer meeting as shown in Table 4.7. Overall, scores were high. For his Seeker meeting, Peter's lowest score was about his feelings about transition. After the Seeker-Completer meeting, Peter's understandability and satisfaction decreased by one point but all other scores increased to the highest. His largest change was feelings about transition increasing from three to five. For the Seeker-Completer meeting, Wanda rated the impact on her talking with others about career as low (2 out of 5). However, she explained that she had already spoken to many people about transition, so the meeting would not change the *amount* of talking she would do, but would change the *way* she would do it. She left two ratings blank because "I don't feel that they relate to me."

Table 4.7
Participant Perceptions of Meetings

Meeting Type	Seeker	Seeker-Completer	
Participant ID	Peter	Peter	Wanda
Status	Seeker	Seeker	Completer
Understandable and satisfying?	5	4	5
Addressed the complex influences in your life?	5	5	5
Supported interaction and collaboration?	5	5	5
Changed how you FEEL about career and transition?	3	5	5
Changed how you THINK about career and transition?	4	5	5
Helped you develop SKILLS in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	4	5	5
Helped you develop CONFIDENCE in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	4	5	5
Affected your likelihood of talking to people in your community about career transition?	4	5	2*
Future Career Description	4	5	*
Life-Career Timeline	5	5	5
Career Pathway	4	5	*

Ratings were based on the following scale: (1) LOW - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5) HIGH.

Suggestions After Transition Meetings. Peter provided no suggestions for his Seeker or Seeker-Completer meetings. After the Seeker-Completer meeting, Wanda wrote about change both for herself and the meetings:

I have spoken a lot already about career transition to people. I think the difference now is that I will probably speak about it in a different way. In a way it is how I wanted to think about it before, and kind of struggled with. Really, I had no expectations of what this would be like. So, it was all a revelation to me, and super interesting. The only thing I would change is that I guess I did not realize that I was supposed to do that exercise in the 15 minutes before 10 o'clock. I'm not sure it would have made a huge difference as to the way I wrote it, but I would just perhaps be a bit more explicit about when I would be required to do that. And it's great to have learned something about [Peter] before getting started - as the kind of sharing elicited in the course of our conversation is so intense that knowing his story helped me to feel connected and safe. This was a really interesting and fruitful experience for me.

Plans After Transition Meetings. After his individual Seeker meeting, Peter copied two suggestions from the survey question (sharing, discussing or updating the items we created in the research process; requesting meetings with people and talking to them about your career goals

and their career transitions) and added his own: “revisit career option paths.” After the Seeker-Completer meeting, Peter wrote about his plans:

requesting meetings with people and talking to them about your career goals and their career transitions Maybe send a survey to people asking them how they see me and what my skills are or a mass email to close contacts and asking them their opinion ... not sure it's the right thing to do.

For Wanda, after the Seeker-Completer meeting she wrote about her plans:

I am interested in looking at the chart that you will send. It will help me think more confidently about how I present myself as a consultant to potential clients, and provide some key ideas (Ironically!) to package my offerings. I will definitely share it with the people around me who have been part of my journey in the past 5 years. I am reminded of how important it is to meet with people around me that are interesting in terms of who they are and what they do. I had resolved to do that before the pandemic hit, and have really delayed picking it up again too long. It is an integral piece of how we shape ourselves. I am inspired to get back to it.

Surprises After Transition Meetings. After his Seeker meeting, Peter wrote, “How quickly the interviewer was able to assume conclusions from my life/work experiences.” After the Seeker-Completer meeting, Peter wrote about his surprise:

How we all go through life's hoops blaming ourselves for things we don't control. How other people have similar experience where there's lots to learn from. How stubborn I am wanting to fit somewhere I don't belong.

For Wanda, after the Seeker-Completer meeting she wrote about her surprise:

What a gift it was to me! It was great and fruitful therapy! I had no idea it would give me so much in regard to perspectives I had not considered before. Thank you, [Researcher]. Your critical thinking and questioning brought out a lot of interesting new ideas to chew on, and a new way to look at my work, both past and future.

Pairing Two: The Curious Listeners

This pairing presents the case studies of Victor and Susan who shared an interest in learning about people and sharing their stories. Each participant experienced an instability in their career and income that prompted them to seek career transition. First, I present Victor's career pathway. Second, I present Susan's pathway including her successful transition. Third, I report how Victor, Susan and I interacted during their group interview.

Seeker Case: Victor

Victor was a mid-forties White male Seeker living in an eastern city in North America. He received my recruiting poster through an email distributed by a charitable organization that provides employment and other services. The agency received my poster from my supervisor who had contacts there.

Narrative of Victor's Career Pathway. Victor's career began as an 18-year-old student applying to a theatrical production school. By the time of the interview, he was an independent theatrical producer. In this section, I describe his career pathway chronologically in terms of

major life events (such as entering or exiting a work or personal relationship) and their individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences.

The biggest thing that I wanted to be my whole life... was a theatrical producer.

Victor had been raised in the eastern city where he lived with his parents. Aged 18, he knew he wanted to be a theatrical producer and he happened to live in a city where a university offered a "super sought-after" production program. Although he applied to the theatrical production school, "it was a hard experience. I kept skipping the interview." He explained, "I didn't have the experience. I wasn't a theatrical producer. I just had ideas and I didn't think they were going to let me in because it was this really hard program to get into." Eventually, he did complete an interview and he was accepted. Unfortunately, his parents were experiencing marital problems and they decided to split up. His mother came from overseas, where she still had family, and she was going back. Victor had the option of getting citizenship there as well. He needed to choose whether he would remain in Canada and engage in the production program or follow his mother overseas. After the program accepted him, he "picked all my courses, talked to the teachers as if I was going to do the school... because it was so much a part of my dream." However, "financially, I wouldn't have been able to take care of myself... I just realistically realized I couldn't do that." As a result, he abandoned theatrical production and moved overseas with his mother.

Overseas, Victor "started a whole new life... I created a whole new identity." He explained. "I got citizenship. So, I really entrenched myself," and "I have all these friends there. I have a whole kind of double experience," which included a woman he would meet again, ten years later. A post-secondary program in communications was available in his community and his application was accepted. The program wasn't theatrical production but was "kind of similar."

Victor sought work to support himself during his communications degree, Victor secured an entry position in his community and "built a career... while I was going to school" with a communication services company." Over time, he left his mother's home to live on his own and his manager treated him as a valuable asset and started providing him with senior tasks such as reports. He was progressing on a management track and a position was "tacitly offered" to him, but "still in my head, I felt like I needed to go to [production school]."

Victor decided to "uproot himself again" and he "travelled halfway across the world to go back to the program he was first accepted into." Overseas, his family "had fractured" but in the eastern city he could re-engage with his "surrogate family," a community of friends he had grown up in. The program accepted him again and he studied with classmates who would go on to become "really successful and interesting theatrical producers."

Victor had won awards during his undergraduate study and after finishing his degree, he sought advanced study. Government funding was available for graduate study, and a central city offered an advanced production school. The central city was a location where Victor "felt the industry was successful" and he only applied to that school because he thought he would be accepted. Although his post-graduate funding proposal was accepted (the only one in his location), he was not accepted at the advanced school where "I think they pick a handful of producers a year... it's more of career development program." Victor adapted his school-based grant proposal into an independent study and secured a professor to mentor him. The government sponsor accepted his revised proposal, and he went on to secure additional funding grants.

Victor's eastern city community included various resources such as parties with industry people, a unique arts school, and an arts-focused theatrical production company. Victor "met a guy at a party" whose work appeared on the festival circuit and who was working on a project. Victor helped him for free and without credit, supported by his own independent study grant. The best friend of that theatrical producer was getting funding to make productions about a major entertainment company in the city. Victor was inspired to think, "I need to do the same thing" and so "my brain is looking around for an opportunity." On the street, Victor met someone who was injured and engaged them in conversation to discover they worked at a unique arts school. Victor envisioned the art-form as a kind of dance and was inspired to make a theatrical production about the school. To make the production, he needed acceptance from the school and the venue he wanted to present it. His proposals were initially rejected so he approached the venue and told them the school was enthusiastic, then returned to the school and told them the venue was enthusiastic. Over six months, he won their acceptance but still needed funding to complete the work. His social circle included connections to a small-time wheeler-dealer, so he borrowed money from the fellow to complete the production, then repaid the loan when he sold the production through the venue.

Despite his successful project, Victor found himself "30 years old and I don't know what I'm gonna do." However, the theatrical producer he'd met earlier at a party and helped for free had shared Victor's work with a friend. That friend was making productions with an entertainment company located in the eastern city, and Victor's work happened to focus on their art-form. Based on Victor's work, the company invited him to come in to talk about one of their projects. During his first pitch, he felt "terrified" due to his lack of experience but chose to "go all out" to get hired. When that opportunity did not result in employment, Victor decided he "would not take no for an answer." He worked on developing more connections at the company, including a "gatekeeper" who made hiring decisions, and persisted with pitching ideas every month for 12-18 months until he was accepted. During this time, the company was doing well, "really riding their wave....at the crest of where they can go" and over a decade Victor kept "overdeliver[ing]" on each project to earn "bigger and bigger projects," becoming the "go-to theatrical producer for the company." He worked with top stars in the industry and his work won a major award. Reflecting on his career pathway to that moment, Victor said, "It's all going to come down to stories that have to do with chance and opportunity... They're literally all this."

Victor wanted to expand his options for work. He felt there were more opportunities for him in the central city than the eastern city and so eight years after his first application, and with much more professional experience, Victor re-applied to advanced study in production, expecting the prestigious school to open new doors for him. This time, the school accepted Victor. He lived in the city for a year but found relationships were "harder to build" than in the eastern city and he faced "cut-throat competition."

The head of the entertainment company Victor worked for embarked on a personal adventure that required physical training. The client was impressed with Victor's work, and asked Victor to capture his adventure in a production. Victor was reluctant. He didn't want to make a production to simply boost someone's celebrity status. Additionally, Victor was expecting his girlfriend from overseas to immigrate, and the project would require Victor to travel for months and delay her arrival. However, Victor believed that refusing the client's request "would be cutting ties with the company" and Victor wanted to preserve his "lucrative and creative" relationship with the company. Victor chose to pitch his own vision for the

production that followed the client's experience of the adventure as a transition into a small club of people who had accomplished the same. Victor also negotiated financial compensation that "I couldn't pass up" to make up for accepting the deal, the location, and putting off his girlfriend's arrival. The client agreed to Victor's terms.

During his life overseas, Victor had met a woman who became a friend, and later a girlfriend. The woman worked in a stressful technical job and Victor lived in a location that needed people who did her job. The woman decided to immigrate and continue working in her profession. Victor supported her efforts, relying on her to ensure she met local eligibility requirements and could be trained and hired. Unfortunately, his location required immigrants to retrain according to local requirements without being paid. As a result, the woman could not work and became dependent on Victor. She was unable to pass the required program and went on to take four years to complete her citizenship process. He said, "her becoming a citizen... broke up our relationship... it was such a trying and difficult experience for her that it had changed our relationship" which "could not withstand the pressure."

During a period of unemployment, Victor who admitted "I don't follow competition shows religiously, I don't care," found himself watching them because the competitors were "so compelling" as characters. An acquaintance called Victor looking for contacts. A venue in the central city was open to pitches by production companies and the acquaintance wanted to spread the word. Victor had an idea for his own production, and a friend with a small production company. He asked the caller to include his friend's production company on the list of contacts so Victor could pitch. The caller agreed and got him a meeting. Over the next ten days, Victor developed a concept that focused on competitors who were not top achievers but who were treated like stars by their community. He shared his idea with his friend with the production company, someone with whom he'd been working with over ten years and "who I totally trusted." Victor relied on his friend's assurances that he would protect Victor's legal rights as a creator. He admitted, "That's been my big problem... I haven't protected myself as well as I should have." Just before Victor's pitch, the venue executive announced that she didn't want any competition stories. Victor's friend was ready to give up, but Victor chose to argue passionately for his concept. "We were one of the 60 productions they were considering... the chances of this getting made were infinitesimal" and yet Victor's pitch was accepted. It was two years before the production was made and then Victor got "shunted... pushed aside by somebody who I trusted" without credit as co-creator. Victor chose to fight until he received the professional credit he was due.

Victor continued to seek opportunities but struggled with making the most of his community. Born on the east coast and raised by adoptive parents he noted, "I grew up in the eastern city. I have an insane amount of friends here... It's my community... I speak their lingo and I've won awards in their community." And yet he had fewer opportunities than locals because "you're completely a minority." Although the central city was a more expensive place to live, and the quality of life was less appealing, Victor sought opportunities there by speaking to local agents and attending networking events. He liked some people he worked with but his experiences in the advanced production school, working on the competitors story, talking with agents, and networking with other theatrical producers made him feel that "relationships are harder to foster" because people are "more status conscious." Although there was more opportunity, Victor felt the industry was "not about substance. It's more about the surface," and "more of a product" with "more grandstanding." Victor noted that, "I really want to find a place

where... I like the people I'm working with... instead of being in a situation where I have to protect myself the whole time, that I actually feel like it's something where we can share."

During another period of unemployment, Victor was invited to perform an interview gig. A person familiar with his skills in interviewing famous people had recommended him for the task. The gig related to a documentary being made in the city where a celebrity had lived. A relative of the celebrity was producing a story about them and wanted to be interviewed for it. Victor joined the in-progress production and quickly realized that the production lacked a story structure and was treating its subject as an "icon" who was talked about by other celebrities who did not really know them. Victor pitched an alternative vision that would examine the celebrity "as a human being from somebody who knew them up close," the relative, celebrating a life according to shared cultural traditions, so "you were getting this really intimate experience of who this celebrity was." Victor had taken a similar approach for a story about a business, where he interviewed the partners as if they were a family who had "lived like brothers." As Victor "got to know" the producer more he "started to believe that we were doing something more" than the original interviewing gig. "I became more emotionally involved." The producer accepted Victor's alternative vision and asked Victor to take on the broader role of "fixing" the story. Not having other work, Victor accepted the condition that he would be paid but not have a signed contract or receive credit for his work. He admitted, "I didn't protect myself contractually and that's happened to me a couple of times in my career" because "I just kind of assumed people are going to be fair." Victor "worked crazy hours" of 16-hour days, six days per week to restructure the story over two months. To help with reworking the story, Victor brought in a colleague he knew from previous projects. When Victor finished the rework, he was "shunted out" of the project and the team tried to avoid paying for his work. Victor said, "I was surprised but I wasn't gutted." He used his record of their emails to fight for full payment. He also proved to the venue sponsoring the production that he had "substantially changed the story for the better" which resulted in recommendations for opportunities in the central city.

At the time of the interview, Victor had navigated the challenges of that dispute, as well as news that his mother overseas had fallen ill. He found himself ready for a change when his friends invited him on a trip to the east coast for a break. One of his friends said, "Hey, let's find your ancestors." Victor's genealogy had been "on the back burner in life for years" and his mother's illness "had some small effect" on his "jump into doing a search for my family." The trip became "like a quest" where they looked on websites and visited institutions to get family records and "it started to become real." He met generous locals who were willing to help him with his search. Victor found that people were also generous in sharing family stories, and he could see who they were and why they had made their life choices. The east-coast location had a small population but had experienced tremendous upheaval in migration where "there's lots of people looking for their families" on social media. Victor decided to pitch a production based on the migration issue as part of a "reverse midlife crisis" where exploring his roots would be "doubling down to commit to my life even more... and not shy away from what could be a potentially difficult experience." It was his first time "making a production about me, where I'm a driving force of this experience." One reason for his passion for theatrical productions was "provoking and promoting empathy," something that is "needed in everybody's world." He felt that "people are surprisingly beautiful" in their lives and "you can kind of polish that so people can see it" and he noted, "that's what I've always tried to do." For instance, he felt that families that made tough migration decisions would be "really generous" if they shared their experiences so that "you're going underneath people's secrets and you're starting to understand who these

people are, why they've made choices." He noted "I kind of go on gut feelings on most things... I had a feeling it's going to be a beautiful story and a beautiful thing to share." He explained, "If you experience things in your life that in any way can help other people, then you should share." A government agency existed that funded theatrical productions, so after his preliminary research, Victor dedicated 40 days to writing a story outline with sample multimedia to pitch to the agency. Based on Victor's demo, the government agency allocated initial funding for his next phase. Victor said, "When I've been presented with opportunity, most of the time I can seize it." Additionally, long-lost relatives heard about his project and contacted him. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic meant he wasn't able to go back. Instead, at the time of the interview Victor was reflecting on his lack of stability in the industry, and wishing to explore new career options.

Completer Case: Susan

Victor was paired with Susan, a 54-year-old White female Completer living in an eastern city in Canada. She received my recruiting poster through a computer listserv (a subscription service dedicated to a particular topic that receives emails from members and then distributes them to all members) dedicated to her Master's discipline of organizational development.

Narrative of Susan's Career Pathway. Susan's career began in sales and customer service. By the time of the interview, she was a change management consultant and workshop facilitator. In this section, I describe her career pathway chronologically in terms of major life events (such as entering or exiting a work or personal relationship) and their individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences.

It's who you are, it's about empathy, it's about being there for people.

During her undergraduate study, Susan was a "party animal" who didn't study hard. She'd been accepted into a political science major but later described it as "kind of a useless degree" because "in terms of my career it didn't help me at all."

After university, Susan found work at a brewery in her community. She joked, "They didn't know what to do with people who graduated political science, so they send us all to work in sales jobs and customer service." She worked full-time in customer service and then inside sales, which meant selling products by phone from an office location. After seven years, "I left there on a package and started my first consulting job."

Susan had worked full-time until her youngest child was three years old. She was married to a "workaholic" who was never home for supper during the week. He provided financial support to the household, but Susan had full responsibility for childcare. She "knew how I wanted to raise my children." She prioritized being at home so her children could "be at home and play outside after school" rather than being put into after-school programs. As a result, "I put my career aspirations on hold" but "I always have some experience going... I needed some stimulation... not just playing with Legos and Thomas the Train." As a result, "because I had been working in a call centre, I started doing consulting work... on quality control and training people... how to talk to people in call centres." Susan noted, "I always created jobs for myself." She "found opportunities and took advantage of opportunities when they came" and relied on word-of-mouth referrals by organizations that benefitted from her work.

When Susan separated from her husband, she had young teen boys to care for and realized, "I don't have someone supporting me anymore. I need to get my shit together."

However, she wanted work that provided flexible hours and work location to allow her to prioritize her children and support their after-school sports engagements and travelling for competitions. Susan happened to live in the same neighbourhood as the director of an anxiety disorders non-profit organization. She had previously met the director at a dinner, and learned the director was moving away and a replacement was needed. The job paid thirty hours per week and relied on phone work. Susan could work from home or from hotel rooms when she travelled for her boy's sports competitions. People who knew her and the director connected them, and the past director recommended Susan to the board to replace her. As the new executive director, Susan used her phone skills to take calls from the public and "advise people where to go." She said, "I got to hear a lot about people calling about anxiety at work and different situations where they didn't know how to handle it." She explained, "sometimes that's all people need to do, is be able to articulate what's really going on in their life... it's just listening and sometimes making some recommendations, and I like doing that." She enjoyed the job but acknowledged that "not-for-profit does not pay well."

To improve her income Susan was interested in returning to school "but I don't know what I want to study. I don't want to do an MBA because that's really not who I am. I needed to do something with people." A friend knew a career coach in the city who had completed a Master's in organizational development at a university there. The coach was also a good friend of a professor in the program. Susan met the coach for a chat over lunch where they discussed her interest in a new career working with people. The coach saw commonality between Susan's values and the Master's program he had taken. Initially, Susan's reaction was "if I don't understand the title, I don't think I should be doing the course" but the coach said, "no, no, it's all you... it's who you are, it's about empathy, it's about being there for people." Susan noted that the coach "brought me to another option, and that was what was really strong for me." At the university, acceptance to the Master's program depended on both the academic program, which focused on fit with its purposes, as well as the more generic school of graduate studies, which focused on undergraduate grades. The academic program accepted her, but her first application was rejected by graduate studies decision-makers "because of my grades... because I was a party animal when I was in university the first time around. It's like, are you kidding me?" However, Susan persisted because, "I knew that's what I really wanted. So, I reapplied the following year and met with the director of the program." During their meeting, the director of the program said, "you're exactly the right kind of candidate." However, Susan's second application was also rejected. The coach asked for the help of a friend who was a professor in the program. The professor approached the graduate studies decision-makers saying, "this is the kind of person we want here." As a result, Susan was finally accepted "at the last minute."

As part of the Master's program, Susan learned change management, where "I teach people how to play nice in the sandbox" in the role of "a translator between the employees and management," as well as organizational development, which she described as resolving conflicts, ensuring people are in the right jobs, and setting long-term goals for them. She noted that the first year of the Master's "is tearing us apart... making us do so much introspection" to avoid "trying to solve past situations through them." For instance, concerned that her own experiences of feeling unsupported by management would cause her to empathize too much with employees, she later focused her thesis on the topic of taking a balanced approach during change efforts. She noted that in the second year, "you build yourself back up" including a group project during the Summer, and a personal project and thesis. After three months of the first-year curriculum, Susan quit her nonprofit job due to the demands of school, saying "It was just too much with my kids at

home." She resumed working in the second year, part-time. For her group project, a local school board needed help developing resources. Working with the school board, parents and teachers, as well as her classmates and a practitioner from a change management firm, Susan helped develop workshops. The practitioner would become a friend and mentor. Completing the degree was not easy. Susan admitted, "I suffered from severe anxiety when I was doing my Master's degree. I invested everything I had financially to go back to school and it was like, this has to work because this is what's going to be my career." She chose to manage her anxiety by using a technique called "EFT tapping, where you tap on your meridians and... you release the bad stuff, and you affirm the positive stuff."

After graduation, she felt that she had "tons of work experience" and had even been doing work related to her degree "but just indirectly" and so "no one was going to hire me because I didn't have any experience... with a title of change management." She looked for ways to make connections and move forward. Reviewing the LinkedIn work-related site, she found blog posts from senior people in her industry. She read their posts, made comments, and requested brief chats for advice on her transition. She said, "one of the people that I met said, 'I met with you because no one's ever asked me to do this. So, I figured I need to meet this woman.'" They had a "great conversation and he actually introduced me to other people and gave me some pointers" to help her "focus and go get the extra stuff that I needed." Additionally, she found a non-profit in her community that offered 3-week workshops for over-40s professionals seeking work as well as job-coaching and twice-a-week networking. She engaged in the program as a client for four months doing networking and meeting with a coach, but was unable to get hired in her new field. However, she made a positive impression on the staff, and they offered her work as a coach. She accepted the role because she saw herself as a natural helper who likes to empower people.

Susan found that working at the coaching non-profit "was really good... when I could help people." However, "I was having a hard time balancing the empathy with the sympathy" and when her clients couldn't find work "it was touching too much of a chord" and "taking a toll on me." She explained, "often they were heads of families... some very highly qualified immigrants who could not find a job and it was tearing me apart." She said, "at one point it was just like, I can't do this anymore." When a change management opportunity arose, "I jumped ship, and I went there immediately."

During her Master's degree, Susan had done a class project with a woman who was a change management practitioner. The woman was in charge of a new project and needed help. A major airline with headquarters in the community was "changing their whole reservation system" and needed to manage the change as well as training. The community was francophone, but the airline also communicated with people in English-speaking jurisdictions. The project needed someone who was bilingual and could speak accent-free English to Americans. Susan qualified so her contact at the consulting firm contracted her and "really gave me my big break" into doing change management professionally. Susan's job was to talk to stakeholders in the organization before the change was implemented. Stakeholders were "the decision makers and the frontline people... who were potentially going to be using the new system." To help management learn "how to train people, when to train people, what kind of communications they need to feel secure" she would ask stakeholders, "What are you concerned about? What do we need to do to make you feel more secure going forward?" Susan found that "I get to speak to stakeholders in every department. So, I really get a sense of how an organization works. Sometimes more so than some of the employees," which meant she might be explaining the details of an organization

to its own people. At times, the decision-makers she reported to might dismiss the concerns of line-level employees, or lack the ability to dedicate resources to "do things properly." However, she said, "I'm curious by nature so it's fun," and "I have an ability to make people feel very comfortable." She said, "When I was going interviews... people would open up and I just would love the work that I was doing and I'd leave happy, I would say 95% of the time." For the remaining 5% of time she said, "I'd be overwhelmed when they would try to get me to understand some of the technology... and that would make me crazy." Susan also experienced self doubts. She explained, "I had a bit of the imposter syndrome... can I really do this... who do I think I am?" To handle her challenges, Susan used several strategies. First, she used her EFT tapping technique to handle anxiety. Second, she credited perseverance, admitting "there might have been some tears, there may have been a couple glasses of wine at the end of the day, but I got through it somehow." Third, she engaged her boss for help. She explained, "There's one thing to learn the theory and there's a whole other thing to apply it in a real-world setting... it was honestly like a whole education in itself to work with this woman." For instance, she learned "how to prioritize, how to present information in a more concrete way." Susan noted, "I worked as part of a small team, and we became very close." As a result, "the person who hired me was a big ally... having to separate friendship from her being my boss... we had to find a balance." They resorted to categorizing their interactions such as, "just to say like, I need to speak to you as my friend, and I need to speak to you as my boss. And she would do the same thing with me."

Additional opportunities arose in her community, where headquarters for a large security company and a commuter transportation company's department for handicapped clients. Both organizations were implementing major changes that affected employees and created anxiety. For instance, one client was merging groups with different processes, and implementing a new software system to manage client reservations. Once again, the opportunities had language requirements. The security company was headquartered in a francophone province, but also had people in English-speaking provinces in Ontario and the prairies. The commuter transportation company was completely francophone. The same friend who had given Susan her first job in change management was handling these new projects and she contracted Susan's services again. Susan felt that she was developing a specialization in change management for transportation companies. Susan interviewed management to understand the project, then conducted lengthy interviews with frontline workers to understand their anxieties and tensions. She presented common themes to management as "a portrait... this is what's going on. This is about they're worried about." She would "identify all the major risks" such as gaps in the organization's capability to develop and deliver training for a new system in a timely fashion due to limited personnel. In turn, she helped management present difficult messages to employees, such as acknowledging employee concerns and offering "quick wins" of issues they could solve, but also explaining why some concerns could not be addressed. Although Susan was bilingual, she admitted that the commuter gig was "the first time that I've worked solely in French in about 25 years." She noted, "the French are so strict with their French. God, I was so stressed about using the proper vocabulary... only to find out that in business these perfectly Francophone people... use English terms all the time." In addition to language, Susan faced other challenges, such as taking employee messages to management who "just doesn't want to hear it" and "forget what it was like to be at the bottom." She noted, "I saw some really bad treatment to the point where I was saying to the VP, your employees are being bullied." Additionally, "a lot of organizations, particularly a not-for-profit, don't have the funds... so you're limited as to what you can do." and sometimes "they don't bring us in at the right moment... at the very beginning... often we get

called in sort of when the shit hits the fan." Once again, Susan relied on her ally for help: "the VP that I was working for was fantastic." Despite her challenges, the work aligned with her values. Reflecting on her lengthy interviews with stakeholders, she said, "I'm just a natural helper... I'm everyone's go-to person in life... I like to empower people... to have someone just listen."

As a contractor, Susan relied on her network to generate work opportunities. Part of her network was a local hairdresser that Susan had used for babysitting and visited regularly for hairdressing. The hairdresser knew Susan's career change story and realized that another of her hairdressing clients could use Susan's services. She decided to "hook the two of you up" even though "she gets nothing out of that." Susan explained it as an example of networking that was "not always about what I can get but also about what I can give." When nothing came from the hairdresser's initial attempt, she talked to her other client again and almost a year later Susan secured a contract from the connection. Unfortunately, Susan found herself isolated from the stakeholders, unable to do her work properly due to lack of interaction with affected employees. As a result, she avoided further work from that source.

Susan also sourced work from an employee assistance organization on an as-needed basis. She facilitated workshops on managing anxiety, depression and mental health, issues she had addressed previously as the director of a non-profit. Once again, her bilingualism was an asset because the organization needed to provide English and French workshops on the same day, and it was cheaper to hire one bilingual facilitator rather than a facilitator for each language. She was provided with pre-existing workshop materials that could make her task difficult. For instance, she noted, "I don't write this stuff, they send me the slide thing and whatever. And I'm in a room with factory workers... strong personalities... and I'm talking about doing a happiness album... losing them completely." As a result, she needed to be able to "read a room and change quickly." She sought connection with her audiences by drawing on her varied life and work experiences: "I've been the employee, I've been a manager and a boss, so I can really look at things with different lenses." Additionally, "I have an incredibly good sense of humour and I tend to bring a message sometimes using humour, using myself to... de-dramatize a situation." Her personal experiences helped her "make it very human, very real for them" by sharing that "I suffered from depression and anxiety" or by having "a laugh about some stupid things that I've done." She described the impact of her work in terms of the audience coming up to hug her and express how they related to her. Susan noted the value of "being a woman talking to other women... sometimes women don't feel heard."

In terms of other sources of work, Susan noted the value of social networking: "It's often people who come to me, recruiters who come to me after reading my LinkedIn profile." Since she lives in a francophone province, her fluent bilingualism was "a key component in my career." However, she admitted, "My own personal social network is not incredibly helpful, other than one person who has actually given me lots of work." Working several change management gigs with her friend and ally had resulted in Susan working closely with her friend's consulting firm. At the time of the interview, she'd been assisting a director of that firm with pitching to a new client, and after the debrief he wanted to know "how you're doing and how you're enjoying getting to know the firm?" and whether she would join his team permanently. He encouraged her to apply for a position and her application was supported by her friend and mentor. The gigs Susan had worked on were building a specialization. Transportation companies in air travel, airline security, commuter rail and handicapped transportation were facing major changes that affected their employees and "it's becoming my niche. So, I would like to continue so that I can

really say... my niche market is transportation." However, Susan was unsure about joining the firm because she valued her independence. She noted:

I like to control who I'm working with in terms of clients. What kind of work that I'm doing is important to me also. Being able to set my own schedule is very important to me. And having a good quality of life.

For instance, Susan wanted to avoid clients that "go against my values" such as the tobacco industry, or the pornography business that was "apparently super-successful and a great place to work, but I have no desire to work there." She also wanted to work in a certain way: "it's important for me to be hands-on with the stakeholders... have some control in terms of how I get to speak to people... make them feel comfortable so that they can talk easily." She explained, "it's a gift to be able to be neutral in front of someone and say, yeah you can tell me anything... to be empathetic is giving power back to someone."

Interaction Case: Victor, Susan and a Facilitator

I met with Victor and Susan in a three-way Zoom meeting in early August, 2020 for a Seeker-Completer interview. The Seeker-Completer interview represented the kind of discussion a Seeker could use to engage people that interested him and explore his options for career transition. His previous Seeker interview and training meeting with me had exposed him to the interview style and helpful active listening techniques.

I hosted from an apartment in Toronto, and Victor and Susan joined from their respective homes in eastern cities. The meeting lasted about one hour and 45 minutes and resulted in two case studies: first, the Completer's case study reported earlier in this chapter focused on the work and life events Susan shared during the meeting; second, this case study focuses on process by reporting the interactions of participants.

To simplify the case and focus on the participants, my basic questions to elicit the Completer's jobs, career choices, and the influences that guided those choices are not reported. Instead, reported interactions focus on times when (a) one participant referred to another or asked a question of the other; (b) a participant referred to the meeting or its process; (c) I prompted the Seeker to ask a question; or (d) I compared or contrasted participants based on their stories, or offered a synthesis for them to react to. To help the reader situate the interactions in terms of the overall interview and the kinds of events and words that prompted interactions, each interaction is reported in terms of the stories shared just prior to the interaction, and then the interaction itself with illustrative quotes from the participants.

Interaction 1: I'm a Theatrical Producer. At the beginning of the interview Victor told Susan, "I don't actually know anything about what you do. I'm really looking forward to learning about that... I'm a theatrical producer." Victor provided a list of his professional accomplishments. He referred to prominent venues and several recognizable public figures he'd worked with, as well as his award-winning status. He did not share content we'd explored during his Seeker interview, his career dilemma, or any interest in transition. At the end of his introduction, Susan simply responded, "Okay."

Interaction 2: What Are Your Tasks? Following introductions, I explained that Victor and Susan were matched because they had expressed professional interest in having empathy for people, and learning about them through interviews. I explained how the meeting would work

and encouraged Victor to play an active role. Susan described her current situation as an independent consultant seeking a new contract. She relied on networking and LinkedIn, as well as helpful allies at a consulting firm who engaged her for work and wanted her to join their firm. She was unsure whether she wanted to surrender her independence and her control over choosing clients, kinds of work, and maintaining her quality of life. She noted her emerging specialization of transportation based on available work, and gave examples of transportation clients. However, up to this moment, she had not described her actual job although I was familiar with her Master's program.

I prompted Victor to "ask a follow-up or if something intrigues you." Victor responded, "we keep using the word consultants... what are you consulting? ... What are your tasks?" When Susan explained that she worked in "change management and organizational development," Victor requested "just kind of an operational definition." Susan described the kinds of work she did as a consultant. Victor followed up with a request for "a specific example of something... which would give me a really good sense of what this change management is." Susan responded with a story about a transportation client changing its reservation software and needing to understand its employees' concerns and training needs. Victor made further requests for details, such as the size of the organization, and how many needed to be trained to cope with the planned changes.

Interaction 3: Now I Totally Understand. Victor noted, "Now I totally understand where empathy comes into it... you're interviewing both sides. So how do you then compile that information so that both sides feel like they've been actively heard?" Susan described her process of finding themes in her interview data, presenting them to management, and helping management respond to their employees. Victor asked how many people she would interview, how long her interviews were, and again asked, "how do you compile it all into the metrics, so that management understands?" Susan explained that she reported common and frequent patterns, and prioritized items that might be a "quick win" with employees "so they'll be patient to get the rest." Victor responded, "Mm hmm."

Interaction 4: It's Actually Similar To... Jobs I've Done. Susan described her inclination to help people, and her past work with an anxiety disorders nonprofit. She described getting her nonprofit job through a neighbourhood connection, and how the job gave her flexibility in where she worked because she travelled with her kids for competitive sports. She described putting her career on hold to raise her children, while still seeking work to keep stimulated, then having to find a career when she was divorced. She noted how she met a career coach who was a friend of a friend, and who recognized her empathy for others and connected her with the Master's program he had done. She described networking with professors in the program, and getting their help when her applications were rejected several times due to her undergraduate grades.

I prompted Victor to consider how Susan's persistence in applying to the Master's was similar to Victor's repeated efforts to achieve certain goals in his career story. I then prompted Victor to ask questions. Victor again asked for details such as, "What did you do your undergrad in?" and "When did you do your Masters?" Susan answered and said that her Master's "became a big career shift for me into change management." Victor responded "Yeah, I didn't even know change management existed." Susan said, "Many people don't. And then when I explain it... they always say we need that." Victor followed-up, "I totally understand. That's why I was asking you the kind of metrics because it's actually similar to some of the jobs I've done... interviewing

people... thematically grouping it, presenting it back to people in an argument." Susan responded, "And trying to keep your own emotions out of it... that's the big part of the training."

Interaction 5: Were You Able to Work? Susan described the problem of emotions affecting interviews, her own challenges in not overly-empathizing with clients, and how her Master's addressed the issue. Victor shifted topics by asking "Were you able to work while you were doing your Master's?" Susan described her efforts to balance studying, work, and childcare. Victor then clarified the timing of her non-profit jobs during her Master's.

Interaction 6: How Did That Opportunity Come About? Susan described the problems of lacking experience in her new area and how she worked as a career coach at a non-profit trying to help other people get jobs until she received an opportunity to do change management. Victor asked, "How did that opportunity come about?" Susan explained that it came from a previous connection with the executive in charge when she did a project for her Master's. Victor then shifted back to her Master's: "You said the second year, you guys were focusing more, so it was less intensive but was it more project-based?" Susan explained that she had a Summer group project and then a thesis project, and explained the time commitment for classes. Victor followed up by asking "Your thesis... was it about change management?" Susan responded by explaining her thesis topic, which addressed the issue of over-empathizing with a particular group.

Interaction 7: What Was the Moment? Victor shifted back to the job opportunity at the major corporation and asked, "It's the first time... you're actually dealing with change management. What was the moment that you actually felt, okay this really does fit?" Susan explained that she enjoyed how people shared with her, and how it was fun to learn how organizations worked and then explain it to her clients.

Interaction 8: Now I Understand. Victor jumped back to the nature of Susan's work by confirming a definition for her use of the word *stakeholders*: "Essentially you're talking all the decision-makers." Susan corrected that it also included front-line workers who would be using the new reservation system being implemented. Victor confirmed, "You're part of the dialogue as the implementation takes place." Susan corrected that her work took place before implementation so that her employer would know how to train people for the implementation.

Interaction 9: Are There Any Negativities? Victor acknowledged her positive experiences in her new work and then asked, "Are there any negativities to you in the job that you're in now?" Susan explained several frustrations, such as management dismissing the concerns of their people, organizations lacking resources to address problems, or rules constraining what organizations can do. She provided an example of "really bad treatment" of employees that she had reported to her executive client. Victor asked, "This would be a little inflammatory... does it ever feel like... it's almost a token position or it's paying lip service to something that management doesn't really want?" Susan responded, "No... I cost too much" then explained that clients might lack funding, or might engage her after they were experiencing problems with an implementation, and it was too late to make changes.

Interaction 10: Three Main Ingredients...To Be Good At Your Job? Victor shifted to exploring her skillset: "You've talked about how all of the experiences you've had with interviewing people has a real impact in why you're good at your job but I'm assuming there's more to it... What would you say are the three main ingredients for you to be good at your job?" Susan responded by noting her varied work experiences as employee, manager and boss, her

ability to empathize as a woman, and her use of humour when delivering a message. She provided an example of a mental health workshop and how she incorporated stories of her own vulnerabilities to relate to attendees.

Interaction 11: Does That... Mean There's A Gig? I asked Susan to bridge the gap between her political science undergraduate degree and her nonprofit work. Susan described her work in customer service and sales at a beer company until she was laid off and started consulting on improving training and quality at call centres through word-of-mouth contacts. Victor again sought clarity by asking, "Consulting... I hear this all the time... does that just basically mean there's a gig?" Susan confirmed that consultants were "an external pair of hands" brought in to examine organizations.

Interaction 12: Anxiety... What Got You Through That? Victor jumped back to Susan's first client after her Master's. He said, "Going from the Master's to [MAJOR CLIENT]. That's a huge jump. You stated that you've had... issues with anxiety... I'm wondering how big a hurdle that was... how you overcame that... what got you through that?" Susan explained her coping strategies as perseverance, EFT tapping and affirmations, and drinking wine at the end of the day. She explained that she had "severe anxiety" during her Master's because she had invested everything to make it work, and then she experienced 'imposter syndrome' during her first consulting job. Victor followed up by asking, "Did you have allies there?" Susan said, "I did" and described her boss as "a big ally" with whom she learned how to manage the dual relationships of employment and friendship.

Interaction 13: I Find That A Huge Impediment. Susan described the guidance she received from her boss, such as how to present information concretely, and how to manage language issues in her francophone city. Susan engaged Victor, saying "I don't know how much you know... the French are so strict with their French... God, I was so stressed out about using the proper vocabulary... in business." Victor responded, "I've worked in another language... won awards... and yet when I write an email, I feel like it's not at the level of my English email. So, I find that a huge impediment. So, I totally understand that." Susan agreed that she also wrote better English than French, despite being a francophone herself, "because I've worked so much in English... I think in English." Susan explained that she used software called Antidote to help her choose correct words, and Victor responded, "Yeah, I use Antidote for sure. Wow, cool."

Interaction 14: It Was All About Your Human Relationships. I offered a comparison of Susan and Victor: "You have very different industries... but you share the same values, you use the same techniques." In response, Susan focused on the empathy that she and Victor valued: "a lot of people want to be empathetic... one of the great things about our roles, [Victor] is that we can show the empathy... because we're neutral. That's sort of a gift.... giving power back to someone." Victor responded:

if I met you going to dinner, or you just gave a quick kind of bio of what you've done, it's... this and Master's and big words. But when you unpack, it's actually well, I was working with my friend. And she needed something. And her and I learned together. And I learned from her. And somebody I knew was a career coach... It was all about your human relationships. Which is like the first thing you said when this all started... *I'm networking*. It's all about networking... that's something I'd be super curious to hear about... what you see networking to be and what you think you've learned about networking in terms of what your skills are and how they bloomed?

Susan responded:

It's funny you say that because I'm actually designing a course on networking for a friend... I try to go into networking as, *'What can I do for someone else that will help them and that maybe eventually it'll come back to me?'*... You can't go in always expecting to get something... and I think that's where people think networking is taboo... that you're always asking for a favour... Networking is about a give-give. It's a win-win situation. And everyone we know... they know other people.

Susan provided the example of her hairdresser connecting her with another client, which resulted in a job. Susan said, "She gets nothing... other than making two clients happy. But that's also networking, bringing two people together who... would benefit from having a relationship." She referred to our meeting: "[Researcher], what you're doing is basically networking also. You're bringing two people together. Now we're in each other's networks. So, [Victor], if I meet someone who says, 'I need a theatrical producer,' I'll say, 'Hey, well, I was just speaking to a theatrical producer. Let me hook you up.'" Victor responded, "Mm hmm." Susan said, "Networking just creating opportunities and filling voids."

Interaction 15: I Find That Massive. Susan described the work she'd got through the hairdresser but noted that she hadn't liked the experience because she'd lacked contact with stakeholders. I prompted Victor for further questions. Victor asked, "Just the name of that career coach... that idea of somebody basically opening a map to you that you didn't even know existed... Maybe it's the way you described it, but it felt like it was a real eye-opening moment for you." Susan responded, "Yeah, oh, definitely" and then described her own work career coaching: "Sometimes we put ourselves in, like, this is where I'm supposed to be at this point in my life. And when someone can bring you to the point where you go, oh, there's this option that I wasn't even looking at... That was really strong for me." Victor responded, "Yeah, I find that massive in terms of, you'd been doing all these other things that weren't what you're doing now, and yet you're using all of the skills." Susan responded with an example of how she had coached a client who had been set on one career direction, but then shifted to something completely different: "She's like, 'I will never forget what you did for me, you made me see something that I was not able to see, I had such blinders on.' You want to find a coach who can ask the right questions. And again, it goes to the empathy." Victor responded, "It's like knowing a good financial advisor. So, you can have a good one. You can have a really bad one. And they can take you in different directions."

Interaction 16: Find The Right People Who Can Open Doors. Victor said he did not have any further questions. I then invited the participants to contrast the concepts of career coaching, mentoring, and information interviewing. I noted that the career coach Susan had met with had been more of a mentor than a coach, because instead of exploring options with her, he had matched her up to a program he had already done himself. I then contrasted mentorships and paid coaching relationships with exploratory conversations. I noted that Victor had used this group interview of Susan to explore transition questions such as working during her Master's, overcoming anxiety, and having allies at work, that were transferrable to any kind of change of career. I then prompted the participants for their reactions.

Susan responded:

I agree with you... Part of my process when I was looking for work was identifying people who had done the job at a different level... I reached out to a few senior people...

on LinkedIn... and said I would like 15 minutes or 20 minutes of your time. I'm changing careers. I need to know if I'm being realistic. What do I need to know during this transition time? ... One of the people that I met said, I met with you because no one's ever asked me to do this, so I figured I need to meet this woman. We sat down and had a great conversation and he introduced me to other people and gave me some pointers and really helped me.

Victor asked whether this was during her Master's, and Susan corrected that it was after graduation. Susan also described a second example where she had messaged the VP of human resources in a large company after reading their article on LinkedIn:

I said, thank you for posting this. I'm curious to know... how you're planning to use this in your own company, could we have coffee? And he's like, sure. So sometimes we have to get over ourselves and ask for help.... It doesn't need to be a career coach. You just need to find the right people who can open doors for you or just give you that little tidbit of advice.

Interaction 17: It Was An Easy Process For Me. I contrasted the freedom of information interviews where seekers can explore any issue that intrigues them, such as the questions Victor had chosen to ask, versus asking a single, biased person for advice on what to do. Victor said, "It's interesting." I asked if the participants had any comments about the meeting process. Susan focused on the questions and paraphrasing:

I didn't really come in with any expectations. I wasn't sure how it was going to unfold, and I thought it was an easy process for me... I liked your interventions where you were able to bring back and summarize what was said and then invite [Victor] to ask questions also. And [Victor] I think your questions were very good, also. So, I think it was a great experience for me. Thank you.

Interaction 18: Listen. I'll Try To Pick It Up. In response to my request for comments, Victor shared several experiences of processing ideas from the interview. First, he noted how he'd navigated unfamiliar vocabulary:

I really enjoyed hearing your story... when you started speaking, I was like, well, I don't know what that means, and I don't know what that means... I was like, well, listen. I'll try to pick it up. And then the more you spoke, the more I was like, well, I understand that we have this in common... we do these things that are similar.

I had previously offered that Victor and Susan both valued empathy in their work. In his second comment, Victor shared how he processed thoughts about empathy based on Susan's story of getting a job referral through her hairdresser:

it really comes back to exactly what you were saying about empathy... it's become a buzzword in business... But I think the way you're using it and just by the way you explained your hairdresser and the fact that she has no actual stake other than keeping clients happy... she still feels that she wants to bring people together. And I think that, if anything, is an example of people's empathy.

Third, Victor framed the willingness of industry executives to meet with Susan and help her as forms of self-interest:

Most people who are at that level are willing to engage with somebody who's engaged and who's active because they want to see what that person can bring or not bring to the institution, because they're seeing people a lot of the time, and not everybody has that same sort of motive.

Interaction 19: For Me, That's A Taboo Word. The last interaction of the interview arose from Victor's final comment about Susan's transition. He alluded to Susan's original work selling beer in call centres, then framed Susan's workshops and change management as other forms of selling:

The more you speak and the more I understood what you've done and how you created those opportunities for yourself-- the fact that you were a salesperson; that's then turned into the fact that you're giving conferences... you're always kind of selling; and then when you're going in, you're kind of selling back to management and the employees... But... the sales job that you're doing is more and more aligned with who you are personally, and with your own values, and what you want. So, it's almost like you're kind of burgeoning as you go through the experience.

Susan responded, "I think it's incredibly funny that you refer to me as someone who works in sales, because I always say, I hate sales. I think that's incredibly funny that... you're defining me as someone who sells themselves. So very funny." Victor responded, "I don't think sales is necessarily a negative thing... We're constantly bidding for something and trying to receive something... That's part of how we interact." Susan responded, "Yeah, I guess for me that's a taboo word." Victor said, "Right." Susan said, "But it's funny." After this interaction, the meeting ended.

Interaction 20: External Contact. Following the interview, Victor sent me a note seeking further connection:

I would be comfortable with [Susan] having my email. If you do speak with her again, please tell her that when I used the term "selling" - it was not in a negative connotation, but rather was meant in the most positive way. I think our two industries have different ways of seeing selling. I apologize if I offended, it was not my meaning at all, but rather was my synthesizing what she had said in a "story mode" and I meant it as an encouraging analysis.

I found her story to be inspiring, one that provides hope for me, and I appreciated her generosity in sharing it with us. I also thought it was astute for you to pair us. She's very accomplished in the way that she has created her achievements and I learnt a lot listening to her, and also saw a lot of similarities in the way that she works, what she does and what she values.

I forwarded the note to Susan who responded that she would "follow up" with Victor.

Survey Results From Meeting

This section presents the results of surveys used before and after the meeting with Victor and Susan to determine how the experience may have contributed to change. First, I present their future career autobiographies (FCA) and then their perceptions of the experience.

Future Career Autobiographies. Victor and Susan wrote descriptions of their future careers before and after their interactions.

Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Victor (First Pair). Seeker Victor wrote two pairs of future career autobiography (FCA): one pair before and after his Seeker interview, and one pair before and after his Seeker-Completer interview. Victor wrote the following before his Seeker interview:

I have had a storied career. I have always wanted to be a theatrical producer, from the time of 5 years old and arguably was successful at it, having built a career that sustained me until my mid forties. I would like to take the skills that I have learnt in the marketplace and work in a career that is able to make use of my creativity, organizational ability, autonomy and people skills. In five years, I would like to be using those skills for a company where I am respected and challenged. I also want to continue to grow while having the security of an entrenched job, as opposed to the precarity of the theatrical production industry.

Victor wrote the following after his Seeker interview:

I think that our conversation about the continuum and where my choices lie on the spectrum between humanistic principles and status and protection was incredibly eye opening. I think that I feel that I do not need to be make "all in" decisions. I also think that I will need to protect myself legally as the future continues. In five years I see myself living in a less polarizing fashion. I will make choices that take into consideration that continuum, and will ensure that the choices I make career wise fit with my values in terms of trusting, and respecting those I work with, while understanding that I need to protect myself legally as those that I work with are not thinking about my interests as much as I should be thinking of my interests. Ultimately, I will feel a much greater sense of security by thinking that way I believe which will translate in more peace with my decisions.

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Victor (First Pair). Victor's second FCA (160 words) was longer than the first (117 words), representing a 43-word or 37-percent increase. In both versions, Victor expressed a desire to be respected. However, his two FCAs were very different. His second FCA no longer mentioned his desire for a stable income or job, his need for challenge or growth, or his capabilities in creativity, organizational or people skills. His second FCA added a desire for mutual trust, but focused on decision-making. He described a desire to be less polarized in his decision-making, and less reliant on others to protect him. Instead, he could feel more secure in decision-making by seeking out the trust and respect he desired and taking steps to protect himself legally. Changes in the career influences in his first pair of FCAs are shown in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8
Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Victor (First Pair)

	FCA 1	FCA 2
Word Count	117	160
Individual	always wanted to be theatrical producer want creativity offer organizational, people skills	

Social	autonomous want work in company storied career arguably successful want respect	want mutual trust, respect
Environmental	dynamism - want challenge, growth	
Chance	sustained career until midlife desire income security desire entrenched job	
Decision-Making		less polarizing decision-making pursue trust, respect, self-protection feel more secure, at peace in decisions

Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Victor (Second Pair). Like the other participants, Victor also wrote a future career autobiography (FCA) before and after his Seeker-Completer interview. Victor wrote the following for his third FCA:

I am hoping that five years from now I am working with people who I respect and who respect me, and where there is a thriving and healthy work atmosphere. I look forward to working in an environment that is stable, productive, allows me to feel challenged and where I am stimulated. I look forward to be working in a manner where I feel I am legally protected in terms of receiving fair compensation monetarily and credit wise for my experience and for the work, and ideas that I continue to provide. I will be working in a job where I feel that I am solving problems, am involved in a job and with a team that has a degree of empathy. I want to work in a job that has some degree of creativity necessary as well as team dynamics that are harmonious.

Victor wrote the following for his fourth FCA:

I hope five years from now I will be engaged working in a job where I am challenged, where there is a good life/work balance, and where my skills are useful and respected. I see that I could traverse into the corporate world but am missing some training in terms of having a focused Masters. I would be in a job where I have protected myself legally, and where I am not confusing my values of empathy, and an empathetic workspace with the fact that the people I am working with ultimately have their best interests in mind and I need to protect myself in that regard. I would however be working with people who respect me and who I respect. I will be in a job that uses, and rewards my creativity and my people skills, while feeling that I am continuing to advance and make a positive impact.

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Victor (Second Pair). Victor's fourth FCA (151 words) was longer than the third (144 words), representing a 7-word or 5-percent increase. In both versions, Victor expressed hope, a desire to use creativity and experience mutual respect in a job. He sought a healthy atmosphere that was balanced and yet offered challenge. In each case he wanted his interests to be legally protected. His second FCA no longer mentioned specific items to protect, such as fair compensation or credit, and no longer described a harmonious team. He also no longer mentioned a desire for stability, productivity or a thriving workplace. His second FCA added a desire to make use of his people skills. He acknowledged a potential need for focused training. Additionally, he added a desire for continual

advancement and making a positive impact. Changes in the career influences in his second pair of FCAs are shown in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Victor (Second Pair)

	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
Words	144	151	7	
Influences				
Individual	5	4	-1	less about feelings and more about skills, freedom
Social	3	1	-2	removed needs for empathy and harmony in workplace
Environmental	1	1	0	shift from stable and productive to continuing to advance and make positive impact
Chance	1	2	1	expanded chance to include potential for working corporate and investigating new learning
Decision-making	1	3	2	more specific about seeking fit for his skills and considering applying them in corporate sphere with training

Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Susan. Completer Susan wrote a future career autobiography (FCA) before and after her Seeker-Completer interview. Susan wrote the following for her first FCA:

I presently work as an independent consultant but want to grow my business to a point where I can hire a small team of consultants. This would allow me to bid on more projects and diversify my client base. It would also allow me to generate income while I start my dream project of opening a center for women at crossroads in their life. It would be an "all-in-one" type of center that would include, therapists, life and career coaches, lawyers, accountants, women who serve as mentors. I would like to transition to working two days a week in each capacity.

Susan wrote the following for her second FCA:

I hope to continue to help people express themselves and be the best that they can be. I would like to collaborate with other change management and organizational development professionals, to learn from them and share my knowledge. This can be by growing my company and hiring collaborators or by joining an existing small to medium sized firm, where I can contribute more than just be a pair of hands. I still dream of having a center for women at crossroads, having lived through some pretty difficult times with little "affordable" support, I know how valuable this type of center could be to empower women.

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Susan. Susan's second FCA (105 words) was longer than the first (103 words), representing a 2-word or 2-percent increase. In both versions, Susan described her dream of operating a centre for women at a crossroads in life. Her second FCA no longer mentioned as many details about the women's centre. She excluded her desired work schedule, and her plan to generate income from a team of consultants to fund

the centre. Her description of her women's centre shifted from a list of professional services to an aspiration of providing affordable and empowering support for women. Her second FCA added specific actions she expected in her future work to help empower people, express themselves and be their best. She also added a willingness to join a firm of consultants, rather than only run her own. Her description of consultants shifted from being people she hired to generate income, to being people she could collaborate with, share with, and learn from. Changes in the career influences in her FCAs are shown in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10
Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Susan

	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
Words	103	105	2	
Influences				
Individual	6	5	-1	less about freedom to do dream public service project and more about options for career development
Social	1	3	2	shift from people needed for dream project to collaborations want to develop career
Environmental	1	1	0	maintains note that her dream project is needed
Chance	1	1	0	expanded chance to include potential for working in a firm
Decision-making	2	3	1	shift away from doing the dream project towards employing her skillset, developing her career knowledge with others through business growth or joining a firm

Perception Surveys. Victor completed a survey about his comfort with interviewing before and after his active listening training. Additionally, Victor and Susan completed surveys before and after their interactions.

Ratings for Active Listening Training. Victor rated himself at the highest score before and after data-gathering training, as shown in Table 4.11. With respect to changes, Victor stated, "I don't have anything that I would change."

Table 4.11
Self-ratings of Comfort With Data-Gathering Techniques Before and After Training

Participant	Rapport		Active Listening		Probing	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Victor73	5	5	5	5	5	5

Ratings for Transition Meetings. Victor rated his Seeker meeting, and Victor and Susan rated their Seeker-Completer meeting as shown in Table 4.12. For Victor overall scores were high. For his Seeker meeting, Victor's lowest scores were for the future career description and

career pathway. After the Seeker-Completer meeting, his confidence in gathering information from people decreased from five to four, and his appreciation of the tools increased by one point each. The reduction in confidence may relate to how Susan reacted negatively to his calling her a "sales" person. For Susan after the Seeker-Completer meeting, she provided the lowest rating for all items except for understandability and satisfaction, which she rated highly, and interaction and collaboration, which she rated three out of five. However, based on her subsequent comments about plans, the low ratings may relate to her intention to "continue doing what I've already [been] doing" without being affected by the meeting.

Table 4.12*Participant Perceptions of Meetings*

Meeting Type	Seeker	Seeker-Completer
Participant ID	Victor	Victor Susan
Status	Seeker	Seeker Completer
Understandable and satisfying?	5	5 4
Addressed the complex influences in your life?	5	5 1
Supported interaction and collaboration?	5	5 3
Changed how you FEEL about career and transition?	5	5 1
Changed how you THINK about career and transition?	5	5 1
Helped you develop SKILLS in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	5	5 1
Helped you develop CONFIDENCE in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	5	4 1
Affected your likelihood of talking to people in your community about career transition?	4	4 1
Future Career Description	3	4 1
Life-Career Timeline	4	5 1
Career Pathway	3	4 1

Ratings were based on the following scale: (1) LOW - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5) HIGH.

Suggestions After Transition Meetings. After his Seeker meeting, Victor offered suggestions:

I don't know if I would change anything - I think I engaged in a very useful 2 hours. I would like to brainstorm types of careers that I could transition to especially after gleaning the insight I have. That would be a bonus - to be given the tools to see what types of careers you could be exploring that would fit the criteria that you and the instructor have garnered together.

After the Seeker-Completer meeting, Victor suggested:

I am not sure what I would change. The process, though empowering and enriching, also provided some normal anxiety as you are faced with some of your gaps in knowledge concerning career transition. However any change, also presents challenges. I think the process, only informs you more, and in that respect is incredibly positive.

For Susan, after the Seeker-Completer meeting she suggested, "Getting a chance to ask the Seeker questions on how he finds projects because I'm curious to know if it differs from one industry to the next."

Plans After Transition Meetings. After his Seeker meeting, Victor wrote about his plans:

In the next 3-5 weeks, I will continue to speak to others about their careers but will also be looking at job opportunities in the paper with as viewed through the continuum that [Researcher] offered up in the meeting.

After the Seeker-Completer meeting, Victor wrote more about his plans:

I think I am going to start looking into what further education, might be able to help me use my skill sets in a way that will work and fit in the job landscape of the next few years. I am aware that there is a vast landscape that I was not aware about. I think there is a whole mindset that I only now feel I am being introduced to.

For Susan, after the Seeker-Completer meeting she wrote about her plans:

I think that I am always transitioning in my career, every project and experience brings me to a new level and allows me to develop new or better tools to do my work. I will continue doing what I've already being doing, which is to have open discussions with people in my network, and increasing my network.

Surprises After Transition Meetings. After his Seeker meeting, Victor wrote about his surprise:

It surprised me that in 2 hours you were able to hone in on very astute patterns of my job behaviour, and I thought the observations and analysis that you made from them were sound.

After the Seeker-Completer meeting, Victor wrote more about surprise:

My surprises me the most was how myself and my [Completer] (who when she began speaking was saying things I was not clear on their meanings), turned out to have very, very similar skills, and methods of thinking and working and her job was not that difficult for me to imagine myself undertaking. I also feel that I was also able to look at my personal trajectory, in a way that was less about the narratives I had told myself - but more the environmental, social and psychological reason I made decisions in the past, which I think strengthens my agency. I found this experience to be incredibly valuable, and a push from maybe some ideas that I had that were attributing to some stagnancy.

Additionally, Victor had provided a comment on the overall experience:

I found the experience very helpful and informative. It was fascinating to look at things in a completely different perspective then how I have trained myself to look at the world. Less narrative based and more systems based. I also found the idea of providing

people with agency via the way that they look at chance also refreshing. There is not just a story model but one that is based on environment, and where you are at the moment of your experience and those elements are reflective in our decision making. I thought the pairing between myself and [Susan] was apt and helpful. She was fascinating in that she had similar life skills and yet was doing a job that I had never heard of yet change management was a translation for me in the corporate world of skills that I already possess. I found the experience enriching and empowering.

For Susan, after the Seeker-Completer meeting she wrote about her surprise: "What surprised me was my reaction to be referred to as someone who is a 'sales' person!"

Pairing Three: The Mindful Counsellors

This pairing presents the case studies of Leonard and Helen who shared an interest in mindfulness and guiding people in life and career. Each participant experienced a dissatisfaction with an established but intense career that prompted them to seek career transition. First, I present Leonard's career pathway. Second, I present Helen's pathway including a series of transitions. Third, I report how Leonard, Helen and I interacted during their group interview.

Seeker Case: Leonard

Leonard was a 37-year-old White male Seeker living in an eastern city in Canada. He received my recruiting poster through a computer listserv (a subscription service dedicated to a particular topic that receives emails from members and then distributes them to all members) dedicated to his Master's discipline of organizational development.

Narrative of Leonard's Career Pathway. Leonard's career began as a researcher in science. By the time of the interview, he was a professional life coach. In this section, I describe his career pathway chronologically in terms of major life events (such as entering or exiting a work or personal relationship) and their individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences.

When nineteen-year-old Leonard considered his choice of university in the European country where he'd grown up, "I had this interest, curiosity and probably skill around inquiring into human nature." He was interested in both humanistic and scientific approaches but felt a preference for a scientific approach based on "reliability, predictability, hard-coded realities as opposed to something that was just blah-blah-blah." Leonard noted, "the most important influences were my parents." His mother was a psychiatrist who focused on helping people with their relationships, and was a "great listener, a great coach." His father was a medical researcher who focused on scientific research but was also someone who practised yoga, meditation and breathing practices. In a city near his community, he had the choice of two universities, one strong in social sciences, and the other strong in science but with social science programs that "were really, really poor programs" focused on marketing psychology. Leonard's application to the humanistic university was rejected, but the science-focused university accepted him, and he said, "you could call that just random or fate." Leonard pursued cognitive science because he was "interested in figuring out people" and this was the option with the most "rigour" at the university where he was accepted. He offered a "cartoonish" explanation that "I was trying to inquire into the topics of my mother...using the repertoire of my father."

After completing his Ph.D., Leonard sought work as an academic researcher in cognitive science, which excludes the study of proteins or brains. In an eastern city in Canada there were

multiple universities with opportunities for post-doctoral research in cognitive science. Leonard was accepted in a postdoctoral position at one university, and subsequently for part-time postdoctoral work at a second university. The laboratories had "good energy" and friendships. While conducting research, Leonard attempted to integrate his interests in music, movement and mindfulness. However, the culture of his discipline focused on using cognitive processing to improve understanding of science, which contrasted with his interests in the role of the human body.

Several months after starting his postdoctoral work, Leonard met his girlfriend, and they would be together for seven years by the time of his interview. She was a college teacher in a well-paid and stable job. Despite feelings "screaming she was not the right person" due to her being older, similar to a past failed relationship, Leonard chose to "trust his gut" and pursue a relationship. His girlfriend happened to be taking a music therapy workshop, and talked frequently about her teacher making Leonard wonder, "Should I be jealous of this guy?" The workshop was offered in his community and open to Leonard's participation, so he decided to check the man out by attending. When he met the music therapy teacher, he found him "very inspiring." The relationship the teacher had with his body was fascinating and "bang, blew my mind... this is what I'm actually interested in," and so he pursued a music therapy certification.

Leonard explored other mind-body explorations based on personal connections. For instance, in a conversation with his psychiatrist mother he learned that "my mom at the time was doing this mindfulness-based stress-reduction course." Leonard asked about the course and decided to meet the mindfulness practitioner she was working with. Leonard said, "I just meet him and bang, oh wow... I want to do the course with him," which was available to his participation. He later found a need "to do some self-work" and took several referrals from his mindfulness instructor. When he moved to Canada for his postdoctoral work, "I'm here on my own, I'm looking for a yoga studio. Completely by chance, I end up in this yoga studio in the middle of nowhere. I met this guy and we became friends, and he ended up being a major influence on my life." Leonard reflected on his experiences: "some kind of introduction happens and there is quickly a strong sense of, 'you've got something that I need to develop, I need to absorb, I want to be close to, and that I need doing.'"

In contrast, Leonard's daily experience of the science lab left him "increasingly disconnected... the person who was going to work in the lab was not me, and there was no room for me to be who I really am." The feeling was "devastating" and "my own road toward the burnout experience... this feels completely artificial, useless, hopeless." Leonard acknowledged that in his lab experiences "I always ended up in places where there was a lot of good energy and friendships." However, "in a research environment... the whole system... has some real elements of toxicity" because researchers "get confused by the role of emotions in what we do." He explained, "we have this hidden imperative of being objective and being detached" by using the "scientific method... very clear procedures and steps." However, "we end up making somehow, sometimes very unscientific and unsound decisions" because "what really matters is, is this going to be publishable?" Choices may actually focus on "maximizing your chances of academic success" such publications, funding and tenure rather than "genuine discovery." Leonard explained, "there are usually hundreds and hundreds of hours of work and failed attempts... we end up with this immense charge about trying to have some kind of meaning for us, all this work... not just be wasted." Regardless of the labour used, findings from research might not be publishable, articles might not be accepted or read widely, and might have little benefit to

readers. The ultimate goal was to produce knowledge "at the level of people understanding something in a slightly different way" by referring to "an electronic piece of information." In the science lab, "self and others and what life is about-- discoveries are not of that sort." In contrast, Leonard described people from his humanistic explorations as having "a certain combination of lightness and depth... a way of just being in their body... a certain way of helping me and others come to new ways of seeing, feeling and taking action." He noted, "It was puzzling... I am the one doing research, however... these people actually seem to make the real discoveries... that end up changing the way I think I feel, changing the way I do things in the world, changing the way I approach others." Leonard accepted that research to improve understanding was "very useful" but noted that understanding mindfulness "got my foot in the door" but "what actually changed my life... was spending time with a wonderful and well-trained teacher... the impact that I experienced on myself on the receiving end... shows me also the impact that I want to have." He realized that "what I needed to do was not so much about doing research on the topic I was most fascinated about but rather something else." He explained that a mindfulness-based practice "is a qualitatively different experience, which is much more direct, it is much more embodied" because he can be "right there and then, helping someone who is sitting right in front of me."

During this period, Leonard's girlfriend happened to be doing a Master's program in organizational development. She'd discuss her experiences "and I got curious about her. And beside that, an increasing number of friends that I was meeting, and people that I was hanging out with had done that program." The program was offered by a local university and included organizational development and coaching elements. When a teacher in the program offered a "social activation" incubator event in the city, Leonard attended and decided that the program "seemed to fit my perception of what I needed to do and wanted to do." His girlfriend offered "unconditional support and encouragement and optimism" for his new direction. Leonard entered the Master's and during the first year he continued his science post-doctoral work, "publishing the last pieces of research that were still hanging." He described the Master's as "a mixed experience." He explained, "the emphasis is a little bit more on the personal development and on the academic side." Although it was "great from the self, personal-development side... it had very little job-related content" such that he was "pretty much like anybody else who came out of this program, not really knowing what this looks like as a career."

During and after his Master's, Leonard conducted "exploration in a number of directions." He tried "facilitation experiences" and "designed a number of workshops or I worked with others." He said, "I managed to make some income." However, he had no clue what "real work" in the industry looked like and he felt "a certain sense of incompetence... because I didn't know what to do with all these ideas and theories." Although his girlfriend completed the program, she did not enter the industry. Instead, she worked as a CEGEP teacher (a hybrid of senior high school and junior college) and "is every day bringing the program into her teaching." Leonard "tried to get some organizational development-related gigs with companies that seemed to be recruiting" however, "it was interesting and informative and none of it was particularly successful." He said, "I had a lot of trouble getting any opportunity." He explained, "people seemed to think of me as someone who doesn't know anything about that world because I have a very different background" unlike his classmates who "had a previous career in something that looks like... human resources, for example, or community development or social justice... a more logical progression, and then [they] get hired because they have this experience plus their shiny new Master." In contrast, Leonard described himself as having a "Shiny Master and it was shining on top of nothing."

Although Leonard lacked experience in organizational development, life coaching was something he had, "on the hobby side, done alongside my professional career" during "weekends or... whenever I have extra time or energy... or when people needed help." He was attracted to coaching because it related to his interests in mindfulness and music therapy. He said, "if you look at my CV, it looks like 'Oh wow, there has been this kind of big discontinuity'" however, "as my research career was progressing... the interest for these other kind of activities... just kept growing... Those were actually the things that I had the greatest interest, energy, feeling of capacity." Leonard had taken a coaching course during his Master's. He'd found the course exciting "but it wasn't a coaching training, it was more of an introduction." Leonard decided that he wanted a more specialized program that focused on "professional coaching" that was "systematic, informed by theory and best practices, and hopefully it has some kind of somewhat predictable outcome for my clients, although of course there is by the nature of the job itself... a lot of discovery and a lot of unknown." Since he lived in a Francophone community, "I wanted to do a program that was in French... to overcome this perceived inability to do the work in French." To get advice about choosing a program, Leonard consulted a professor from his Master's with whom he'd learned and done research on coaching, as well as "a senior coach" that Leonard had worked with and come to respect while exploring career options. The coach was part of a program that met Leonard's criteria and led "to a coaching certification, all the bells and whistles." The teacher helped Leonard get a discount on fees, resulting in "a perfect storm." The opportunity was "just the right fit, it happened at the right dates." Leonard "trusted my gut" and decided that "timing was actually more important than picking the perfect program" despite the "pretty significant \$9,000 investment." Leonard's girlfriend remained supportive during his additional training: "we are playing this as a team... in the past... we have played the same game with inversed roles." He explained that he had supported her with his science work when she had taken her Master's. He admitted, "she has been much quicker than me in finding a financially viable position" as a CEGEP teacher. During his training, Leonard felt that coaching "was more usable... I seemed to have the right skills, to be quite effective at it. I was able to start doing it although I didn't have a lot of previous experience." He felt that the community offered the potential for stable work, noting that "people seemed to be, for whatever reason, quite interested in working with me as a coach" which meant that there was "somewhat more ease of access" and more "entryways" into that career versus organizational development. Following his training, he had a child with his girlfriend, which created "urgency and focus." He felt a "sense that I need to make this new profession financially viable sooner rather than later," and yet "I want to spend significant time with this baby." Based on his still-emerging status characterized himself still as a Seeker in contrast with his girlfriend who was "a CEGEP teacher, which is one of the most stable jobs... also a well-paid job." He admitted that she "provides the stability and I am the high-risk investment... maybe it's gonna be a crazy success. Maybe it's gonna be failure after failure."

Completer Case: Helen

Leonard was paired with Helen, a 65-year-old White female Completer living in a rural exurb in central North America. She received my recruiting poster when it was forwarded by her former colleagues at a university career centre.

Narrative of Helen's Career Pathway. Helen's career began as a translator and bilingual secretary. By the time of the interview, she was a semi-retired career advisor and yoga instructor who had been a secretary, headhunter, career counsellor, and acting director of a university careers centre. In this section, I describe her career pathway chronologically in terms

of major life events (such as entering or exiting a work or personal relationship) and their individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences.

An anglophone from [a central city in Canada], Helen wanted to be a French-English translator. She moved to [an eastern city] and studied in French to earn a university degree in French linguistics but "I didn't experience translation" during the program. After she completed her degree, she returned to [a central city in Canada] and "I got a few gigs translating documents for a government ministry and had to spend all my day in a dictionary." She also worked for a motorcycle company as "a bilingual secretary for the service department" and "translating technical bulletins, sales and marketing brochures, credit letters from English to French, which you're really not supposed to do... you're really supposed to translate into your naive language." Having "translated a little" Helen realized that "I didn't want to live in a book."

Helen wanted more interesting work that built on her language skills. She lived in a large city with branches of international businesses. At that time, computers were rare, and typing was handled by secretaries. She said, "I thought I would plug my nose and get a job as a secretary even though I thought that was really beneath me." She decided to become a bilingual secretary and took a typing course to become more skilled and marketable. She applied to a management consulting firm in part because, "I thought this would be like getting an MBA without having to go to school." As a secretary, "I got a bird's eye view of the inner workings of one of the most sophisticated management consulting firms in the world." She explained, "all day long I type management consulting reports. You got to see the inside of all sorts of different organizations. We typed interview notes between the consultant and senior executives about what was working, what wasn't working in their organizations. We did proposals, which looked at what are the issues facing this company and how are they going to go about solving them." She admitted, "in some ways it was mind-numbingly boring because you had to follow the rules of the firm for literally every single detail... but it was a tremendous education at the same time... a superb fly-on-the-wall experience."

Over time, Helen said, "admin staff started to complain, and they complained to me a lot. I was the one who listened." She said, "it is a pattern in my life. I'm the woman on the plane that listens to the person next to them and gets their life story." The secretarial staff felt unappreciated because, "we were sometimes there 24 hours around the clock to get a document out," and "we were all university graduates... [but] we were given sometimes not a whole lot of variety in our work... not much responsibility." Helen explained, "you have a pecking order. Consultants are... the elite. They have incredible backgrounds... the secretary and admin staff, we're just there to help them look great." Helen listened to her colleagues then decided, "we can't just complain that we're feeling like second class citizens here. We've got to say something, we've got to do something about it," and so "I kind of coordinated a group of support staff to go to management and say, we're not happy. These are all the ways in which we feel we're being abused by the professional staff." As a result of Helen's complaint, a director "assigned two consultants to work with me and a small team of support staff to develop a presentation on how to improve communications... so I got to work with a professional, staff team."

Helen wanted something more than being a secretary but had trouble taking herself seriously as a "professional." However, the connections she had made after complaining to management included a female consultant. Helen said, "as we opened up about our concerns around not feeling fulfilled... one of the female consulting staff... suggested that I join an association of business and professional women." The association held monthly meetings in the

city with "an interesting topic related to building your own business or managing a business." Members included "women's rights advocates... real trailblazers... I was surrounded by some really interesting role models." She said, "I would hear speakers and I would network with women who were in a whole variety of professional roles." Helen admitted, "I consider myself to be an introvert... I have to coach myself to go out into social situations... this allowed me to go out and practice those interpersonal skills." For instance, "in any dinner function, you're using social manners... or you're learning about different people's careers because women would go up to the podium and do a speech and talk about how they got to where they are." Additionally, the club was celebrating an anniversary and wished to create a daily planner that featured its historical achievements. She worked with other members to review materials that chronicled the accomplishments of women and gems of wisdom such as, "know what you want, know how to get it, get it." For Helen, membership "kind of helped me to define myself more as a professional and less as a secretary." She said, "I'm not sure if any of the people I met there helped me along the way, but it was a good grooming experience for me to take myself seriously."

Eventually, Helen was "taking the subway home from work one night, exhausted and thinking: *I hate my job, it's boring, it's not good enough for me, I'm better than this.*" She visited a local library and "started hunting through all of the university calendars" to explore her options for becoming a consultant herself. Her city hosted several universities including one with a Master's program in "environmental studies in which *environment* comprised natural, built, organizational and social environments. She explained, "I was thinking I would do an MBA but because my quantitative skills aren't that great, I ended up choosing a program that would draw more on my creativity... the Masters in Environmental Studies." Within that program, "I was interested in the organizational environment-- the looking at questions of quality of work-life and organizational change." At the office, she'd fallen in love with one of the management consultants, and "this fellow had been really instrumental in helping me get back into school and was a champion for me in terms of my goals." She noted, "consulting staff were extremely helpful in helping my application for graduate studies, and gave me recommendations... and a great send-off party."

During her Master's, Helen interned during the summers at a head-hunting boutique to earn money. When she graduated, "my plan had been to get into... human resources management consulting" but "I still didn't have any confidence when I came out." During her studies, her consultant boyfriend had moved to the west coast for work, so she moved across the country to join him. Unfortunately, he "had taken up with someone else." Helen acknowledged, "there were two important relationship breakdowns that kind of totally reorganized my career." In this first breakdown, her boyfriend, who had previously supported her career transition, responded to her arrival by "sen[ding] me packing back to [a central city in Canada]," with the result that "I was... absolutely devastated... everything just fell apart in terms of what I thought I wanted to do." She said, "my identity took a huge beating. I didn't know who I was, what I was going to do. I just needed a safe harbour to lick my wounds... get my act back together, and slowly but surely piece a life together." Her internship employer "said come on back and work with us just 'til you heal." Although "I had been more of a back--, behind-the-scenes support person... he invited me back to be a full-time headhunter" at his small tech boutique. She said, "I had no kind of heart or energy to do the search for a consulting job. I didn't think I could sell myself very well." However, the headhunter was "offering me a career that I hadn't even thought of for myself... that role in recruitment sort of established... getting me out of the admin and secretarial work and into

something that had more to do with what I wanted to do in the future." She accepted the offer "and gradually built my confidence back up."

Helen noted, "once I had healed... I said, okay I want to get back to this desire to do HR consulting and I'll use my executive recruitment experience." She discovered that "big public accounting firms had an executive recruitment arm." To find a position, "I did a lot of research on the different firms in the city," then "I did a lot of networking and talking to people." As a headhunter, she loved hearing the career stories of candidates for a position. However, over time she found herself stressed because she met many candidates but only one person could win the job. She wanted to help the candidates who hadn't succeeded so they could do better next time. Additionally, she faced a culture that expected long work hours. Initially, the culture reflected her on background: "I come from a bit of a workaholic family... they work insane hours... the Protestant work ethic was the way we were raised. Work as a good thing: work, work, work. Unlike my brothers and sisters, I think I started to question some of that... later in my career." However, over time Helen found that "I'm burned out from working 12-hour days for seven years and you're never as good as your last assignment." She said, "you always had a list, your arm long, of more things you had to do... I can't live like this forever. It's not healthy." Helen decided to change: "I was so stressed out... I had it all designed in my mind... how I would make my escape." She said, "I was keeping a journal and writing about how excited I was to leave the firm and build my own company." Unfortunately, her marriage had also suffered. Her husband's career relied on shift work and "we were like ships passing in the night. We never saw each other, and whenever we did, we'd fight all the time." When Helen discovered his affair with another woman, her plans to be a consultant fell apart again: "I got home, and the situation exploded... I thought I was going to leave my job but instead I gotta leave my marriage."

Following her marital breakdown, Helen sought counselling. Partners at her firm were unexpectedly supportive, and "were my saviours during that period... they sort of sheltered me and helped me heal." She said, "I would have partners come in and share some of their own challenges of marital breakdowns, some who had been holding it close to their chest for months and nobody knew." She explained, "in a workaholic environment, that's all you do is work, work, work. I was expecting them to not be understanding... but it was the complete opposite... they cut me slack in terms of my billable hours, they checked in on me." Unsure what to do next in her career, Helen planned for a sabbatical: "I gave myself one year to... rethink who I wanted to be, and what I wanted to do, and how to avoid bad relationships in the future." To support herself, she lined up alternative work: "one of the ways I made money as I went along, I guided three bicycle tours in France with a Canadian company." Additionally, the accounting firm provided work. They were a multi-national organization with offices in Europe but experienced communication challenges between Europe and North America. Her employers "knew I had strong writing skills" and to help her make money they "came to me... they said, how would you like to visit some of the management consulting offices in our European offices and write back to us about how they manage their services?" The work included offices in six or seven European countries, and "as a result of the reports that I wrote to them, eight months later they ended up developing a much stronger relationship with their European counterparts... it was kind of a win-win." On the personal side, "I did a lot of reflective journalling and observing of where my highs came from, where my lows came from, where my sources of satisfaction were. I wanted to focus more on what was important to me and what I valued and learn to say no to stuff that I didn't think was good for me." Based on her reflections, "I kind of discovered head-hunting is... very result-oriented versus process-oriented. It's highly critical in nature and only one person gets

the job." In contrast, "I felt more comfortable with the people who didn't get the job. I wanted to help.... I'm more the social worker than the business person."

After her sabbatical, Helen entered a five-year period of self-employment because "I told myself I didn't want to work for certain kinds of clients, and I wanted to have the ability to say no... if they were not creating what I thought was a healthy environment for me. Or I would be able to dictate the number of assignments I would take on." She said, "I did the practical stuff to pay my rent by supporting executive recruiting firms... I would sit on the phone all day long... call people who were prospective candidates for jobs... invite them to consider the job... walking them through their career history to see if they were a good fit." She did struggle because "there were also lots of times where I didn't have enough work." However, "I found a way to gradually transition over where I was doing more of my work as a career counsellor than as a headhunter." The university where she had earned her Master's degree was holding an alumni reunion. She said, "I went to a reunion with my alumni and ran into one of my favourite profs... we had a lot of joint interests." She said that she attended "with no expectation really, just to connect." Her professor "ended up helping me create a part-time position... supporting all their... students in doing both field experience searches as well as their summer job searches and their graduating jobs." Helen embraced the position which reflected her desire to help people get jobs, rather than help employers filter candidates to choose a single winner. To perform her role, she used massive, searchable job listing sites that were available free online. During this period, she met her new partner who "couldn't be further from me in terms of career... he worked in two organizations since graduating... very stable, very conservative in his career decisions... he didn't understand self-employment because it was, for him, too insecure." However, her contingent workload offered advantages, such as "he would blow off work at three o'clock, come join me and we do a big, long bicycle ride and I had the flexibility to do that... we had cycling and tennis and squash and rollerblading." She said, "the first five years we kind of went our separate ways in terms of career.

Over time, Helen eliminated her contracts for headhunters and focused on career counselling but "I still was having trouble making enough money... it was very challenging." On one day, "I was so depressed and so scared. I wrote down on a piece of paper what I wanted to do... something to do with supporting students... working in a university environment... surrounded by so many wonderful, interesting ideas... something closer to home because I was still travelling." She said, "I knew all the qualities I was looking for and the ingredients I needed to make me happy because I'd experienced them." However, she did not actively pursue those needs. Instead, "I just put it down on paper and then put it aside and then went back to my real job, which was helping these students get good jobs." However, after five years of unstable self-employment, her partner "encouraged me to try to get more stable employment... that's when I kind of opened my mind to looking at job ads." While she was searching Workopolis for jobs for students, Helen saw an ad for a full-time co-operative job coordinator at another university, and "adrenaline went through my body because I knew with clarity that was the perfect job for me." She said, "Oh my God, that has my name on it. It had everything that I'd ever done... as soon as I saw it was like whoo-who-who-who, like it had big green lights flashing go-go-go, don't waste this opportunity!" She explained, "it was partly sort of that notion of when preparedness meets opportunity." She said, "I totally thought I'd bombed the interview. I went home, I cried, I pulled the covers over my head," but "a day later, they called me and offered me the job." Her work began with coordinating physical and computer sciences co-op support. However, "co-op was growing so dramatically during that time... they asked me to take on all the sciences... and

then they asked me to merge arts and science." She helped students prepare for a competitive search for work-experience internships, supported them for the search, and managed the administrative process to ensure "our professors graded their papers and gave them credit for their co-op work terms." Her contingent work lifestyle changed. She said,

[the] university environment tends to respect lifestyle... they're not expecting you to work all hours of the day and night, but co-op was intense. Three times a year, we had to manage a cycle of getting anywhere from 70 students to 300 students jobs. That's a lot of processing, marketing and interviews and resumes... all going through our central office, and at the same time we're managing visits out to the workplaces.

However, "my late at the office was maybe seven o'clock as opposed to [the accounting firm] where it might have been 10 or 11 o'clock and working all weekend." During busy job-matching periods in co-op, "I had to make a lot of excuses to the love of my life now for the last 25 years." She said, "he's probably more encouraging of a lifestyle balance... he was very careful with the boundaries between work and play. It's like: *'you pay me to do this job and I'll stay for an emergency but I'm not giving up my life for you.'* He was probably an influence in terms of me putting boundaries around my work."

Over time, Helen expanded her role by becoming assistant director of the career centre where "I was responsible for all of the career and employment staff that supported our student population." She "worked for what I thought was the most amazing boss." She explained, "he wasn't a really hard-driving individual. He was one who engaged us all in consensus process. So, it really was a kind of team... you feel a sense of ownership." When he decided to leave, he offered Helen the position of acting director, which further expanded her role by making her responsible for academic advising staff. They both expected that her boss would be promoted into a senior position and be able to confirm Helen's promotion into his old position. However, her boss was promoted into another part of the organization, and the position he had wanted was taken by somebody else. The new person had a business-results philosophy and wanted the new director of the career centre to reflect that philosophy. Helen "had a really bad interview... I didn't get the job." She remembered, "they kept asking me about problem situations and all I could think about were wonderful things that happened... I know I had to solve a lot of problems, but I guess I'm somebody who... remembers the rosy." As a result, "my most spectacular failure would be not getting the job of director after acting in it for 18 months, and then staying" in the demoted role afterward. She said, "The woman who got the job was... 25 to 30 years younger than me, which is a bit of a hard blow when you think, 'Oh aren't I the greatest thing since sliced bread, I've got all this experience and knowledge and wisdom.'" When she met the incoming director, "I did not get along with this person... but I still wanted the job because this was a community of people that I'd worked with for the last six years and we had built something together."

After losing the promotion Helen returned to her assistant director position but "a whole part of my identity had been kicked in the teeth." She initially believed she should stay as assistant director because "I can learn something from this woman... I want to stay there. I really love the environment. I love the people. I love the work." However, "she was much younger than me, very strong, very businesslike and we did a lot of this in the early days--" she banged her fists together to illustrate conflict, although "we ended up with a good relationship." Helen explained, "I ended up seeking counselling... I had to take mental health days because I was just so demoralized... it was really hard because [the new director] was basically dismantling

everything that I thought we as a team had built over the previous five, seven years." She explained, "it's soul-destroying to watch your baby get taken apart piece by piece and to have decisions made without your consultation for something that you used to have ownership over the decisions." She said, "nothing I did was right in her eyes." Helen's counsellor told her, "Sit tight and eventually she'll move on, and the opportunity will come back again." In contrast, Helen's friend told her, "You're nuts. Why the hell would you stay there in a toxic environment? You'll just hate it every minute of the day," and Helen admitted that "she was right." When the director did leave, the job was changed and someone new was hired yet again. For her last three to four years, Helen demoted herself from assistant director to career counsellor where "I was doing direct work with our students 100% of the time, and program development." She created and implemented workshops and a mental health program for students. She explained, "I ended up coming to terms with myself... it was too late in my career... to move on to a whole other area... taking this career counselling role was my way of staying in the centre but doing work that I love, because I always love working with students, and I like the creative part of building programs." She believed that she was "probably seen as one of the most creative people in that unit... they brought me in on projects and they gave me my way in terms of creative expression, and they sought my opinion." Additionally, "I didn't have to be on campus as much and I could pull myself right out of the decision-making because that was part of the clashes that I was having with the new manager." She moved to a three-day week at the office with one day working at home "where I could do my project work and make progress on creation of resources, and then I had a three-day weekend to do my own thing." She said, "I live in this beautiful forest, and I hate leaving my home... it was a long commute." At the office, Helen changed how she interacted with colleagues: "I could dominate the conversation around the career counsellor table, but I didn't... It would have made everybody else feel uncomfortable... *'who the hell does she think she is, she's just a career counsellor?'*... and they would have been right... it was a humbling experience... of watching my language, watching my behaviours." She admitted that she "stuffed a lot of the negativity... a lot of the time I had to put my face on... I had to do a lot of managing of my emotions... sometimes I'd cry on the way home, but you know, just soldiered through." She said, "I did many days feel a certain hypocrisy, that I wasn't always telling the full truth," however, "I kept a positive attitude. I didn't bring negativity into it because of my own dissatisfaction or unhappiness about where I was." She said, "I think it built bridges. I think it created respect from people... because I wasn't disrespecting things and putting people down and shoving my way into situations. I just pulled back... exercised humility." When Helen retired, she was told, "your professionalism in this environment is truly admirable... I have not heard you say a single negative thing about the changes... I really have to commend you for being such a positive presence." Reflecting on her 17.5 years at the university career centre, she said, "I actually affectionately call my progress there as working my way down the corporate ladder... my last position was my most junior... I chose that for lifestyle reasons and career reasons."

After the career centre, Helen shifted into semi-retirement. She enjoyed working from home in a 24-acre forest north of [a central city in Canada], offering services as a career counsellor and yoga teacher. As a counsellor, she helped former colleagues with workplace applications. She also helped students with career challenges. For instance, she helped a young student narrow her choices for study, understand requirements of multiple universities, and prepare her personal statements for her applications. In another instance, she helped a student prepare for a competitive engineering application by reviewing eligibility requirements, building his online resume, explaining the structure of interviewing questions and practising his answers

for timed interviews. Helen had an account on the Facebook social network where she maintained connections such as an ex-boyfriend from the 1980s. On his page she noticed an ad for a U.S.-based consulting business that helped high school students transition into college study, and she thought "it's like, oh my God, I would love to do this." She had done something similar "back in the 80s when I was transitioning out of recruiting... I did it with private schools whose parents could afford to pay the big bucks for that kind of support." She approached the owner about expanding into Canada, and her ex-boyfriend was happy to "put a good word in for me because he knew me." Her interest in yoga arose from an injury from her hobby as a long-distance cyclist. She experienced shoulder pain and mobility issues and decided to try yoga as a treatment. She "discovered a relatively new studio in the area. I liked the vibe of it. I went to one class, and I was hooked." She said, "I'm really cheap... so I would buy an unlimited monthly subscription and in order to make it worthwhile, I had to force myself to go four or five times a week... I ended up paying \$4-5 a class instead of \$18 a class." Her experiences "opened me up to the whole mind-body-spirit experience... and I began yoga teacher training." The studio happened to need a yoga teacher "and even though I wasn't completely trained, it's like, would you like to do this?" She accepted because "I love, love, love the yoga studio owner... I do like most of her yoga instructors," and because "I tend to do my learning a bit backwards... I end up getting the concrete experiences and then I have to go back and do the learning in relation to it."

At the time of the interview, Helen reflected on her plans: "as a semi-retired individual I still go back and forth in terms of, why do I even bother with any of this professional stuff? Why don't I just bugger off and have fun like all my cycling buddies... they're just so glad to have their work life behind them." She said, "but I still feel a pull to create resources to support young people in their transitions. So that's where I'm at right now."

Interaction Case: Leonard, Helen and a Facilitator

I met with Leonard and Helen in a three-way Zoom meeting in mid-August, 2020 for a Seeker-Completer interview. The Seeker-Completer interview represented the kind of discussion a Seeker could use to engage people that interested him and explore his options for career transition. His previous Seeker interview and training meeting with me had exposed him to the interview style and helpful active listening techniques. Leonard had begun his career transition but considered himself a seeker due to his financial status.

I hosted from an apartment in Toronto, Helen joined from a northern exurb of [a central city in Canada], and Leonard joined from Europe. The meeting lasted about one hour and 55 minutes. This meeting produced two case studies: first, the Completer's case study reported previously focused on content in terms of the work and life events Helen shared during the meeting; second, this case study focuses on process by reporting the interactions of participants.

To simplify the case and focus on the participants, my basic questions to elicit the Completer's jobs, career choices, and the influences that guided those choices are not reported. Instead, reported interactions focus on times when (a) one participant referred to another or asked a question of the other; (b) a participant referred to the meeting or its process; (c) I prompted the Seeker to ask a question; or (d) I compared or contrasted participants based on their stories, or offered a synthesis for them to react to. To help the reader situate the interactions in terms of the overall interview and the kinds of events and words that prompted interactions, each interaction is reported in terms of the stories shared just prior to the interaction, and then the interaction itself with illustrative quotes from the participants.

Interaction 1: Everybody Has A Rich Story. At the beginning of the interview, I explained how the meeting would work including its exploration of systemic differences. Helen responded, "It's wonderfully complex, but it's also quite simple and easy to understand... It reminds me of how everybody has a rich story when you look at all these details." I urged Leonard to participate and interrupt at any time. I noted, "I have a certain bias where I'm asking certain things, but the Seeker comes in and they have things they really want to know about. That really helps me when you ask those questions, to see what's of interest to you."

Interaction 2: Do You Mind If I Share? I asked Leonard to introduce himself. Leonard provided a brief overview including his age, his previous 12-year career in science at universities, and his transition into coaching, which he was doing at the time of the interview. I asked for permission to share details from Leonard's Seeker interview and Leonard responded, "Please." I shared Leonard's experience of burnout in his cognitive-focused lab, his contrasting energizing experiences of mindfulness, and his desire to help others have similar energizing experiences. Leonard agreed that it was a fair explanation of his pathway.

Interaction 3: How The Change Came About? Helen described her life in semi-retirement, including cycling and turning an intermittent, life-long interest in yoga into a more regular practice, which had resulted in her becoming a yoga teacher. Leonard asked, "How the change came about, this last year and a half?" Helen confirmed that he meant shifting yoga from an intermittent interest into a regular discipline. She explained that she had purchased an unlimited subscription to "force myself to go four or five times a week" and she had liked the owner and instructors.

Interaction 4: What Aspects Do You Particularly Enjoy? Helen then described her pre-retirement work at a university career centre, including her most-recent downshifted role of working partly from home in a shortened week. She had used the extra personal time to develop a small-scale career counselling business for former colleagues and high school students applying to universities. Leonard asked, "You say you help them with the application. What aspects do you particularly enjoy?" Helen noted how she helped students understand and prepare for university application processes. She explained how she found clients through social media networking. I prompted Leonard to ask follow-up questions, but he shook his head.

Interaction 5: How Universities Came Into Play? Helen described prior positions at the university career centre and how she began coordinating co-operative education placements. She proceeded to her sabbatical before that period and how she had decided to move from headhunting to career counselling because she preferred to help people get jobs. She described her headhunting role and then shifted back to how she transitioned from headhunting into career counselling by contracting for headhunters while seeking career counselling roles. I prompted Leonard to ask questions and he responded, "I am curious how universities came into play. It sounds like in the earlier parts of your career, you were somewhere between the business or the entrepreneurial context and then academia comes into play at some point, and it stays into play for a long time." Helen responded by recounting her undergraduate studies in linguistics, her move to [a central city in Canada] to become a secretary, her entry into a management consulting firm, and how that experience inspired her to get a Master's degree. She jumped ahead to her subsequent self-employment and how an alumni event led to a part-time job helping co-operative education students find jobs. She explained how self-employment was not creating enough income, so she brainstormed her desired career, and when she saw a full-time coordinator

position at another university, she knew that it drew on her experiences in recruiting, career counselling, and co-operative field placements and she wanted it.

Interaction 6: Tell Me Something About Your... Failures. To fill in some gaps in her timeline, Helen explained that she hadn't enjoyed translation work and had transitioned into being a secretary at a management consulting firm to learn about business. She described her efforts there to address conflicts between support staff and consultants, and noted how that had led to being referred to a women's business association, which had improved her confidence. Helen explained that at club meetings, "You're learning about different people's careers because women would go up to the podium and... talk about how they got to where they are. So, they were kind of doing what you and I are doing here, [Leonard]. They're exchanging life stories." I encouraged Leonard to ask questions and he said, "I could continue listening to you without any question for a very long time, it's fascinating." Helen asked, "You're getting something helpful, useful out of this?" Leonard responded, "Oh, absolutely. Absolutely." Helen said, "Okay, good." Leonard said, "I do have a curiosity that has been with me for the past few minutes. Tell me something about your most interesting, spectacular perhaps, failures--" Helen exhaled and nodded vigorously. Leonard continued, "I'm hearing a lot of success in your story and that's really encouraging to hear. And I'm curious to know, what's the other things?" Helen made exaggerated nods then described "my most spectacular failure" as losing an expected promotion to director of a career centre after being in the role for 18 months, and then staying on under the new boss. She described conflicts with the new director that led her to seek mental health counselling and eventually demote herself into a counsellor role to avoid further conflicts over decision-making.

Interaction 7: You Traumatized Me With Your Question... Just Kidding. After sharing her failure, Helen reflected on why her interview for the director job had gone poorly. She said, "They kept asking me about problem situations and all I could think about were wonderful things that happened.... I guess I'm somebody who remembers the rosy." Leonard responded, "Tell me about the roses, or the gifts from this major challenge that you had to face." Helen suggested that "it taught me humility," as well as admitting "I stuffed a lot of the negativity... I had to put my face on... I think it built bridges... because I wasn't disrespecting things... I'd cry on the way home but just soldiered through." She also described being respected for her creativity, but "watching my language, watching my behaviours" to ensure her counsellor peers wouldn't think she was trying to leverage her previous directorial experience to influence them. I asked Helen, "I hope this is a positive experience for you... Is this interesting for you?" Helen responded, "Totally, but you traumatized me with your question, [Leonard]." Helen and Leonard responded with laughs and smiles. Helen said, "Just kidding... you're taking me back to my worst moments!" Helen feigned outrage but with a smile, and Leonard grinned.

Interaction 8: I Don't Mind, It's Okay. Helen described the impact of key relationships on her career transitions. She noted how a romance with a management consultant had led to support for getting her Master's, but after her graduation, the end of that romance had derailed her transition into consulting, and led instead into headhunting. After healing from that breakup, she had leveraged her headhunting experience to join recruiters at an accounting firm. I asked Leonard's permission to share a similar pattern from his Seeker interview and he responded, "I don't mind. It's okay." I noted how Leonard had connected with his new career direction of mindfulness as well as his Master's through a girlfriend and compared it to Helen's experiences

with the difference that losing her relationship had damaged her confidence before she could start work. Helen responded, "Mmm hmm" and nodded.

Interaction 9: You Used The Word Workaholic. Helen explained how a second relationship had derailed a subsequent attempt at career change. As a recruiter at an accounting firm, she had been working long hours and decided to leave and start her own business. However, she discovered her husband's infidelity and decided to end her marriage and let her colleagues support her emotionally. To re-think her life, she took a sabbatical paid for by guiding cycling tours in Europe. Helen said, "You smiled, [Leonard] when I said I'm a cyclist. Do you like to bicycle?" Leonard responded, "I do, but I'm not nearly close to the level of cycling you described." Helen described how her firm had supported her sabbatical by paying her to interview colleagues across Europe. I prompted Leonard to ask questions and he said, "I got a feeling that for long stretches of your professional life, you were very, very busy." Helen laughed and nodded. Leonard said:

You used the word workaholic. I'm curious, how does that play out today? When I hear you describe where you are today. I get a very, very different vibe about how you manage your energy and how much work you get.... First of all, is that true that there has been a shift the way I am feeling it, or maybe it's, reality is very different? And if there has been indeed, how that came about, and how are you feeling about that?

Helen explained that she came from a workaholic family and had lived as a workaholic at the accounting firm, but then decided it wasn't healthy. She described her sabbatical as exploring how to "focus in more on what was important to me... and learn to say 'no'." She then contrasted with her career afterwards: in self-employment she'd lacked work at times, and at the university, there were cycles of times that were more busy but never as bad as the accounting firm. She noted that university culture "is much more allowing of personal time... that probably helped me take a more healthy view." She described her semi-retired life as still feeling "a pull to try to create resources to support young people" despite her retired friends being happier to give up work altogether.

Interaction 10: I Am At The Threshold For Me. Helen described the impact of her last marriage to a man who was very stable in his career and encouraged her to seek more stable work. His influence had encouraged her to seek full-time work at the university, which had led to her long career at the career centre. I prompted Leonard for questions, but Leonard responded, "I feel rather complete for this conversation. It's also 9 p.m. for me and I still have to eat. So, I think I am at the threshold for me." I thanked the participants. Helen asked, "[Leonard], what part of [country] are you?" Leonard responded, "I am visiting my parents who are in [city]. I actually live and work in [an eastern city in Canada]." Helen said, "That's wonderful... so I might have some contacts for you there." She then shared a trip she had made to [country], and noted several locations she had visited, saying "So beautiful. We want to go back."

Interaction 11: External Contact. Following the interview, Leonard requested a contact with his Completer for coaching services to apply for a job. I passed his request to Helen who confirmed that they made contact.

Survey Results From Meeting

This section presents the results of surveys used before and after the meeting with Helen and Leonard to determine how the experience may have contributed to change. First, I present their future career autobiographies (FCA) and then their perceptions of the experience.

Future Career Autobiographies. Leonard and Helen wrote descriptions of their future careers before and after their interactions.

Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Leonard. Seeker Leonard wrote a future career autobiography (FCA) before and after his Seeker-Completer interview. Leonard wrote the following for his first FCA:

In 5 years from now, in 2025, I am running an organization that enables thousands of people to explore and shape the meaning of their lives, regardless for whether they are financially well off. My coaching programs are attended all over the world, largely on a donation basis, thanks to a small, highly committed and growing team of coaches that have joined my cause and are helping me expanding our reach. I am doing well financially, in the order of 60K or so, thanks to some well paid coaching contracts and grants, but the greatest measure of my success is in the growing impact that my revolutionary donation-based programs are having all over the world, in sectors as diverse as the general public, schools, prisons, community centers and so forth. I feel energized by the sense of strong alignment and service I am able to experience every day, and I continue to make exciting and bewildering discoveries.

Leonard wrote the following for his second FCA:

Five years from now I will be a successful coach who helps people in the thousands move toward what is most important to them. I have been successful in creating a model that enables a large number of people to have access to transformative experiences of self-discovery with minimal or zero financial burden for them, thus maximizing accessibility, while at the same time creating a small number of clients or projects that pay well and have a medium-term time horizon, thus ensuring financial viability for myself. I share my professional time between coaching this limited number of high-impact clients and serving the larger organization I have created, training facilitators, advancing the vision, and working with a small and diverse leadership team of people that inspire me, provoke me and with whom I love building things. These could for example be [three names listed]. My work life has wide overlap with my family life, providing opportunities for travel, for meeting new amazing people and for building lasting friendships. At the same time, my family remains a privileged space to which I continue to devote significant quality and quantity of time on its own.

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Leonard. Leonard's second FCA (196 words) was longer than the first (158 words), representing a 38-word or 24-percent increase. In both versions, Leonard describes helping others, leading within an organization, having financial viability through some coaching contracts, and using those finances to also impact thousands of people by offering a financially-accessible service model. However, his word choices and details changed between the two FCAs. His second FCA no longer mentioned venues of service such as schools, prisons, and community centres, or his desire for feeling an energizing alignment or exciting and bewildering discoveries. Additionally, Leonard shifted from helping people explore and shape meaning to helping them with self-discovery and moving towards what's important to them. He shifted from running an organization to serving it. He

shifted from having a coaching team committed to his cause to having a leadership team that provoked and inspired him. In his second FCA he added training facilitators (rather than using the word coaches). He added a desire for work and life to overlap to create friendships and travel. He added a desire to devote time to his family. He added a desire to be a successful coach who divided his time between a small number of well-paying clients and leadership of his organization. Changes in the career influences in his FCAs are shown in Table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Leonard

	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
Words	158	196	38	
Influences				
Individual	3	10	7	more about his planned roles, feelings, and time allocation
Social	3	4	1	shift from alignment and commitment of a vague team to more diversity and provocation from a leadership team with actual names
Environmental	6	0	-6	no longer mentions grants, donations, worldwide reach, or range of sectors, or income or regularity of success
Chance	4	3	-1	removed mentions of worldwide, multi-sector impact and refocuses on meeting new people
Decision-making	1	2	1	shift focus from running organization to coaching

Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Helen. Completer Helen wrote a future career autobiography (FCA) before and after her Seeker-Completer interview. Helen wrote the following for her first FCA:

In 5 years, I hope to have an active private practice that integrates my many years experience in career, education & employment with my more recent active engagement with Yoga and mindfulness. My work will include creation and delivery of online and in-person workshops, private coaching and writing. I hope to work in collaboration with like-minded individuals to help clients honour their inner spirit and develop skills to meet their aspirations. I aim to draw out individuals' curiosity and creativity in relation to who they want to become and why to build a foundation for transformative change. Once clarified, we'll work on the more practical matters of transition to education or work, focusing on navigating options, target marketing and the art of personal presentation - on paper or face-to-face.

Helen wrote the following for her second FCA:

I'm still processing. This experience and [Researcher]'s probes/summaries helped me to look more deeply at some of the patterns in my career. Telling the stories was exhausting, mostly in a good way, but I've come out the other end with questions for which I don't yet have answers. I want to prioritize my relationship with my partner at this stage of my career and I'm not sure I'm doing that. I've been struggling with "what

aspects of my professional life do I want to hold on to" for the last couple years since retiring and trying to build a little business on the side, without a whole lot of success. But maybe I'm not asking the right questions at this stage of my "career". Instead, perhaps I should be asking "what aspects of my relationship life do I want to grow, nurture and cherish?" I'm thinking relationship in a broader sense - with me, my partner, my family and friends. I've been so immersed in traditional "career and work" for so many years, maybe it's time to take a break. Wow, novel idea: break up with my "career" - stop taking myself so damn seriously. Timing's not great - part-way through a strategy session with a marketing person to build my online presence. Hmmm. What's a girl to do.

Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Helen. Helen's second FCA (219 words) was longer than the first (131 words), representing an 88-word or 67-percent increase. Helen's FCAs did not overlap. Her second FCA no longer mentioned her hopes to expand her career workshops and coaching business, use her skills and experiences, or collaborate with others to assist clients with being curious and skillful to achieve desired transformative changes. Instead, her second FCA revealed that her business was not having a lot of success and that she was rethinking her priorities. Helen described how processing patterns from her career more deeply led to wondering what part of life she wanted to nurture. She wondered if she should prioritize her partner and relationships with family and friends, stop taking herself so seriously, and break up with her career. Changes in the career influences in her FCAs are shown in Table 4.14 below.

Table 4.14
Changes in Future Career Autobiography (FCA) for Helen

	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
Words	131	219	88	
Influences				
Individual	3	2	-1	abandoned career identity and tasks and focused on reprioritizing partner
Social	3	3	0	shift from collaboration with likeminded people to reprioritizing partner, family and friends
Environmental	1	0	-1	no longer mention active practice or work
Chance	0	1	1	first mention of lack of business success
Decision-making	1	5	4	shift from running a business encompassing all past experiences to noting patterns, questioning priorities, and considering abandoning career for relationships

Perception Surveys. Leonard completed a survey about his comfort with interviewing before and after his active listening training. Additionally, Leonard and Helen completed surveys before and after their interactions.

Ratings for Active Listening Training. Leonard rated himself at the highest score before and after data-gathering training, as shown in Table 4.15. With respect to changes, Leonard

provided extensive criticisms. Leonard described the training as follows: "[Researcher] told me a number of things that I should do to listen well, he asked me to apply them, and gave the impression of assessing whether I did them right." He noted that, "the training seemed to emphasize external behaviors (ask this or that, put your body like this or like that)." Leonard felt that the training was "somewhat artificial and I felt awkward doing it." He complained that "The training felt unidirectional and evaluative" as well as "somewhat manipulative and shallow." Leonard suggested that the training should instead "Ask people what is important to them in terms of listening well and feeling listened to well. Creating an interaction that feels less like schooling and more like sharing wisdom." To do so, he suggested helping Seekers "reflect on the internal conditions that enable powerful listening, for example what it feels and what it's like to be present, to be curious, to be in your body - without telling them what they have to do to." He also suggested that training should distinguish between "a question that comes from genuine curiosity" and "a question asked to make you, who ask the question, look smart."

Table 4.15
Self-ratings of Comfort With Data-Gathering Techniques Before and After Training

Participant	Rapport		Active Listening		Probing	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Leonard	5	5	5	5	5	5

Ratings for Transition Meetings. Leonard did not provide ratings or comments for his Seeker meeting however his comments after the Seeker-Completer meeting seemed to refer back to his Seeker meeting. Leonard and Helen rated their meeting as shown in Table 4.16. After that meeting, Leonard's scores could be categorized into three groups. His highest scores related to interactions: he found the meeting understandable and satisfying, addressed complexity, and supported interaction and collaboration. His medium scores related to tools we used. His lowest scores related to his personal feelings, thoughts and skills about transition. Helen also provided high ratings for understandability and satisfaction, addressing complexity, and supporting interaction. Her ratings for feelings, thoughts and skills about interaction were all middle scores and in a comment, she noted, "Where I scored a 3 in a few instances, it's because I'm still processing." In contrast with her Seeker, she felt that her experience would affect talking to others, and she rated the future career description and timeline tools highly.

Table 4.16
Participant Perceptions of Meetings

Meeting Type	Seeker	Seeker-Completer	
Participant ID	Leonard	Leonard	Helen
Status	Seeker	Seeker	Completer
Understandable and satisfying?	N/A	5	4

Addressed the complex influences in your life?	N/A	4	5
Supported interaction and collaboration?	N/A	5	4
Changed how you FEEL about career and transition?	N/A	1	3
Changed how you THINK about career and transition?	N/A	2	3
Helped you develop SKILLS in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	N/A	1	3
Helped you develop CONFIDENCE in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	N/A	1	3
Affected your likelihood of talking to people in your community about career transition?	N/A	3	5
Future Career Description	N/A	3	4
Life-Career Timeline	N/A	3	5
Career Pathway	N/A	3	

Ratings were based on the following scale: (1) LOW - (2) - (3) - (4) - (5) HIGH.

Suggestions After Transition Meetings. Leonard's comment after the Seeker-Completer meeting seemed to refer to his Seeker meeting and complained:

I am not fully clear about the purpose of the career interview I just did. That makes it hard to say what I would change and why, because that depends on the goal. It was interesting and fun to revisit some parts of my life. [Researcher]'s observation on some of the patterns were insightful. The whole process felt to me like an open-ended exploration of my life-career timeline, with some examination of recurring patterns, and no particular goal. It often wasn't clear to me whether what we were exploring was for my benefit or for the sake of generating research data. My impression was often that generating research data was the main purpose. Which is a totally legitimate goal, but then again I am not fully sure that that was the reason. We explored and dug a lot, in many different directions, but we didn't necessarily look at the implications of the data we were surfacing for the decisions I have to make right now. Maybe it was implied that having done that digging in the past was going to on its own spur some insights about what I should do now? Or maybe the question of what I should do now was not really the point of doing the process? I have some confusion on this. The question right above "Please rate the tools used in this section" is a little hard to decipher, because 1) the life-career timeline and career pathway seemed to fully overlap during the interview, so I am not sure when we did each; 2) it is not clear to me what the rating is about. How useful were they? Useful in relation to what? Or how interesting they were? Or something else?

For Helen after the Seeker-Completer meeting she wrote about changes:

I thought the process and questions were excellent and very thoughtful. [Researcher's] summaries and probes were helpful and astute. Where I scored a 3 in a few instances, it's because I'm still processing and I'm frankly not sure how I feel or think or whether I gained new skills. I might respond differently tomorrow or after I view our side-by-side stories. It was a long (maybe I'm too chatty and go off on tangents) - and I think both of us were quite tired by the end. I would have liked to hear more from the Seeker side. Though his questions were few, they were great questions.

Plans After Transition Meetings. After his Seeker-Completer meeting, Leonard described his plans:

Some actions that I am going to take are completing the website I have been working on for the past few days, have some people have a look at it before it goes public and get feedback, launch the website, preparing the events advertised in the website, continuing to track some job searches, continuing the ongoing collaborations, explore the possibility of new collaborations related to the events advertised in the website, carefully assess other new opportunities as they come to me. These actions were already on my mind, I don't have the impression that these actions have been influenced by the career interview I just did.

For Helen, after the Seeker-Completer meeting she wrote about her plans:

- a) Think deeply about life balance, relationships and how I want to spend the next 20 years as a retired/semi-retired individual.
- b) Talk to or read about others in retirement about how they "let go" of their professional identities and embrace retirement goals.
- c) Cycle, meditate and do yoga.

Surprises After Transition Meetings. After his Seeker-Completer meeting, Leonard wrote about his surprise:

The digging in the past was interesting and stimulating, but I felt somehow detached, and I was a little surprised by that. I have the feeling that something about the setting (possibly the research purpose and) or the interaction (revealing very personal information to someone I don't know, someone whom I did not take the initiative to invite in, and the context of an interaction with layer of formality due to the research setting) may have contributed to that.

For Helen, after the Seeker-Completer meeting she wrote about her surprise:

I didn't expect to be "rethinking" who I want to be and what I want, as I was not the "seeker." It was fascinating to hear patterns emerging from simple focused stories - quite a rich process. I'll be excited to read your dissertation/final report as I suspect it will contain some revealing important insights about careers unfold - not necessarily along theoretical lines.

Chapter Five: Multi-Phase Analysis and Research Questions

Chapter Four reported the results of implementing the study. In this chapter, I report a multi-phase analysis to explain career transition, and then a multi-phase analysis to explain participant interactions about career transition. I conclude the chapter by answering the research questions. The process of analysis was described in detail in Chapter Three, however brief reminders are provided in this chapter to introduce each phase.

Multi-Phase Analysis of Career Transitions

To develop an explanation of career transition, I conducted a multi-phase analysis. First, I conducted an analysis of the cases to elicit concepts that explained the kinds of choices made and conditions faced by participants throughout their career paths. Second, I fitted those concepts into activity systems to derive an explanation of how choices and conditions interacted over time to produce career outcomes, and how change occurred in response to pressures. An activity system encompasses a Subject (the person or organization driving the activity) who applies Instruments (tools, mental models, or ideologies) to an Object (the motivating concern and raw materials) to achieve an Outcome (the desired result), while constrained by Rules, and participating within a Community (the social context) as part of a Division of Labour (the other people participating in the activity) (Engeström, 2001). An explanation of activity theory appears in Chapter Two. Third, I conducted a cross-case analysis of the participants' activity systems to provide a broader explanation of career transition.

Concepts Emerging From Career Cases

To elicit concepts that explained the kinds of choices made and conditions faced by participants, I conducted a constant-comparative analysis guided by the Systems Theory Framework to ensure I addressed all aspects in the framework. First, I categorized statements in each case study according to the systemic influence they represented, namely individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making. Within each influence, statements were analyzed using constant comparison to identify emerging concepts that would explain the influence. Each concept had two states that represented extremes on a continuum. For instance, the individual influence included the concept of identity. The concept of identity had extremes of belonging and excluding. By using concepts, I provide an explanation that allows for a diagnostic approach: examining the states of each concept and considering how to change those states to achieve a desired transition. A report of the constant comparative analysis detailing each systemic influence, the concepts emerging within each influence, and quantitative strengths and illustrative quotes for each concept, are reported in detail in Appendix P. The following Tables 5.1 through 5.5 summarize the concepts emerging from career transition cases for individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences defined by the Systems Theory Framework.

Table 5.1

Summary of Individual Concepts from Career Transition

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
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Power	authority to make decisions about pursuing or ending a venture in which the participant might play a role	high	control a venture invest in learning engage a service join professional association	low	employment gig-based work
Freedom	the ability to structure and modify work according to values and preferences	high	align work with values control place, schedule, workload control tasks	low	comply with tasks compromise values
Scope	degree of focus in career choices	wide	expand a role manage a business explore career options create preferred role confront expanded responsibility	narrow	accept non-preferred role enrol in training accept preferred role
Identity	subjective sense of membership in a group	belonging	external validation personal habits desire to become past roles relationships	excluding	perceived lack of fit internal contradiction external invalidation traumatic loss
Arousal	subjective emotional state in relation to a life or work experience	encouraging	enjoy a role attracted to a role encouraged by potential of role initially relieved by role	undermining	dislike experience anxious about failure lost or devalued

Table 5.2
Summary of Social Concepts from Career Transition

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Referral Style	approach used to develop contacts for work or support	active survey	targeted networking general networking	passive familiarity	colleagues and clients friends and acquaintances family and lovers classmates and educators service providers avoiding familiar contacts
Priority Alignment	how similar interests and values are among members of a relationship regardless of roles	high	shared interests valued experience or ability supported general success facilitated cooperation supported specific goal.	low	diverging interests, priorities undermining interactions undermined a goal disregard of experience, value
Member Agency	distribution of power and resources among members of a relationship to advance in their desired directions	balanced	sought rebalance of power power shared to them power shared from them	unbalanced	had or created dependence relinquished power wanted more power
Trust	the basis on which participants expected the surrender of power, control and resources	proved	suspend based on performance proved from work proved from interaction	unproved	gave without proof expected or received without proof

Table 5.3
Summary of Environmental Concepts from Career Transition

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
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Market opportunity	the demand in a community for products and services that supported a kind of role	supportive	ongoing needs expansion addressing challenges	undermining	failed to connect changed expectations
Resource availability	ability to access assets and services to pursue a role	high	access training resources network connections helpful suppliers financial support	low	financial gap supplier gap
Local Qualification	location-specific consequence of a participant's ability or status	helping	language ability enabling status, background	hindering	disabling status, background language deficit
Feedback tempo	timing for participants to experience validating results from the environment	short	manageable incoming work validation in the moment	long	validation too infrequent required persisting, adapting seemed unachievable
Presentation	how well the appearance of an organization or resource reflected actual qualities	consistent	fulfilment of expectations safety or dependability	inconsistent	undermined expectations disrupted safety, dependability
Stretch	degree to which travel is required to engage with an opportunity or resource	high	changed country or continent changed region changed city	low	same city same organization same neighbourhood own home

Table 5.4
Summary of Chance Concepts from Career Transition

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Engagement with chance	how participants monitored events within their boundaries and took action	high	explored options pursued training, support indicated interest in role built own venture accepted offer based on past demonstrated competence prioritized family support	low	lacked awareness, contingency avoided engagement
Alignment of engagement with results	how well a level of engagement with chance supported a participant's goals	high	acceptance aligns needs acceptance not align needs achieved fit in a role bridged to new role "stars were aligned"	low	betrayal of expectations unsatisfying role business failure lack of fit to get role crisis of confidence lack of supportive resources

Table 5.5
Summary of Decision-Making Concepts from Career Transition

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Personal value	participant's interpretation of the implications of obstacles when pursuing a role	developed	built on past embraced learning while doing adapted to achieve success sought insight from mentor pursued learning to change	innate	invalidated by circumstances validated by circumstances pursued validation avoided invalidation

			managed negative arousal		
Change approach	participant's motivation for changing a role	purposeful	improve identity fit improve arousal fit improve freedom fit improve power fit improve scope fit improve social trust	submitting	perceived no choice avoided failure accepted lesser alternative "trusted the process"

Activity Systems Emerging From Career Cases

I conducted an activity theory analysis by fitting the transition concepts to activity systems, analyzing each participant's career path in the form of evolving activity systems, and then conducting a cross-case analysis.

Fitting Concepts to Activity Systems. To explore how the transition concepts interacted as an activity of career navigation, I fitted the concepts to the activity system structure. Table 5.6 defines each activity system element, the criteria I used to fit concepts to that element, and then each concept and its possible states.

Table 5.6
Career Transition Concepts Fitted to the Activity System Structure

AT Element	AT Definition	Concept Criteria	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Extreme 2
Outcome	Desired result	subjectively-defined career goal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Object	Problem space of motivating concern and raw materials	subjectively-defined approach to achieve the Outcome	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Subject	Driver of the activity	subjective interpretations of career experiences	Identity	a person's subjective sense of membership in a group	belonging	excluding
			Arousal	a person's subjective emotional state in relation to a life or work experience	encouraging	undermining
Instruments	Tools used by the Subject, comprising unconscious operations (habits to overcome resistance) and conscious actions (goals and strategy)	habits and actions used to navigate career decisions	Scope	a participant's degree of focus in their career choices	wide	narrow
			Referral style	approach participants used to developing contacts for work or support	active survey	passive familiarity
			Trust	the basis on which participants expected the surrender of power, control and resources	proved	unproved
			Engagement with Chance	how participants monitored events within their boundaries and took action.	high	low
			Personal Value	a participant's interpretation of the implications of obstacles when pursuing a role	developed	innate
			Change Approach	a participant's motivation for changing a role	purposeful	submitting

AT Element	AT Definition	Concept Criteria	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Extreme 2
Rules	Constraints on the activity	limitations placed on career decisions	Power	the authority to make decisions about pursuing or ending a venture in which the participant might play a role	high	low
			Freedom	the ability, in relation to an established venture, to structure and modify work according to values and preferences	high	low
Community	Context of the activity	results of environmental engagement	Market opportunity	the demand in a community for products and services that supported a kind of role	supportive	undermining
			Resource availability	the participant's ability to access assets and services to pursue a role	high	low
			Feedback tempo	the timing for participants to experience validating results from the environment	short	long
			Presentation	how well the appearance of an organization or resource reflected its actual qualities	consistent	inconsistent
			Stretch	the degree to which a participant needed to travel to engage with an opportunity or resource	high	low
			Local qualification	a location-specific consequence of a participant's level of ability	helping	hindering
			Chance alignment	how well the outcome of monitoring and addressing chance events supported a participant's goals	high	low
Division of Labour	Participants in the activity	results of social engagement	Priority alignment	how similar interests and values are among members of a relationship regardless of their roles	high	low
			Member agency	the distribution of power and resources among members of a relationship to allow them to advance in their desired directions	balanced	unbalanced

Activity Theory Analysis for Each Participant. The activity theory analysis for each participant's career path is reported in detail in Appendix R. A cross-case analysis of those analyses is presented below, first for Seekers and then Completers.

Cross-Case Analysis of Seeker Activity Systems. This section presents a cross-case analysis of the career transition activities of the three Seekers. For each activity system element, patterns are first noted for contradictions that reflected career dilemmas; and then for changes that reflected career successes, if applicable. Patterns are labelled based on frequency: dominant means all three cases; strong means two out of three; isolated means one out of three; and dichotomy means a pattern that incorporates opposites.

Outcome and Object. The Outcome describes the expected results from the activity and the Object describes the problem space and raw materials used to achieve the outcome. The Outcome and Object relate to primary contradictions, which address stresses arising from a participant's choices about using their labour to serve themselves versus exchanging it for compensation to serve others, as shown in Table 5.7. Two dominant patterns emerged. First, all Seekers desired career change when their activity was exchanging skills for work rather than

using skills to support identity and arousal. Second, all Seekers faced economic challenges when their activity focused on use value at the expense of exchange value.

Table 5.7
Primary Contradictions

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Peter	using skills to repeat being a boss versus exchanging skills to monitor, preserve, alter business	exchanging skills for miserable sales jobs versus using skills to be a boss		
Victor	exchanging skills for corporate job versus using skills for artistic theatrical production	using skills for artistic client versus exchanging skills in an expanded base of work	exchanging skills to work gigs for others versus using skills to create human-centred stories	
Leonard	exchanging skills for rigorous research or theory-application versus using skills to energize and excite him through one-on-one interactions			using skills for personal development in his organizational development degree versus exchanging skills to master theory and practice to secure work

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions experienced by Seekers, one strong pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.8. Both Victor and Leonard chose to transition into a long-term interest by pursuing specific training at a dedicated school.

Table 5.8
Successful Seeker Objects and Outcomes

AT Element	Victor Second Activity	Leonard Second Activity
Outcome	Becoming artistic theatrical producer	Engaging in direct, embodied and energizing applications of human inquiry
Object	Returning to childhood community to connect with artistic theatrical producers	Pursuing applied training in coaching to support building a business

Subject. The Subject drives the activity. Each participant was the subject driving their own career navigation activity. Secondary contradictions emerged when a participant's identity or arousal conflicted with another element of the activity as shown in Table 5.9. One dominant pattern emerged. In all three cases, a participant's identity undermined their connection with people they associated with a particular community. Peter identified as a boss who could be doing so much more than sales and shouldn't be caged like an animal. Victor identified as an empathic theatrical producer who couldn't connect with glib and superficial people in the central

city. Leonard identified as a rigorous and enlightened inquirer who found researchers to be participating in a toxic atmosphere of denying the impact of emotions on their work.

Table 5.9
Contradictions With Subjects

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Peter		Identity as "boss" deserving a high salary and trust undermined ability to work as a sales or purchasing employee where he was told he could be doing so much better		
Victor		Identity as artistic and empathic person undermined ability to connect with industry people he perceived as "superficial"	Identity as a humanistic theatrical producer undermined ability to connect with superficial colleagues and led to growing tasks into bigger projects not supported by contracts	
Leonard	Identity as a rigorous inquirer undermined his needs for encouraging arousal and freedom of inquiry and undermined ability to connect with research community			

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions experienced by Seekers two strong patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.10. Both Victor and Leonard had a belonging identity with their desired transition, which emerged from a long-term personal interest in a topic. Both experienced encouraging arousal engaging in practice.

Table 5.10
Successful Seeker Subjects

AT Element	Concepts	Victor Second Activity	Leonard Second Activity
Subject	Identity	Belonging for theatrical production	Belonging
	Arousal	Encouraging	Encouraging

Instruments. Instruments are the tools used by Subjects to achieve the Outcome of their activity. Secondary contradictions emerged when the habits or choices of a participant conflicted with another element of the activity as shown in Table 5.11. Five dominant patterns emerged. First, all three participants showed a narrow scope as part of their unsatisfying career activity. For instance, Peter focused on task-based sales and purchasing jobs, Victor focused on a corporate communications role in his first activity, and task-based interviewing and directing gigs in his third, and Leonard focused on rigorous human inquiry in the context of post-doctorate positions where he found the experience stifling and toxic.

Second, all participants relied on passive referrals for their career activities. Peter relied on family loans and startups with unreliable acquaintances, and job leads from classmates, acquaintances and LinkedIn posts. Victor relied on his mother and corporate manager in his first

activity, and existing contacts and friends for his third. Leonard relied on his mother and girlfriend for important career influences.

Third, all three participants showed low engagement with chance in terms of exploring and monitoring to support their desired direction. Peter and Victor showed low monitoring for threats, with Peter admitting he didn't monitor and adapt to changes in his industry and did jump in and out of failing parallel business ventures, and Victor admitting that he expected to be treated fairly and have his interests protected by others. Additionally, Peter, Victor and Leonard showed low exploration for fit before committing to a career direction. Peter pursued an executive MBA that did not fit his needs, and Peter, Victor and Leonard pursued roles that undermined their needs for power, feedback, empathy and emotion.

Fourth, all participants showed an innate personal value that interfered with their desired direction. For Peter, business failure undermined his abilities, and he sought validation from getting hired rather than pursuing a career direction. Victor initially avoided theatrical production due to fears of inadequacy and failure, and later interpreted challenges with networking and directing in the central city as undermining his suitability. Leonard pursued roles based on his belief in an innate ability to conduct rigorous human inquiry, and left roles based on a sense that there was no room to be himself in a lab, or that he was unable to apply theory or be accepted in organizational development.

Finally, all participants demonstrated a submitting change approach, where they entered career directions based on others' priorities. Peter took unwanted sales and purchasing roles, Victor took limited roles and attempted to remake them according to his needs, and Leonard allowed his initial study to be determined by admissions decisions, and abandoned his Master's training when he failed to be recruited.

One strong pattern emerged. Two participants relied on unproved trust, expecting (without proof or negotiation) a relationship whereby they would be entrusted with power, or they could entrust others to protect their interests. First, Peter expected new employers to know him and believe in him enough to give him power over purchasing and sales roles. Second, Victor expected others to treat him fairly by protecting his legal interests and giving him proper credit and compensation without paperwork.

Table 5.11

Contradictions With Instruments

Case	First	Second	Third
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Peter	<p>Narrow scope: focused on task-based jobs vs. being a boss</p> <p>Passive referrals: family loans, parallel startups with unreliable people</p> <p>Unproved trust: for self no track record; and for others - depending on people who let him down</p> <p>Low engagement with chance: failed to monitor and adapt to changing industry, wife's unfulfilled career needs</p> <p>Innate personal value: failures in business and job-hunting meant sales was only provable skill remaining</p>	<p>Passive referrals: relied on classmates, acquaintances, LinkedIn posts</p> <p>Unproved trust: for self, expected power and support without demonstrating competence</p> <p>Low engagement with chance: workplaces, feedback tempo poor fit for his needs</p> <p>Innate personal value: used hiring to validate self vs. mastering a new area</p> <p>Submitting change approach: taking unwanted work to feel accepted</p>
<hr/>		
Victor	<p>Narrow scope: corporate communications vs. theatrical production identity</p> <p>Passive referrals: relied on mother, corporate manager for guidance</p> <p>Proved trust: followed mother, avoided testing ability to survive on own, succeed in theatrical production</p> <p>Low engagement with chance: not exploring ways to exploit acceptance by theatrical production school</p> <p>Innate personal value: avoided his dream due to fear of failure</p> <p>Submitting change approach: follow mother overseas, train for unwanted corporate job</p>	<p>Narrow scope: more task-focused interviewing, directing</p> <p>Passive referrals: relied on existing contacts</p> <p>Unproved trust: expected others to protect his interests</p> <p>Low engagement with chance: not protecting self or exploring better fitting work</p> <p>Innate personal value: challenges meant he didn't belong in a city, or in a genre of work</p> <p>Submitting change approach: taking tasks that came along, trying to change them, then fighting for credit, payment</p>
<hr/>		
Leonard	<p>Narrow scope: focusing on identity as rigorous inquirer excluded his other key needs</p> <p>Passive referrals: relying on close people for career influences</p> <p>Low engagement with chance: work in science and organizational development not match expectations</p> <p>Innate personal value: pursued roles based on identity as rigorous inquirer but left roles when perceived lack of space for his emotions, lack of understanding of theory, lack of needed background.</p> <p>Submitting change approach: allowed university admissions to determine his career path. Left roles when felt excluded.</p>	

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions experienced by Seekers, four strong patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.12. First, Victor and Leonard had a broad scope because they embraced entrepreneurial aspects of work including sourcing work and funding as well as performance. Second, they actively surveyed contacts such as persisting with finding a gatekeeper into a major employer, or requesting input from trusted sources to find a rigorous coaching school and secure a discount. Third, they engaged with chance to take on tasks such as assisting with or starting theatrical production projects, or taking on clients during training. Fourth, they embraced development to achieve their transition, which included training, persistent pitching and adapting to get into a desired workplace, and developing local language skills to improve chances for success. Fifth, they both pursued change purposefully, knowing the role they wanted and how they wanted to perform it such as artistic documentary theatrical production, or rigorous and systematic coaching.

Table 5.12*Successful Seeker Instruments*

AT Element	Concepts	Victor Second Activity	Leonard Second Activity
Instruments	Scope	Broad	Broad
	Referral style	Actively surveyed initially	Actively surveyed
	Trust	Proved	Unproved
	Engagement with Chance	High for tasks Low for exploring	High
	Personal Value	Developed	Innate for concept Developed for practice
	Change Approach	Purposeful	Purposeful

Rules. The Rules are the constraints, explicit and implicit, imposed on the activity. Secondary contradictions emerged when a participant's requirement for power or freedom conflicted with another element of the activity as shown in Table 5.13. Contradictions related to power and freedom were addressed within the Instruments section.

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions experienced by Seekers, two strong patterns emerged. First, both Victor and Leonard experienced high power because they created opportunities with entrepreneurial efforts. Second, both Victor and Leonard experienced high freedom because they practised according to their priorities such as artistic theatrical production and rigour-guided coaching.

Table 5.13*Successful Seeker Rules*

AT Element	Concepts	Victor Second Activity	Leonard Second Activity
Rules	Power	High	High
	Freedom	High	High

Community. The Community is the environment in which the activity takes place. Secondary contradictions emerged when environmental conditions conflicted with another element of the activity as shown in Table 5.14. One isolated instance emerged. Victor perceived

exclusion from communities based on his identity, first as a cultural outsider in the eastern city, and second as an empathic theatrical producer in a cutthroat, and glib industry in the central city.

Table 5.14
Contradictions With Communities

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Peter				
Victor			cultural outsider in eastern city and "cutthroat" culture in the central city undermined market opportunity and identity	
Leonard				

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions experienced by Seekers, four strong patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.15. First, Victor and Leonard benefited from supportive market opportunity because there was demand for their new skill. Second, they were both able to access training resources. Third, practice was consistent with their expectations. Fourth, chance alignment was high because they were able to enter training and then secure gigs.

Table 5.15
Successful Seeker Communities

AT Element	Concepts	Victor Second Activity	Leonard Second Activity
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive initially	Supportive
	Resource availability	High	High
	Feedback tempo	Long	Short
	Presentation	Consistent	Consistent
	Stretch	High to restart	Low
	Local qualification	N/A	Helping
	Chance alignment	High	High

Division of Labour. The Division of Labour is the different roles performed by people, in addition to the Subject, to achieve the Outcome. Secondary contradictions emerged when a participant's priority alignment or member agency conflicted with another element of the activity. Such contradictions were addressed in the Instruments section.

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions experienced by Seekers, two strong patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.16. First, both Victor and Leonard experienced high priority alignment because training and work reflected their values, such as finding a sponsor for artistic theatrical production, or a trainer respecting rigorous and systematic coaching. Second, they experienced balanced member agency because Victor was able to reshape his main sponsor's work to fit his vision, and Leonard was supported by his girlfriend to retrain multiple times into his desired direction.

Table 5.16
Successful Seeker Divisions of Labour

AT Element	Concepts	Victor Second Activity	Leonard Second Activity
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High	High
	Member agency	Balanced	Balanced

Neighbouring Activities. Neighbouring activities are separate activity systems with which the participant intersects as part of their career navigation. Neighbouring activities have their own participants, priorities and structure. Quaternary contradictions emerged when a neighbouring activity conflicted with a participant's career navigation as shown in Table 5.17. Two dominant patterns emerged. First, all three participants used school acceptance to enter programs that did not serve their needs. Second, all three participants used activities meant to connect qualified people to opportunities, such as networking, recruiting, or project sponsorship, to secure work that did not serve their needs, and then attempted to remake that work according to their needs.

One isolated instance emerged. Leonard used a hobby activity to explore his needs and experience ways to satisfy them that became a new career.

Table 5.17
Contradictions With Neighbouring Activities

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Peter		Graduate school resulted in a credential but failed to help find a role that met his needs recruiting is meant to engage qualified people to fill needs but acceptance or rejection was used to determine unhappy career directions		
Victor	schools admitted based on likelihood to succeed academically but were used to validate a pathway rather than construct pathway according to identity		project sponsors expect certain work and results but he attempted to remake them according to his own needs Networking relies on matching needs to abilities but he engaged with non-humanistic networks and judged them as superficial and cutthroat	

Leonard schools admit based on likelihood of academic success but admissions choices were used to determine career direction that led to two degrees that left him unhappy

recruiting is meant to engage qualified people to fill needs but acceptance or rejection was used to determine career direction including an unhappy position and quitting altogether

hobby activity met needs while embracing purposeful change, high engagement with chance, developed personal value, and proved trust in others which contradicted career activity by demonstrating what was possible

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions experienced by Seekers, two strong patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.18. First, Victor and Leonard both used targeted training to turn an abiding personal interest into an occupation. Second, both used activities to create their own opportunities for practice.

Table 5.18
Successful Seeker Neighbouring Activities

Victor Successful Second Activity	Leonard Successful Second Activity
Successfully used theatrical production school activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - earned undergraduate award to aid employability - qualified for post-graduate grants and supervision 	Successfully used coach training activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - used program to turn hobby into credential - used French nature of program to prepare for local market
Successfully used project sponsor activities to build a portfolio and secure ongoing work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - funded independent study on a post-graduate grant - created production involving arts school and venue - pitched to major entertainment company until hired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - used program to practise and earn income before finished

Cross-Case Analysis of Completer Activity Systems. This section presents a cross-case analysis of the career transition activities of the three Completers. For each activity system element, patterns are first noted for contradictions that reflected career dilemmas; and then for changes that reflected career successes, if applicable. Patterns are labelled based on frequency: dominant means all three cases; strong means two out of three; isolated means one out of three; and dichotomy means a pattern that incorporates opposites.

Outcome and Object. The Outcome describes the expected results from the activity and the Object describes the problem space and raw materials used to achieve the Outcome. For unsatisfying career experiences, primary contradictions emerged from conflicts between a participant's use of their labour to serve themselves versus exchanging for compensation for serving others as shown in Table 5.19. One dominant pattern emerged. Three participants who focused on using their skills to serve personal needs experienced challenges that made them vulnerable in their careers and businesses. Wanda's shift to using her skills to care for family

while delegating judgment to accountants and advisers led to the downfall of her business. Susan's use of skills to maintain her freedom to care for children and control her client base led to financial vulnerability after her divorce and an unstable workload after her career transition. Helen's shift to using her skills to retreat into a diminished role and then a semi-retired lifestyle undermined her business and led to questioning whether to abandon it.

Additionally, one strong pattern emerged. Two participants experienced vulnerability when their identity as carers or helpers was undermined. First, Wanda's shift from homeschooling to managing her growing business resulted in delegating her son's education to a public school where his subsequent drugs addiction undermined her identity of having good judgment. Second, Helen's focus on exchanging skills in structured roles such as translation, secretarial work and headhunting undermined her identity as a "social worker" who naturally listened to and helped others.

Table 5.19
Primary Contradictions

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Wanda	exchanging skills for business versus using them to homeschool son and monitor his safety	using skills for family care and ceding judgment to advisers and partner versus exchanging skills to exercise control and judgment		
Susan	using skills for homemaking versus exchanging them to build a career for independent finances from ex-husband	using skills to control freedom over schedule and client choice versus exchanging skills more broadly for self or a firm		
Helen	exchanging skills to compile structured reports for business versus using skills to help people advance themselves		exchanging skills to maintain her role and navigate conflict with boss versus using skills to fulfill ambition	using skills in diminished service roles versus exchanging skills to build seniority and business

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions two dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.20. All Completers pursued an Outcome informed by a kind of problem they had experienced in the past, such as Wanda's business failure from poor advice, Susan's anxiety and disempowerment in a changing call centre, or Helen's sympathy for job applicants in a recruiting process. All Completers used an Object that repackaged skills that had emerged from their past experiences, either by enhancing them with training or credentialling, or by offering the skillset to people on the other side of the problem such a Helen used her headhunting experiences to help students secure work.

Table 5.20
Successful Completer Objects and Outcomes

AT Element	Wanda Successful Third Activity	Susan Successful Second Activity	Helen Successful Second Activity
Outcome	Facilitating organizational insight and improvement for others	becoming a credentialed professional in organizational development	growing opportunities to connect young people with their desired work
Object	Repackaging herself with post-graduate training to supplement her diverse practical experiences with theory, mentorship and credentials	pursuing disciplinary training and work that leveraged her skills in interviewing, presenting and recommending	channeling headhunting experiences into helping students get work for summer, internships and after graduation

Subject. The Subject drives the activity. Each participant was the subject driving their own career navigation activity. For unsatisfying career experiences, secondary contradictions emerged when a participant's identity or arousal conflicted with another element of the activity as shown in Table 5.21. Two strong patterns emerged. First, two participants experienced exclusion from a capable identity after a traumatic event. After her son's addiction, Wanda lost her sense of being a confident, capable businesswoman. After losing an expected promotion, Helen lost her sense as a wise and capable administrator. In each case, they retreated from positions of authority. Second, two participants expressed helper identities related to listening to others, which did not support their expressed ambitions to start and grow businesses. Susan and Helen both expressed desires to be independent consultants, but their identities related to being empathetic helpers rather than bosses chasing market opportunities. At the time of the interview, they talked about having a business, but their actions related to word-of-mouth helper tasks done for others.

Table 5.21
Contradictions With Subjects

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Wanda	Identity undermined by son's addiction within her Division of Labour	Identity and arousal undermined by reliance on advisers and partner		
Susan		Identity as "natural helper" who empowered through listening made other roles problematic		
Helen	Identity as "social worker" undermined by restrictive, detail-oriented report work	Identity as wise, valuable administrator undermined by losing promotion to toxic new boss	Identity as positive helper undermined by low priority alignment and unbalanced member agency with new boss	Identity as positive helper related to self-censoring and self-demoting vs. pursuing seniority and entrepreneurship

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions two dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.22. All Completers had a belonging identity with their desired roles, which emerged from repackaging and further developing skills they already had and valued in order to address new kinds of problems they had experienced such as organizational failure, disempowered employees, and qualified job applicants needing help to find roles. All Completers experienced encouraging arousal from engaging in the practice of their new roles. Additionally, one dichotomy emerged. In contrast to Wanda and Helen, Susan noted having to overcome an

undermining anxiety while training for and anticipating practice, although actual practice was enjoyable.

Table 5.22

Successful Completer Subjects

AT Element	Concepts	Wanda Successful Third Activity	Susan Successful Second Activity	Helen Successful Second Activity
Subject	Identity	Belonging	Belonging	Excluding for income Belonging for work
	Arousal	Encouraging	Undermining apprehension Encouraging practice	Encouraging

Instruments. Instruments are the tools used by Subjects to achieve the Outcome of their activity. For unsatisfying career experiences, secondary contradictions emerged when the habits or choices of a participant conflicted with another element of the activity as shown in Table 5.23. Four dominant patterns emerged. First, all three participants showed a narrow scope as part of their unsatisfying career activity. When she lost confidence, Wanda deferred to the judgment of others. Susan focused on task-oriented people interactions. Helen focused on task-based roles related to structured documents, reports, and headhunting.

Second, all three participants relied on passive referrals as part of their unsatisfying career activity. Wanda relied on a local school, and the "expensive" investment plans from existing advisers. Susan relied on word-of-mouth referrals and contacts made from a class project, a hairdresser and a job coaching service. Helen relied on a boyfriend, an internship employer, a boss and mentor, and existing office contacts.

Third, all three participants showed low engagement with chance as part of their unsatisfying career activity. Wanda did not see the drug problem at her local school or her son's addiction, her accountant's errors, the risk in her advisers' investment advice, her distributor's financial vulnerability, or her partner's husband's fear of debt. Susan's exploration of career options focused on one chat with a coach whose recommendation she initially resisted, and she accepted referrals and workshops without exploring whether they met her needs. Helen lacked insight into roles she trained for such as translation or how to become a consultant. She was unaware of changing expectations when a new administrator interviewed her for a promotion, and she lacked information on options when she lost the promotion.

Fourth, all three participants demonstrated innate personal value as part of their unsatisfying career activity. Wanda perceived her son's addiction as undermining her value as a businesswoman. Susan resisted a career direction when she didn't understand its name until a coach convinced her. On multiple occasions Helen avoided executing her plans to be a consultant or pursue an executive role when trusted people abandoned her, such as a boyfriend, her first husband, and her career centre mentor.

One strong pattern emerged. Two participants had a submitting change approach as part of their unsatisfying career activity. Wanda gave in to the judgment of her partner and advisers despite disagreeing. Helen submitted to headhunting, an interviewing contract, and self-demotion when she felt undermined by trusted people.

Table 5.23
Contradictions With Instruments

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Wanda	Broad scope: taking on homeschooling, business, cross-border eldercare	Narrowed scope: shifting final decisions to others		
	Passive referrals: accept local school beside office	Passive referrals: relied on judgment of partner and advisers		
	Unproved trust: expect local school to be safe	Unproved trust: trusted partner and advisers despite lack of their demonstration of expertise		
	Low engagement with chance: not monitoring for options or threats	Low engagement with chance: trusted accountant and adviser competence, distributor for support, let down by them all		
	Innate personal value: lost identity after son's addiction	Innate personal value: perceived son's addiction as undermining her judgment		
			Submitting change approach: gave in to partner and advisers despite disagreeing	
Susan	Narrow scope: focused on phone support style tasks	Narrow scope: task-oriented interview and facilitation roles		
	Passive referrals: relied on word-of-mouth for work, coach	Passive referrals: rely on contact made during job coaching, and at school		
	taking word-of-mouth jobs based on telemarketing experience and avoiding options outside that	Low engagement with chance: coaching, work referral, workshop content not align with her values		
	Low engagement with chance: resisting options vs exploring them			
	Innate personal value: relied on phone skills and resisted unfamiliar options			

Helen	Narrow scope: focused on structured, task-oriented roles	Passive referrals: relied on former boss/mentor for promotions, support	Narrow scope: accepted lessening of responsibilities as decisions taken away	Narrow scope: task-oriented roles rather than admin or business development
	Passive referrals: relied on boyfriend, workmate, internship employer for her own needs vs actively surveying referrals for roles that didn't fit	Low engagement with chance: not exploring new boss's changed expectations for interview, having no alternative options when didn't get job	Passive referrals: loss of boss/mentor meant loss of champion for her in organization	Passive referrals: relied on existing work relationships, contacts vs. developing ones to support ambitions
	Low engagement with chance: lacked insight into undergrad and Master's missing needed experiences, multiple unsatisfying roles		Proved trust: loss of boss/mentor undermined her confidence	Proved trust: relied on proved tasks and contacts
	Innate personal value: cancelling going independent multiple times due to shaken confidence		Low engagement with chance: not exploring options, remaining while job wanted redefined out of existence	Low engagement with chance: lacked exploration of alternatives and business options
	Submitting change approach: taking task-based roles		Innate personal value: loss of promotion undermined identity	Innate personal value: retreated to familiar task-based roles
				Submitting change: self-demoted, retreated from work, semi-retired, and contemplated quitting business

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions five dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.24. First, all Completers used passive familiarity to get work engagements from friends, classmates, and intimates. Second, all Completers used proved trust, such as demonstrating ability through class projects or collegial approaches, cultivating relationships with faculty to develop opportunity or overcome admissions barriers, and demonstrating performance with trusted bosses. Third, all Completers had high engagement for action by taking training and gigs that became available. Fourth, all Completers used developed personal value where they embraced learning and adapting in the face of challenges. Fifth, all Completers used a purposeful change approach of pursuing work according to their values and priorities.

Additionally, one dichotomy emerged. First, Wanda and Helen pursued a wider scope in terms of developing desired roles and embracing a broad responsibility of problem-solving, growth and administrative duties. In contrast, Susan had a narrower scope focused on performing skill-based gigs for employers.

Finally, one isolated instance emerged. Susan engaged an active survey technique to create and use faculty contacts to overcome multiple rejections by graduate admissions.

Table 5.24
Successful Completer Instruments

AT Element	Concepts	Wanda Successful Third Activity	Susan Successful Second Activity	Helen Successful Second Activity
Instruments	Scope	Wider	Narrow	Wider
	Referral style	Passively familiar	Active survey for training Passive referral for gigs	Passively familiar
	Trust	Proved for self Unproved for others	Proved	Proved

AT Element	Concepts	Wanda Successful Third Activity	Susan Successful Second Activity	Helen Successful Second Activity
	Engagement with Chance	High	High for taking action Low for exploring	High for tasks Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Developed	Developed	Developed
	Change Approach	Purposeful	Purposeful	Purposeful

Rules. The Rules are the constraints, explicit and implicit, imposed on the activity. For unsatisfying career experiences, secondary contradictions emerged when a participant's requirement for power or freedom conflicted with another element of the activity as shown in Table 5.25. One isolated instance emerged when Susan's insistence on freedom to schedule and control her clients reduced her options for career and work.

Table 5.25
Contradictions With Rules

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Wanda				
Susan	High freedom: preserving ability to schedule around children resulted in unbalanced agency (dependence on husband) reduced resources and work options	Need for freedom to control clients reduces alignment with opportunity.		
Helen				

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions one dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.26. All Completers had high freedom in their targeted transition because they were able to locate opportunities that allowed them to perform work according to their values, such as Wanda being a facilitative problem-solver, Susan being an empowering listener and communicator drawing on her own experiences, and Helen being a valued team member, using her skills and creativity to help students find the roles they want. Additionally, one dichotomy emerged. Wanda and Susan had high power when they trained for work roles but low power in taking gigs that were defined and controlled by an employer. In contrast, Helen had high power in work in which she grew in responsibilities, engaged in consensus decision-making and became an administrator.

Table 5.26
Successful Completer Rules

AT Element	Concepts	Wanda Successful Third Activity	Susan Successful Second Activity	Helen Successful Second Activity
Rules	Power	High for development Low for work	High for transition Low for gigs	High
	Freedom	High	High	High

Community. The Community is the environment in which the activity takes place. For unsatisfying career experiences, secondary contradictions emerged when environmental

conditions conflicted with another element of the activity as shown in Table 5.27. One isolated instance emerged. Susan's ability to help clients as a job coach was undermined by her community, which attracted immigrants needing work but had local qualifications for French and credentials that undermined their market availability and created a long feedback tempo for success.

Table 5.27
Contradictions With Communities

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Wanda				
Susan		low market availability, low resources for retraining, long feedback tempo, local qualifications all worked against her success as a job coach for immigrants		
Helen				

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions seven dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.28. First, all Completers experienced supportive market opportunity because there were positions available requiring their skillsets. Second, all Completers experienced high resource availability because they were able to locate and complete training and engage in work. Third, all Completers experienced short feedback tempo in practice because they experienced satisfaction through performance of their new roles. Fourth, all Completers experienced consistent presentation within actual practice because it reflected their expectations. Fifth, all Completers experienced low stretch in training and work that were available in their community. Sixth, all Completers experienced helpful local qualifications such as Wanda's student status qualifying her for a research position, Susan's accent-free bilingualism qualifying her for national and international roles, and Helen's headhunting background provided a window into the recruiting process for career centres. Seventh, all Completers experienced high alignment because they were able to secure the training and work opportunities they pursued even if, such as Susan's case, she had to retry multiple times.

Additionally, three isolated patterns emerged. First, Susan experienced a long feedback tempo for training because she was rejected multiple times before overcoming the issue. Second, she experienced inconsistent presentation in isolated gigs that lacked engagement with people, or had alienating workshop materials. Third, Wanda experienced inconsistent presentation in classes because it was an expert-driven experience rather than something she expected to respect her as an equal.

Table 5.28
Successful Completer Communities

AT Element	Concepts	Wanda Successful Third Activity	Susan Successful Second Activity	Helen Successful Second Activity
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive	Supportive	Supportive
	Resource availability	High	High	High

AT Element	Concepts	Wanda Successful Third Activity	Susan Successful Second Activity	Helen Successful Second Activity
	Feedback tempo	Short	Long for training Short for practice	Short
	Presentation	Inconsistent in class Consistent in practice	Inconsistent Consistent for narrow scope	Consistent
	Stretch	Low	Low	Low
	Local qualification	Helping	Helping	Helping
	Chance alignment	High	High	High

Division of Labour. The Division of Labour is the different roles performed by people, in addition to the Subject, to achieve the Outcome. For unsatisfying career experiences, contradictions related to the Division of Labour were addressed in terms of how choices of instruments affected priority alignment and member agency, as shown previously in the instruments section.

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions one dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.29. All Completers had high priority alignment with the people in their targeted career such as Wanda enjoying collegial respect and ownership of a project working with a coaching professor, and both Susan and Helen finding employment under mentors and allies who valued and helped them. Additionally, one dichotomy emerged. Wanda and Helen embraced balanced member agency through facilitative and collegial work with bosses and clients who valued their contributions while Susan still experienced a lack of balance, relying on task-based gigs defined and controlled by employers.

Table 5.29
Successful Completer Divisions of Labour

AT Element	Concepts	Wanda Successful Third Activity	Susan Successful Second Activity	Helen Successful Second Activity
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High	High	High
	Member agency	Balanced	Unbalanced	Balanced

Neighbouring Activities. Neighbouring activities are separate activity systems with which the participant intersects as part of their career navigation. Neighbouring activities have their own participants, priorities and structure. For unsatisfying career experiences quaternary contradictions emerged when a neighbouring activity conflicted with a participant's career navigation activity as shown in Table 5.30 One notable dichotomy emerged related to school activities. For Susan, a graduate school repeatedly rejected her despite her fit with alumni and faculty at a specific program. In contrast, Helen was twice admitted to programs for which she lacked insight into practice, which resulted in abandoning translation, and then ambitions for consulting. Additionally, one isolated pattern emerged. Wanda relied on service providers such as a public school, accountants, financial advisers, and a partner distributor, each of which failed to protect her interests in service of their own.

Table 5.30
Contradictions With Neighbouring Activities

Case	First	Second	Third	Fourth
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Wanda	<p>competitors destroyed market opportunity; undermined her original partners</p> <p>service provider failed to keep son safe, and undermined her identity, personal value, and unbalanced member agency running a business and caring for mother herself</p>	<p>service providers (financial) failed to provide accurate accounting and advice; their failures undermined her entire business</p> <p>partner (distributor) failed to support her business and ended it with a lawsuit over a mistake</p>
Susan	<p>school admissions rejected her based on past grades despite her fit with alumni and faculty</p>	
Helen	<p>school provided credentials but lacked insight or practice in actual roles which she later abandoned</p>	<p>recruiting rejected her based on fit with new regime but she interpreted it as undermining her identity</p>

In contrast, for satisfying career transitions three strong patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.31. First, Wanda and Susan both used graduate school to join a desired community of people who valued their skills and shared their values. Second, both used class projects to make connections for work. Third, both used their theses to explore a topic to inform future work. Additionally, one isolated instance emerged. Wanda used gigs for nonprofit and research work to earn money, engage in practice, and experience encouraging arousal while in school.

Table 5.31
Successful Completer Neighbouring Activities

Wanda Successful Third Activity	Susan Successful Second Activity	Helen Successful Second Activity
Used graduate school:	Used graduate school:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - joined desired community of problem-solving facilitators in organizational development - used group projects to impress classmates leading to job referral - used thesis to explore application of theory and enjoy practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - joined desired community of organizational development professionals - used course project to meet and impress future employer - used personal reflection and thesis to explore topics that supported her future work in interviewing and presenting employee issues to management 	
Used nonprofit client:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - source of work and self-worth after loss of business - opportunity to practice in "synergy" with studies 		
Used academic research:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - earned resources to support self - opportunity to impress researcher in field - enjoyed collegial practice that respected her contributions 		

Multi-Phase Analysis of Career Transition Interactions

To develop an explanation of career transition interactions, I conducted a multi-phase analysis. First, I conducted an analysis of the interaction cases to elicit concepts that explained the kinds of choices made and conditions faced by participants throughout the interviews. Second, I fitted those concepts into activity systems to derive an explanation of how choices and conditions interacted over time to produce interview outcomes, and stresses that emerged that suggested the need for change. Third, I conducted a cross-case analysis of the participants' activity systems to provide a broader explanation of career transition interactions.

Concepts Emerging From Interaction Cases

To elicit concepts that explained the kinds of choices made and conditions faced by participants, statements in each interaction case were analyzed using constant comparison to identify emerging concepts that would explain the interactions. Each concept had two states that represented extremes along a continuum. For instance, the concept of applying had extremes of advancing and impeding. By using concepts, I provide an explanation that allows for a diagnostic approach: examining the states of each concept and considering how to change those states to achieve a desired transition. A report of the constant comparative analysis detailing each systemic influence, the concepts emerging within each influence, and quantitative strengths and illustrative quotes for each concept, are reported in detail in Appendix Q. Table 5.32 summarizes the concepts emerging from the interaction cases.

Table 5.32

Summary of Concepts from Interactions

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Probing	requesting information	open (unlimited response)	transition issues job tasks lifestyle changes common experience general background	closed (limited response)	job tasks common experience transition issues lifestyle changes
Relating	comparing selves to each other	resonating (highlighted similarities)	shared experience shared feeling shared tasks shared hobbies shared context	distinguishing	rationalizing differences
Tensioning	engaging with emotional responses	settling (reducing tension)	laughing empathizing confirming value restoring	unsettling (increasing tension)	checking value demurring imbalanced disclosure recoiling
Utilizing	making meaning by offering statements	building (offer something new based on what heard)	referring summarizing	reflecting (refer to what heard)	labelling syntheses researcher proposal
Judging	responding to utilizing statements	affirming (agreement or insight)	agreement insight	refining (correcting or refining)	refined corrected
Applying	addressing actions to resolve challenges	advancing (explored how challenges navigated)	bridged gaps addressed objections sought contact	impeding (created barriers to exploration)	raised objections withheld info

Activity Systems Emerging From Interaction Cases

I conducted an activity theory analysis by fitting the interaction concepts to activity systems, analyzing each pair of participants' interactions in the form of activity systems, and then conducting a cross-case analysis.

Fitting Concepts to a Career Interaction Activity System. To explore how the interaction concepts worked together as an activity of career interaction, I fitted the concepts to the activity system structure. The structure of the activity was defined by this study, which focused on a dialogue among participants. The results of the activity revealed the nature of the Instruments, Community and Division of Labour arising from that dialogue. Table 5.33 defines each activity system element, concepts fitted to that element, their definitions and continuums of possible states.

Table 5.33
Career Interaction Concepts Fitted to the Activity System Structure

AT Element	AT Definition	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Extreme 2
Outcome	Desired result		uncovering systemic influences affecting career transitions to provide insight into how they can be navigated		
Object	Problem space of motivating concern and raw materials		facilitating a dialogue among a Completer, Seeker and researcher guided by the Systems Theory Framework		
Subject	Driver of the activity		researcher seeking to answer research questions by providing participants with an opportunity to learn through interactions		
Instruments	Tools used by participants, comprising unconscious operations (habits to overcome resistance) and conscious actions (goals and strategy)	probing	requesting information	open (unlimited response)	closed (limited response)
		relating	comparing selves to each other	resonating (highlighted similarities)	distinguishing
		tensioning	engaging with emotional responses	settling (reducing tension)	unsettling (increasing tension)
		utilizing	making meaning by offering statements	building (offer something new based on what heard)	reflecting (refer to what heard)
		judging	responding to utilizing statements	affirming (agreement or insight)	refining (correcting or refining)
		applying	addressing actions to resolve challenges	advancing (explored how challenges navigated)	impeding (created barriers to exploration)
Rules	Constraints on the activity		Expressed by facilitator: avoid advice; explore STF influences; encourage interruptions, questions, corrections Self-imposed by Completers: hesitant to question Seekers		
Community	Context of the activity		Pool of recruits for matching, their locations of participation, Zoom videoconference with live video of participants and facilitator note-taking		
Division of Labour	Participants in the activity	Facilitator	prompts disclosures and reflections from Completer, and reactions and questions from Seeker		
		Completer	source of career transition actions and consequences, fresh insights		

AT Element	AT Definition	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Extreme 2
		Seeker	source of career frustrations, hopes, questions and appreciation for Completer's achievements		

Activity Theory Analysis for Each Group of Participants. The activity theory analysis for each group's meeting interactions is reported in detail in Appendix S.

Cross-Case Analysis of Interaction Activity Systems

This section presents a cross-case analysis of the three instances of career interaction activity. The analysis is presented in the form of an emerging model activity system. The analysis proceeds through each element of the activity system and their contradictions, and labels patterns based on frequency: dominant means all three cases; strong means two out of three; isolated means one out of three; and dichotomy means a pattern that incorporates opposites.

Outcome. The Outcome describes the expected results from the activity. This section compares outcomes for pairs based on changes in their FCAs and survey results. The intended Outcome of the activity was to assist the researcher and the participants with learning about systemic influences that affect midlife career transition, and related navigational strategies. Learning was facilitated through the process of the semi-structured dialogue about career paths. To identify what learning actually occurred, I asked participants to express their ideas about career both before and after the dialogues so I could observe measurable changes in their behaviour.

Comparison of FCAs. The Future Career Autobiographies (FCAs) were written before and after the meeting to see how the meeting might have affected participants. Note that of the six participants, Leonard failed to complete the exercise for his Seeker-Completer meeting. For comparison purposes, results from his Seeker meeting are shown and asterisked but are not included in the cross-case analysis.

Change in FCA Word Count. Two dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.34. First, in all cases word counts changed. Second, in all cases excepting Peter in case 1, word counts increased after the meeting. One strong pattern emerged. In cases 1 and 3 the Completer had the largest word count increase of over 20%. Two isolated instances emerged. First, in case 1, Peter's word count decreased significantly in contrast to a significant increase for Wanda. Second, in case 2, the word count increase was very small for both participants.

Table 5.34

Change in FCA Word Count

Pair		FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	
1	Peter	65	34	-31	-31%
	Wanda	87	133	46	21%
2	Victor	144	151	7	2%
	Susan	103	105	2	1%
3	*Leonard	158	196	38	11%

Helen	131	219	88	25%
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Change in FCA Individual Coding. One strong pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.35. Cases 1 and 3 had more emotional focus. One related dichotomy emerged. In Case 1 participants diverged such that the Completer was more sure of herself and her direction but the Seeker was more vague and hopeful about possibilities. In Case 3 the Completer abandoned her business identity and considered refocusing on her life partner. One isolated instance emerged. In case 2 participants were both practical, shifting from dreams and ideals towards skills and career development steps. Changes indicated learning with respect to how participants viewed their possible future after having a dialogue about their past. Dialogues elicited evidence about past decisions and consequences, which participants could compare with how they saw their future and their role in it. Learning occurred when participants realized their past supported or undermined their future, resulting in either increased confidence and more practical plans, or rethinking.

Table 5.35
Change in FCA Individual Coding

Pair	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift	
1	Peter	6	4	-2	reduced details of fulfillment needs, abandoned need for decision-making and power, but reopened entrepreneur option
	Wanda	2	4	2	stronger identity, confidence
2	Victor	5	4	-1	less about feelings and more about skills, freedom
	Susan	6	5	-1	less about freedom to do dream public service project and more about options for career development
3	*Leonard	3	10	7	more about his planned roles, feelings, and time allocation
	Helen	3	2	-1	abandoned career identity and tasks and focused on reprioritizing partner

Change in FCA Social Coding. Two strong patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.36. First, in cases 1 and 2 Completers shifted from proving reputation to others or gathering people with shared values for a dream project, towards finding more practical collaborations to advance their careers. Second, in cases 1 and 2 Seekers shifted from passively experiencing commitment and harmony from others, towards actively seeking others with shared values and respect. One isolated instance emerged. In case 3 the Completer shifted away from collaborations or work to refocus on her partner and friends. Changes indicated learning with respect to how participants viewed the role of relationships within career navigation. Dialogues elicited evidence about past relationships (fruitful and otherwise), but also engaged participants in discussion with someone who shared their experiences and contributed to insights despite being in different vocations. Learning occurred when participants realized that people were a potential resource to help build their desired future, rather than a source of safety.

Table 5.36*Change in FCA Social Coding*

Pair	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
1	Peter	1	1	0 shifted from commitment from employer to alignment with values
	Wanda	2	2	0 shifted from building reputation to networking for new work and new collaborations
2	Victor	3	1	-2 removed needs for empathy and harmony in workplace and focused on mutual respect
	Susan	1	3	2 shift from people needed for dream project to collaborations want to develop career
3	*Leonard	3	4	1 shift from alignment and commitment of a vague team to more diversity and provocation from a leadership team with actual names
	Helen	3	3	0 shift from collaboration with likeminded people to reprioritizing partner, family and friends

Change in FCA Environmental Coding. One strong pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.37. Both the case 1 Seeker and Case 3 Completer, who were emotional and questioning themselves after their meeting, did not address the environment. Two isolated instances emerged. First, the Case 2 Seeker shifted to seeking an energized feedback tempo for success. Second, the Case 2 Completer shifted from a focus on her dream project to simply noting a general need for it. Changes did not indicate learning with respect to the importance of environment, but did suggest that people who were less confident after the dialogues were also less engaged with their environmental influences, perhaps due to emotions turning their attention inward.

Table 5.37*Change in FCA Environmental Coding*

Pair	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
1	Peter	0	0	0 doesn't address his environment
	Wanda	2	1	-1 removed mention of regularity of work
2	Victor	1	1	0 shift from stable and productive to continuing to advance and make positive impact
	Susan	1	1	0 maintains note that her dream project is needed
3	*Leonard	6	0	-6 no longer mentions grants, donations, worldwide reach, or range of sectors, or income or regularity of success
	Helen	1	0	-1 no longer mention active practice or work

Change in FCA Chance Coding. One strong pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.38. the Case 1 Completer, and both the Case 2 Seeker and Completer expanded chance to include new work options such as new collaborations, corporate work, new learning, and joining a firm. Two isolated instances emerged. First the Case 1 Seeker never addressed chance. Second, the Case 3 Completer revealed her lack of business success and her reasons to abandon it. Changes indicated learning with respect to how participants viewed possibilities for their future. Dialogues afforded participants with the ability to express who they were and what they planned, and to hear new options from someone they could relate to. Changes suggested that the process prompted reflection and rethinking whereby participants re-evaluated self-imposed limitations that had protected their independence, or engaged in a reality check about how successful their strategies had been.

Table 5.38
Change in FCA Chance Coding

Pair	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
1	Peter	0	0	0 doesn't address chance
	Wanda	2	3	1 expanded chance to include collaboration not just for new work but for new kind of projects
2	Victor	1	2	1 expanded chance to include potential for working corporate and investigating new learning
	Susan	1	1	0 expanded chance to include potential for working in a firm
3	*Leonard	4	3	-1 removed mentions of worldwide, multi-sector impact and refocuses on meeting new people
	Helen	0	1	1 first mention of lack of business success

Change in FCA Decision-making Coding. One strong pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.39. The Seeker in Case 1 and both Seeker and Completer in Case 2 improved purposefulness with more details such as eliminating sales as a job option, seeking a fit for skills by investigating training and the corporate sphere, and moving away from a dream project to focus on career development and growth through contracts or employment at a firm. Two isolated instances emerged. First, the Case 1 Completer retained her consultancy focus with improved individual confidence. Second, the Case 3 Completer questioned her entire future and considered abandoning her business plans. Changes indicated learning with respect to how participants planned to achieve a desired future. Dialogues afforded participants with the opportunity to explore and discuss the strategies and steps used to navigate actual career transitions. Changes suggested that the process prompted a focus on desired roles and options for achieving them.

Table 5.39
Change in FCA Decision-making Coding

Pair	FCA 1	FCA 2	Change	Shift
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1	Peter	1	2	1	added purpose of avoiding sales and including entrepreneur as an option
	Wanda	2	1	-1	retained consulting focus but no longer mentioned retirement
2	Victor	1	3	2	more specific about seeking fit for his skills and considering applying them in corporate sphere with training
	Susan	2	3	1	shift away from doing the dream project towards employing her skillset, developing her career knowledge with others through business growth or joining a firm
3	*Leonard	1	2	1	shift focus from running organization to coaching
	Helen	1	5	4	shift from running a business encompassing all past experiences to noting patterns, questioning priorities, and considering abandoning career for relationships

Comparison of Surveys. In this section, I compare the survey results of the three pairs of participants.

Comparison of Suggestions After Seeker-Completer Meeting. Two dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.40. First, all Completers wanted to know more about their Seeker. Second, in all three cases, one participant reported both emotional impacts of intensity, anxiety or processing as well as receiving positive value from the experience.

Table 5.40
Comparison of Suggestions After Seeker-Completer Meeting

Pair	Value	Reactions	Requests	
1	Peter	N/A	N/A	
	Wanda	revelation, super interesting, really interesting, fruitful how wanted to think about career transition but struggled with	kind of sharing elicited... is so intense	learn about Seeker's story before start to feel connected, safe
2	Victor	empowering, enriching, informs, incredibly positive	normal anxiety as face gaps in knowledge of career transition	N/A
	Susan	N/A	N/A	wanted to ask Seeker how he finds projects
3	Leonard	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Helen	process and questions excellent, very thoughtful summaries and probes helpful, astute	still processing, not sure how feel or think, long, quite tired	hear more from Seeker

Comparison of Plans After Seeker-Completer Meeting. One dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.41. All three Completers and one Seeker planned to meet with more people to learn about transitions and themselves, to meet someone interesting or increase a network, or to learn about plans they could apply to their own retirement. One strong pattern emerged. In cases 2 and 3 one Seeker and one Completer planned to investigate new options for their futures. Changes indicated learning with respect to the value of talking to others for advancing their own career desires. Dialogues afforded participants with the opportunity to experience sharing, safety and insight with a relatable and sympathetic person about personal and career experiences that triggered vulnerability and anxiety.

Table 5.41*Comparison of Plans After Seeker-Completer Meeting*

Pair	People	Options	
1	Peter	talk to others about own career goals, their transitions survey contacts for how see me, my skills	N/A
	Wanda	help think more confidently, key ideas to package self reminded important to meet with interesting people, inspired to resume	N/A
2	Victor	N/A	look into further education to use skillset vast landscape, whole mindset was not aware about
	Susan	continue open discussions with network and increasing network	N/A
3	Leonard	N/A	N/A
	Helen	talk to or read about others letting go in retirement	think deeply about life balance, relationships, retirement, next 20 years

Comparison of Surprises After Seeker-Completer Meeting. Two dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.42. First, in all three cases one participant described the fruitfulness, value, or richness of the process. Second, in all three cases, at least one participant expressed insights related to new ways of looking at themselves. One strong pattern emerged. Seekers from cases 1 and 2 expressed surprise that others had similar experiences or skills to theirs and could be resources to learn from. Two isolated instances emerged. First, in case 1, both participants expressed insights about themselves. Second, in case 2, the Completer noted her negative reaction to being called a salesperson. Changes indicated learning with respect to how participants viewed the value of career conversations. Dialogues elicited stories and patterns that helped participants identify helpful and unhelpful strategies, and experience the value of speaking with others to identify new options and to hear new perspectives on their own challenges.

Table 5.42
Comparison of Surprises After Seeker-Completer Meeting

Pair	Insights	Reactions
1	Peter blaming self for stuff out of control wanting to fit where don't belong	N/A
	others have similar experiences, learn from others	
	Wanda new way to look at her work, past and future	great and fruitful
	perspectives not considered before interesting new ideas	
2	Victor push away from ideas causing stagnancy	incredibly valuable
	someone who seemed different had very similar skills and thinking and working her job he could imagine doing	
	look at career path in new ways using more influences	
	Susan N/A	being called salesperson
	Leonard N/A	N/A
3	Helen rethinking who want to be, what want despite being completer	quite a rich process
	patterns from simple stories	

Object. The Object is the problem space and raw materials used to achieve the Outcome. In this study, the problem space was midlife career transition, and the raw materials were the stories used in dialogues.

Content and Process of Dialogue. Two dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.43. First, all three cases included the transition story of the Completer, as expected. Second, all three cases lacked Seeker interactions in the closing. Two strong patterns emerged. First, in cases 1 and 2 a processing phase with similar proportions of participant interactions occurred. Second, in cases 2 and 3 Completers interacted in the closing. Five isolated instances occurred. First, only case 1 included the career loss and dilemma of the Seeker. Second, the same case included Completer interactions in the introduction to request Seeker background. Third, the same case featured a near-even divide of interactions during story-elicitation. Fourth, only case 3 had no processing phase. Fifth, only case 2 had no interactions in the closing.

Table 5.43
Content and Process of Dialogue

Case	Story	Phases of Dialogue	Seeker Proportion	Completer Proportion	Proportion of Dialogue
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1: Peter and Wanda	Wanda transition Peter catastrophe	Introduction	20%	80%	5%
		Story-Elicitation	53%	47%	49%
		Processing	67%	33%	43%
		Closing	0%	100%	2%
2: Victor and Susan	Susan transition	Introduction	100%	0%	2%
		Story-Elicitation	86%	14%	59%
		Processing	67%	33%	39%
		Closing	0%	0%	0%
3: Leonard and Helen	Helen transition	Introduction	100%	0%	6%
		Story-Elicitation	70%	30%	86%
		Closing	0%	100%	9%

Subject. The Subject drives the career exploration activity. As the driver, the Subject recruited participants, matched them, and facilitated dialogues.

Basis of Researcher Matching. One strong pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.44. In cases 2 and 3 I matched based on skills and values. One isolated instance emerged in case 1 where I matched based on a similar life experiences of career loss.

Table 5.44
Basis of Researcher Matching

Case	Matching Basis	Kind of Match
1: Peter and Wanda	each was entrepreneur who lost their business and transitioned to new work	career loss experience
2: Victor and Susan	each valued interviewing people to learn about them	skills and values
3: Leonard and Helen	each valued counselling/coaching style helping work, mind-body hobbies like yoga	skills and values

Researcher Facilitations. One dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.45. In each case, I used multiple occasions to prompt the Seeker for questions or offer synthesis to either participant. One strong pattern emerged. In cases 1 and 2, I prompted participants for reflections after a substantive exploration of the Completer's career. One isolated instance emerged. In case 3, I supplemented the Seeker's brief introduction to add his reasons for transition.

Table 5.45
Researcher Facilitations

Case	Prompt Seeker for Questions	Offer Synthesis for Judgment	Intervention
1: Peter and Wanda	8	5	Addressed Wanda's discomfort about Peter's lack of disclosure by having him provide more of an introduction Prompted for reflections about meeting
2: Victor and Susan	4	4	Pointed out shared values and methods despite different jobs Prompted a comparison of coach, mentor, and interviewee Prompted for reflections about meeting
3: Leonard and Helen	6	2	With permission, supplemented Seeker's introduction by providing a summary of his reasons for transition, from his Seeker interview After Seeker prompted a traumatic story from Completer, checked she was okay Noted similarity of participants relying on romantic partners for career change

Instruments. Instruments are the tools used to achieve the Outcome of the activity.

Proportions of Interactions Per Meeting Phase. One dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.46. In all three cases story-elicitation was the most frequent source of interactions. One strong pattern emerged. In cases 1 and 2, a processing phase occupied close to forty percent of interactions. Three isolated instances emerged. First, each case had a different amount of interactions ranging from 35 through 61 (1.7 times greater) to 91 (2.6 times greater). Second, case 2 lacked interactions in the closing phase. Third, case 3 lacked a processing phase.

Table 5.46

Proportions of Interactions Per Meeting Phase

Case	Introduction		Story-elicitation		Processing		Closing		Total Instrument Use	
Peter and Wanda	5	5%	45	49%	39	43%	2	2%	91	100%
Victor and Susan	1	2%	36	59%	24	39%	0	0%	61	100%
Leonard and Helen	2	6%	30	86%	0	0%	3	9%	35	100%

Proportions of Seeker-Completer Participation. One dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.47. Overall, Seekers had more interactions than Completers. Four strong patterns emerged. First, for Introductions, in cases 2 and 3 Seekers provided 100% of interactions. Second, for Story-elicitations, in cases 2 and 3, Seekers provided far more interactions (1.9 to 3.8 times more) than Completers. Third, for Processing in cases 1 and 2, Completers provided 1/3 and Seekers provided 2/3 of interactions. Fourth, for Closings, in cases 1 and 3, Completers provided 100% of interactions. Two isolated instances emerged. First, for Introductions the case 1 Completer not only participated but interacted far more than the Seeker to request and confirm balanced disclosure. Second, for Story-elicitation and overall participation, the case 1 participants had more-evenly split participation.

Table 5.47

Proportions of Seeker-Completer Participation

Case	Introduction		Story-elicitation		Processing		Closing		Total Participation	
	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S	C	S
1. Peter and Wanda	80%	20%	47%	53%	33%	67%	100%	0%	44%	56%
2. Victor and Susan	0%	100%	14%	86%	33%	67%	-	-	21%	79%
3. Leonard and Helen	0%	100%	30%	70%	-	-	100%	0%	34%	66%

Proportions of Instrument Usage. Two strong patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.48. First, cases 1 and 3 both had much higher relating and tensioning than Case 2. Second, in cases 2 and 3 probing comprised over 25% of interactions. Two isolated instances emerged. First, case 1 had the lowest amount of probes and the highest amount of relating, judging and applying.

Second, case 2 had the lowest amount of relating and tensioning and the highest amount of probing and utilizing.

Table 5.48
Proportions of Instrument Usage

Instrument	Pair					
	Wanda and Peter		Susan and Victor		Helen and Leonard	
probing	9	9.9%	18	29.5%	9	25.7%
relating	15	16.5%	4	6.6%	4	11.4%
tensioning	17	18.7%	2	3.3%	8	22.9%
utilizing	16	17.6%	19	31.1%	5	14.3%
judging	19	20.9%	9	14.8%	4	11.4%
applying	15	16.5%	9	14.8%	5	14.3%
Total within their meeting	91	100.0%	61	100.0%	35	100.0%

For each pair of participants, this table shows the count of each kind of interaction, and the proportion of that count compared to total interactions

Rules. The Rules are the constraints, explicit and implicit, imposed on the activity.

Implicit Rules of Participants. One dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.49. All three cases initially lacked Seeker information about their career dilemma. One strong pattern emerged. In cases 2 and 3 the Completer in a survey wanted more from the Seeker which suggested their inference of a rule against asking the Seeker questions during the meeting. Two isolated instances emerged. First, in case 1 the Completer expressed discomfort in sharing her story with an unknown Seeker, which I interpreted as a request for Seeker information. Second, in case 3 the Seeker's hunger and fatigue abruptly ended the meeting, which had lacked a schedule of phases to ensure meaning-making occurred.

Table 5.49
Implicit Rules of Participants

Case	Challenges	Implied Rules	Missing Explicit Rules
1: Peter and Wanda	Seeker lacked detail or dilemma in introduction	Completer implied rule of balanced personal disclosure	Lack rule to disclose dilemma
2: Victor and Susan	Seeker lacked detail or dilemma in introduction		Lack rule to disclose dilemma
	Completer didn't ask Seeker desired question	Completer inferred rule of not asking Seeker about securing work	

3: Leonard and Helen	Seeker lacked detail or dilemma in introduction	Lack rule to disclose dilemma
	Lacked processing phase	Lack rule to schedule phases
	Completer wanted more Seeker info	Completer inferred rule of not asking Seeker about himself

Community. The Community is the environment, real and virtual, in which the activity takes place.

Recruiting Sources of Participants. One dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.50. All participants were recruited based on receiving a referral to the study from a trusted contact from a familiar organization. Two strong patterns emerged. First, cases 1 and 2 featured participants from the same region. Second, cases 1 and 2 featured Completers from the same graduate program. Two isolated instances emerged. First, case 3 had participants from two different cities communicating across a 6-hour difference. Second, the same case had both participants with similar graduate training in organizational development.

Table 5.50
Recruiting Sources of Participants

Case	City	Source	Referral
1: Peter	eastern North America	Non-profit social services	trusted professor who worked with them
1: Wanda	eastern North America	Alumni listserv for organizational development	trusted professor in organizational development
2: Victor	eastern North America	Non-profit social services	trusted professor who worked with them
2: Susan	eastern North America	Alumni listserv for organizational development	trusted professor in organizational development
3: Leonard	eastern North America (Participated from Europe)	Alumni listserv for organizational development	trusted professor in organizational development
3: Helen	central North America	Former employer (career centre)	former colleague of Completer

Challenges Within Virtual Community. One strong pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.51. In cases 1 and 3 the system and process to collect surveys and FCAs resulted in loss or confusion. One isolated instance emerged. In case 3 the virtual community crossed a six-hour time difference such that the Seeker in Europe was hungry and tired at 9 p.m. while the Completer and facilitator were talking mid-afternoon in their location.

Table 5.51
Challenges Within Virtual Community

Case	Challenge
1: Peter and Wanda	Peter lost first FCA and ignored error message of system Wanda lacked enough prior notice to complete survey and FCA before meeting

2: Victor and Susan	
<hr/>	
3: Leonard and Helen	survey and FCA missing for Completer interview
	6-hour time difference led to abrupt end due to hunger and fatigue

Division of Labour. The Division of Labour is the different roles performed by people, in addition to the Subject, to achieve the Outcome. First, I compare participant profiles and then the roles they played in each phase of the dialogues.

Participant Profiles. Four dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.52. First, all participants had post-graduate education, although Peter's degree was an executive MBA without a completed undergraduate degree. Second, all participants' current careers were people-oriented services. Third, all Seekers were male, and all Completers were female. Fourth, all Completers were older than Seekers. Two strong patterns emerged. First, Seekers in cases 1 and 2 were in their 40s. Second, Completers in cases 1 and 3 were in their 60s. Two isolated instances emerged. First, each Completer was older than their Seeker by different amounts ranging from 7 years (15% older) through 18 years (41% older) to 28 years (76% older). Second, Case 1 had both participants with a similar background of entrepreneurial loss.

Table 5.52
Participant Profiles

Case	Age	Sex	Starting Career	Current Career	Education
1: Peter	44	M	multimedia production entrepreneur	professional services salesman	Post-Graduate
1: Wanda	62	F	juvenile clothing entrepreneur	organizational development consultant	Post-Graduate
2: Victor	47	M	theatrical producer	theatrical producer	Post-Graduate
2: Susan	54	F	beer telesales, telemarketing consultant, anxiety helpline	organizational development contractor	Post-Graduate
3: Leonard	37	M	science research	life coach	Post-Graduate
3: Helen	65	F	translator, secretary, headhunter, career counsellor, career centre administrator	student adviser, yoga teacher	Post-Graduate

Roles Played by Participants in Introduction Phase. One dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.53. All three Seekers withheld their career dilemma. Three isolated instances emerged from Case 1: first, the Completer noted her desire for more Seeker information; second, the Seeker contributed his story of failure and career dilemma when asked; and third, business failures became a point of relating for the participants.

Table 5.53
Roles Played by Participants in Introduction Phase

Case	S	C
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1: Peter and Wanda	withheld career challenge information	noted imbalanced disclosure from Seeker
	shared own career catastrophe when asked	probed general background
		related to shared experience of loss
		restored by balance
2: Victor and Susan	withheld career challenge information	N/A
3: Leonard and Helen	withheld career challenge information agreed facilitator summary	N/A

Roles Played by Participants in Story-elicitation Phase. Two dominant patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.54. First, all Seekers referred back to Completer story elements and labelled or synthesized them. Second, all Completers attempted to relate to Seekers based on a potential shared experience such as credentialling through graduate school, writing in the French language, or bicycling.

Four strong patterns emerged. First, in cases 1 and 3 after Seekers demurred from a researcher prompt, Completers checked for the value of sharing their emotional stories and then Seekers responded by confirming value. Second, in cases 1 and 3 Seekers and Completers shared laughs to relieve tension. Third, in cases 2 and 3 both Seekers probed for transition issues and job tasks. Fourth, in cases 2 and 3 both Seekers explicitly sought negative experiences from Completers.

Three isolated instances emerged. First, in case 1 the Seeker resonated with the similar experiences he shared with the Completer. Second, in case 1 the Completer empathized with the struggles shared by the Seeker. Third, in case 3 the Seeker followed-up his question for negatives by seeking "roses" that came from his Completer's negative experiences.

Table 5.54
Roles Played by Participants in Story-elicitation Phase

Case	S	C
1: Peter and Wanda	labelling, synthesizing and referring	refining or correcting, agreeing insight
	resonating shared experiences and feelings about loss of business while rationalizing different choices	relating based on transition, grad school
	demurring prompt, confirming value	checking value
	laughing	laughing
		empathizing
2: Victor and Susan	labelling, synthesizing and referring seeking transition steps	refining or correcting, agreeing
	probing transition issues and job tasks	relating based on challenge of French language
	tensioning by seeking negativity	

3: Leonard and Helen	labelling, synthesizing and referring	agreeing
	probing transition issues, job tasks, lifestyle changes	relating attempt based on bicycling
	tensioning by seeking negativity	checking value
	demurring prompt, confirming value	laughing
	laughing	
	seeking "roses" from negativity	
bridging transition gaps		

Roles Played by Participants in Processing Phase. Three strong patterns emerged as shown in Table 5.55. First, in cases 1 and 2 Seekers labelled and synthesized what they heard, and Completers corrected, refined or agreed. Second, in cases 1 and 2 both Seekers probed for transition issues. Third, in cases 1 and 2 the Completer chose to assist me by explaining information interviews to the Seeker using personal experiences.

Two isolated instances emerged. First, in case 1 the Seeker objected to applying the Completer's steps to himself. Second, in case 1 the Completer addressed the Seeker's objections with her own examples.

Table 5.55
Roles Played by Participants in Processing Phase

Case	S	C
1: Peter and Wanda	labelling and synthesizing	correcting or refining
	probing transition issues	helping facilitator explain information interviews
	raising objections to implement Wanda's actions	addressing Seeker objections
	resonating shared experiences and feelings of loss and graduate school	empathizing with Seeker and recoiling
	rationalizing differences in choices	
2: Victor and Susan	labelling and synthesizing	correcting or agreeing
	probing transition issues and job tasks	helping facilitator explain information interviews
	seeking transition steps and additional contact (career coach name)	labelling or synthesizing
3: Leonard and Helen	N/A	N/A

Roles Played by Participants in Closing Phase. One dominant pattern emerged as shown in Table 5.56. No Seekers actively engaged in the closing. One strong pattern emerged. In cases 1 and 3 the Completer offered further contact to the Seeker.

Table 5.56
Roles Played by Participants in Closing Phase

Case	S	C
1: Peter and Wanda	N/A	seeking additional contact to talk laughing in relief, expressing value
2: Victor and Susan	N/A	N/A
3: Leonard and Helen	N/A	seeking additional contact offering work contacts probing common experience of European travel to resonate over travel

Contradictions Arising From the Interaction Activity. Challenges from participant interactions revealed contradictions within the interactions activity as shown in Table 5.57.

Two dominant patterns emerged. First, no Seekers disclosed their career dilemma, which revealed a contradiction between Rules, which lacked such guidance, and the Outcome. Second, participant backgrounds affected the roles they played, which revealed a contradiction between an idiosyncratic Division of Labour (which could be empathetic or imposing motivations and identities, or picking at negativities in a detached fashion) and the Outcome.

Three strong patterns emerged. First, in cases 1 (a Seeker) and 3 (a Completer) a participant shared an emotionally-charged loss in their career, and expressed confusion about their future, which revealed a contradiction between the Object and Outcome of the activity and the individual emotional vulnerability in the Division of Labour. Second, in cases 2 and 3 the Completers noted in their surveys that they had wanted more information from the Seeker, which revealed a contradiction between the Rules, which did not provide clear guidance to encourage sharing by the Seeker, and the individual needs of the Division of Labour. Third, in cases 1 and 3 the Completer shared catastrophic personal events and when a Seeker passed on making follow-up questions, the Completer inquired whether their disclosure of loss was helpful, which revealed a contradiction between the lack of active listening skills of the Division of Labour and the Community of discussion.

One isolated instance emerged. Case 3 lacked any processing phase because it focused on story-elicitation until the Seeker ran out of energy, which revealed a contradiction between the Rules, which lacked structure of the phases of the meeting, and the needs of the Division of Labour.

Table 5.57
Contradictions Arising From the Interactions Activity

Element	Case		
	1: Peter and Wanda	2: Victor and Susan	3: Leonard and Helen
Outcome and Object	not address emotional state of Seeker who focused on his losses and confusion and objected to applying Completer steps		not address emotional vulnerability of Completer who abruptly questioned her future post-meeting
Instruments	focused on processing his emotions and regrets rather than transition		

Rules	Seeker did not disclose career dilemma to balance vulnerability	Seeker did not disclose career dilemma to balance vulnerability Completer didn't ask Seeker questions she wanted to	Seeker did not disclose career dilemma to balance vulnerability Completer didn't ask Seeker questions she wanted to Lacked scheduled phases so processing never happened
Community	Completer checked for value after sharing catastrophe and Seeker demurred questions Loss of Peter's first Seeker FCA close match related to Seeker trying to make sense of regret and loss	Seeker's "sales" meaning-making offended Completer	Completer checked for value after sharing catastrophe and Seeker demurred questions Loss of Leonard FCAs, survey for meeting Six-hour time difference related to hunger, fatigue
Division of Labour	participant background affects roles they play such as empathizing, answering objections	participant background affects roles they play such as harvesting detail and imposing motivation and identity on someone else's story	participant background affects roles they play such as a detached observer seeking areas of interest and spectacular failures

Answering the Research Questions

The overall phenomenon I wished to explore was how people in midlife could engage in structured dialogues to explore midlife career transition, and what explanations arose from those dialogues. In this section, I address the two main research questions based on the cross-case analysis.

Research Question 1: How Did Participants Engage With and React to a Multi-Party Facilitated Conversation About Midlife Career Change?

This question is answered through the sub-questions below.

How Did Participants Express Their Future Differently After the Dialogue? All participants, Seekers and Completers, described their future differently in post-meeting FCAs but differed in magnitude and kind. The magnitude of change in writing related to the kinds of career stories they had told. The largest word-count changes of 20% or more related to participants who had shared emotional stories of loss, such as Peter and Wanda losing a business or Helen losing a promotion and self-demoting. Such emotional cases could result in integrating, such as Wanda feeling more confident that past patterns supported her future, or disintegrating, such as Seeker Peter hoping more vaguely for new possibilities, and Completer Helen considering abandoning her retirement career for a more social future guided by other retirees. Both emotional-disintegrating participants lacked environmental influences in their second FCA. In contrast, the smallest word-count changes of 1-2% related to participants in Case 2 who had told stories of slowly working their way towards something they wanted without any tragic loss.

Both Seeker and Completer participants changed the way they described interacting with people in terms of what they sought from relationships. In FCAs, Seekers Peter and Victor (who had both told stories of betrayal by others) shifted their FCAs away from more passive desires to have commitment and harmony from others towards more active intentions to seek others who shared their values and offered mutual respect. In surveys, both expressed surprise

that other people had similar skills or experiences, and could be resources to learn from. Completers Wanda and Susan, who both saw their futures positively, shifted their focus from proving their reputation or finding people for a philanthropic project, towards finding collaborations with others to advance their practical careers. In contrast, Completer Helen, who saw her future more negatively, described a retreat from career collaborations towards relationships of family and friends. All three Completers and Seeker Peter expressed plans to meet people. The emotional cases of Peter, Wanda and Helen expressed a desire to learn from others, while the non-emotional case of Susan focused on interacting with and increasing her network. Participants' approaches to social contacts may be related to safety whereby they shrink to passive referrals within an existing sphere when less confident, but are willing to more actively survey contacts for their own needs when feeling more confident.

Some Seeker and Completer participants expressed new options for engaging with chance. Completer Wanda, and Seeker Victor and Completer Susan (who all had positive ideas about their future) added new options to their second FCAs such as new learning, new collaborations and kinds of work, and considering moving from independence to corporate work or joining a firm. Some changes expressed by participants reflected a potential increase in practical steps for purposeful decision-making. Although Seeker Peter's future became more vague, he did eliminate future work in sales. Seeker Victor planned to explore training and the corporate sphere for his skills, and Completer Susan shifted away from her dream project to focus on developing her career, and she shifted from insisting on freedom to considering employment at a firm.

Changes in the way participants expressed their future can be interpreted as learning that occurred during the dialogues. For instance, discussing a career path led to learning about the self in terms of patterns of behaviour. Comparing those patterns to ambitions led to reinforcement and focus on more practical steps forward, or reflection and rethinking. Discussing past relationships and their positive and negative roles in career change, as well as doing so with sympathetic and relatable others led to learning about the value of engaging with people to learn from them as well as leverage their help to build as desired career future. Sharing their plans and values and self-imposed limitations, as well as hearing the options and plans of others, triggered learning through reflection, which appeared in the form of disclosing hidden failures after the dialogues, and rethinking limitations to consider trading some independence for more security.

How Did Participants React to the Dialogue? Participant reactions to the dialogue focused on emotions, value, and a common request. In each case, at least one participant noted emotional impacts. Seeker Victor noted "normal anxiety" while the three Completers variously described sharing as being "so intense," leaving a second "still processing" and "quite tired," and a third surprised at her specific negative reaction to being called a salesperson by her Seeker.

Participants who described broad emotional impacts also described value. Value included reactions, such as Seeker Victor writing "empowering, enriching" and "incredibly valuable"; and Completers such as Wanda writing "revelation... fruitful"; and Helen writing "very thoughtful... helpful" and "quite a rich process." Value also included insights related to individual and social influences that could open environmental options. For the individual influence, Seeker Peter realized he was "blaming self for stuff out of control" and "wanting to fit where don't belong" while Seeker Victor realized he could "push away from ideas causing stagnancy" and "look at career path in new ways using more influences." Completer Wanda noted a "new way to look at her work, past and future" while Completer Helen found herself

"rethinking who want to be, what want despite being completer" and being surprised at "patterns from simple stories." For the social influence, Seeker Peter realized "others have similar experiences" and he could "learn from others." Similarly, Seeker Victor noted that "someone who seemed different had very similar skills and thinking and working" and her job was something he could "imagine doing." Some reactions, such as insights, can be interpreted as learning whereby a dialogue exploring "simple stories" from their lives revealed self-limiting patterns, strengths to draw on from the past, and the value of sharing with people who seemed different on the surface but offered new perspectives and options.

The only request arose from all Completers, who wanted to know more about their Seeker, ranging from a desire to share networking tips to wanting to balance vulnerability by hearing the Seeker's story before disclosing their own.

What Was the Structure of the Dialogue? The intended structure was a cooperative interview walking backwards through a Completer's reasons for career choices. Actual dialogues proceeded through phases of introductions, story-elicitation and closing. Two cases also included a phase of processing triggered by my request for their experiences of the meeting after a career path had largely been explored. During processing, participants chose to reflect on their interactions in order to make meaning out of them, or to challenge them. The processing phase did not occur in case three in which the Completer shared a longer, more complex story than others, and in which the Seeker ran out of energy and time in a different time zone. Case 1 differed from the other two cases in terms of content, interaction, and participant roles. Although all Completers wanted to know more about their Seekers, only Wanda participated during the introduction phase and asked for the Seeker's story and expressed resonance with what she heard. During story-elicitation, Wanda participated far more than other Completers with a more equal proportion of interactions with Seeker Peter. Their story-elicitation and processing phases were also more equally proportioned, and their processing phase focused more on the Seeker challenging what he heard and Wanda answering those challenges, in contrast to Victor who simply tried to make abstract meaning from what he had heard.

What Was the Nature of the Researcher/Facilitator's Role? I performed several roles related to the dialogue: matching participants; conducting the base interview of the Completer; prompting the Seeker to ask questions; offering patterns emerging from the interview; and prompting participants for reflections on their experience.

I matched participants from a limited pool. The study embraced a constructivist paradigm, which meant that the subjective priorities, experiences, and training of participants and the people they were matched with, could shape the content and process of dialogues. Two pairs were matched based on shared skills and values, and one pair was matched based on a shared life trauma that had led both to a forced career transition.

For all cases, I conducted the basic interview by asking the Completer about a career position, how they came to enter or exit it, and then what came before. Those basic interactions were not part of the analysis, which focused instead on additional interactions among the participants. However, the basic interview provided a stream of career information that Seekers could observe and process without also having to question and follow-up in real time, and also reflected a purposeful elicitation of individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences for Seekers and Completers to observe and react to.

In each case, I used multiple occasions to interrupt the base interview and prompt the Seeker to engage with a question. On multiple occasions Seekers demurred from a prompt to ask a question but would follow-up soon after with a line of inquiry that interested them, such as wanting to explore the negative side of a positive career transition, or experiences they related to in some way.

In each case, I used multiple occasions to offer the Completer or Seeker a synthesis of the emerging career story for their judgment. The syntheses prompted participants to correct, refine, agree or express insight. Such meaning-making demonstrated listening, which was appreciated by Completers, offered patterns, which increased Wanda's confidence and caused rethinking for Helen, and moved dialogues beyond fact-gathering and relating.

In two cases, I prompted participants to reflect on their meeting experiences after a Completer's story had been elicited. Such prompts triggered a processing phase where participants reflected on what they had heard and offered meaning from it. In the third case, I did not make the prompt because the story had been long, and the participants were exhausted.

In one case, I attempted to supplement Leonard's brief self-introduction to Helen by sharing his reasons for transition. However, the intervention did not appear to engage the Completer.

What Was the Nature of Seeker and Completer Participation in the Dialogue?

Participation comprised the probing, relating, tensioning, utilizing, judging and applying that Seekers and Completers did.

The overall frequency of interactions ranged from 35 to 91. In each case, the story-elicitation phase had the most interactions. The two cases with a processing phase had more overall interactions at 61 and 91. Almost forty percent of their interactions occurred in the processing phase, which may explain why the case without processing had only 35.

The overall proportion of interactions among participants favoured Seekers at 56-79% over Completers. For Introductions, although all Completers in surveys indicated curiosity about Seekers, only the Case 1 Completer used the Introduction to request more about her Seeker and relate to his story. In contrast, the other two cases featured only a brief statement from the Seeker. For Story-elicitation, only Case 1 participants had a nearly balanced participation as they continued to relate to each other's stories as the interview unfolded. In contrast, the other two cases featured 70-86% Seeker interactions. Both cases with processing phases featured the same 67% participation by a Seeker. For the two cases with Closing interactions, Completers were 100% responsible, trying to relate to Seekers or offer continued interaction. In the case of Victor, his final processing comment about "sales" appeared to offend his Completer which may explain why no Closing interactions occurred and the interview ended awkwardly.

The cases differed in Instrument choices, which may relate to the matching of participants and the kinds of content they shared. Case 1 had the lowest number of simple probes and the highest amount of relating, judging and applying interactions. Case 1 also featured emotional loss, shared life experience between Seeker and Completer and a processing phase with deeper engagement with how to apply what was learned by the Seeker. Cases 1 and 3, which both featured stories of loss, also featured much higher relating and tensioning than Case 2. Cases 2 and 3, which lacked relating over common life experience, also relied on probing for

over 25% of interactions. Case 2, which lacked emotion or shared experience, also had the lowest amount of relating and tensioning and the highest amount of probing and utilizing.

What Guidelines Were Missing or Implied by Participants? All three Seekers provided perfunctory introductions, and all three Completers wanted to know more about their Seeker. However, two Completers only expressed that desire in exit surveys, while only Completer Wanda expressed discomfort with sharing with someone she knew little about during the introduction, and explained in her exit survey that learning more about her Seeker helped her feel safe in sharing her story. Seeker Leonard expressed confusion in his exit interview about the nature of his Seeker interview and whether it was a research exercise to collect data or a service to help him address his current career challenges. Several implied rules emerged from these behaviours.

First, Seekers appeared to have an implied rule that their personal history, challenges and goals were not relevant to an interview with the Completer because they didn't share them unless explicitly asked. Second, Completers appeared to have an implied rule that their curiosity about the Seeker was not relevant to the interview because they didn't ask questions when they had a desire to know more. The case of Peter and Wanda demonstrated that a Seeker could provide a more detailed story when asked and that such a story could improve a Completer's sense of safety and resonance, and the common experience could form a foundation for interactions during the interview.

The implied rules may relate to how participants framed the interaction: as a service whereby the researcher helps a Seeker solve a problem; as a research activity extracting data from a participant; as a philanthropic exercise of a helpful Completer sharing their success with a Seeker; or as a dialogue in which participants balance vulnerability through mutual sharing, relating, and engaging in problem-solving. The rules and framing may relate to the backgrounds of the participants such as sales, scientific inquiry and theatrical production, career counselling, or facilitative consulting.

What Was the Source of Participants and the Associated Limitations? Multiple communities were approached for recruiting including targeted and paid social media advertising, employment services organizations, and educational institutions over several months and addressing several countries. However, such efforts failed, and all participants resulted from referrals through one or more levels of trust, which may relate to the vulnerability associated with their stories. The referrals resulted in many expressions of interest with a limited number of commitments based on my follow-up. Two sources of recruiting involved three levels of trust. First, I expressed the recruiting problem to my supervisor. Second, the supervisor made contact with two sources (an organization he was connected to, and a colleague) asking each to share the request. Third, the organization shared the request with its members, and the colleague shared the request with her alumni network. A third source of recruiting involved one level of trust. My contact of a university career centre resulted in that centre referring the request to one of its former longtime employees who had made several career transitions.

The result of relying on trusted referrals was a convenience sample biased by Communities. Five out of six participants were living in an eastern North American region. Three out of six participants had earned the same graduate degree in organizational development from the same program, although each had a very different career afterward.

What Was the Nature of Participants and the Roles They Played? The referral-based convenience sample resulted in biases related to education, gender, and age. All participants had graduate-level educations and worked in people-oriented careers. Although men and women expressed interest, all committed Seekers were males, and all committed Completers were females who additionally shared organizational development-related training and expressed a desire to "help" others by participating. All Completers were older than Seekers, but age differences ranged from seven to 28 years. Participants may have had other similarities in emotional, cognitive or psychological dimensions that led to common career dilemmas or their desire to help others by sharing stories. However this study only highlights observable patterns from their interactions and disclosed career paths.

Participants in this study were able to express concerns, ask questions, and raise challenges. As such, their choices, career experiences and training influenced the content and process of their dialogues, as described for each phase below.

In the Introduction phase, the intended roles were for me to introduce the process and the Seeker to introduce themselves. During the phase, Seekers withheld information about their career dilemmas, which limited the role they played within the dialogue. In contrast to the two Completers who accepted that limitation, Wanda expressed a need for more disclosure from her Seeker. As a result, Wanda expanded her role by probing for background, relating to shared experiences of loss, and expressing her restored sense of balance. Wanda's expanded role in turn expanded the role of Seeker Peter: he shared his career dilemma, which became a source of ongoing relating.

In the Story-elicitation phase, the intended roles were for me and the Seeker to ask questions to elicit the Completer's transition story. During the phase, two Seekers probed for transition issues and job tasks while Peter focused on relating to his Completer. All Seekers referred to Completer story elements and labelled or synthesized them, while two Completers responded with agreeing, refining or correcting. In addition to these roles, all three Completers expanded their roles by attempting to relate to Seekers based on shared experiences. However, only Seeker Peter resonated with his Completer's attempts and in return his Completer's role expanded by expressing empathy for his struggles to navigate a similar transition to hers. In the two cases without the shared experience, both Seekers responded to their Completer's transition stories by expanding their roles to explicitly probe for negative experiences related to the transitions. Leonard furthered the role by asking for positives arising from the negatives. Two Completers shared emotional stories of loss. In both those cases, Completers and Seekers engaged in laughter to reduce tension. Additionally, when Seekers in those dialogues demurred from my prompts to ask questions, Completers expanded their roles by checking for value: they asked Seekers whether they were benefitting from stories of failure. Seekers expanded their roles by confirming the value they experienced and subsequently asking a question.

In the Processing phase, the intended roles were for me to check on participant reactions to the meeting following the elicitation of the Completer's story. The phase only occurred in Cases 1 and 2. In contrast in Case 3 the Seeker's tensioning probe for his Completer's spectacular failures, the Completer's lengthy responses, and the Seeker's later time zone led to proceeding directly to Closing. During the processing phase, Seekers probed for transition issues, labelled and synthesized what they heard, and Completers corrected, refined or agreed. Both Completers expanded their roles by choosing to assist me by explaining information interviews and providing examples and guidance about using them. Additionally, in Case 1 the Seeker expanded

his role by noting what he had learned from the Completer but objecting to applying it to himself. In turn the Completer expanded her role by addressing his objections.

In the Closing phase, the intended roles were for me to thank participants, explain next steps and address outstanding questions. During the phase, two Completers expanded their roles by offering further contact to their Seekers. For Case 2, Victor appeared to offend Susan during processing, which may explain why she did not offer as well. However, during a post-meeting email follow-up, Susan also conveyed her openness to further contact.

What Challenges Arose Within the Interaction Activity? In a simple interview, a researcher controls the process and content by asking each subject a common list of questions. In contrast, this flexible activity had a design but was subject to the contributions and choices of the participants. Those choices could trigger challenges within the activity as it unfolded. Such challenges could expand not only the roles played by participants within the activity, but also the broader purpose and design of the activity.

The activity aimed to elicit the individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences faced by midlife adults navigating career transitions. The design of the activity was primarily intellectual, to explore the career paths of Seekers and Completers and elicit patterns about what impeded or assisted satisfying transitions. Social interaction was incorporated to expose Seekers to the interview experience, first as a subject sharing personal history with a facilitator, and then as a participant helping me elicit personal history from a friendly third party. The intent was to provide Seekers with experiences that would (a) allow them to experience sharing and talking about career patterns using themselves in a Seeker interview; (b) allow them to observe and participate in a similar experience but from an inquiring role with a friendly third-party in a Completer interview; and (c) by doing so, positively affect their interest in engaging in further exploratory conversations with others.

Role of Emotions. Other than an expectation that anxiety in Seekers could be reduced through exposure to multiple career dialogues that progressed from one-on-one to three-party, the design did not address emotions. However, emotions emerged as an unexpected influence that affected a Completer's experience of sharing, participants' confidence in their career future, and value expressed by participants at the end.

First, although Completers self-selected as successful in career transition, their stories could include strong emotional experiences related to the losses of a business, a relationship, a dream or an expected promotion and a sense of personal value. Sharing such stories could create intense emotions, vulnerability, and fatigue for Completers. When Seekers did not respond with questions or follow-up, Completers asked whether hearing about such painful failures was valuable. One inference from such a question is whether the vulnerability that Completers experienced from such sharing was worth their discomfort by helping someone else. In each case, Seekers responded by expressing the value they received, then following-up with questions.

Second, although the experience was intended to expand perspectives and skillsets for Seekers by interacting with successful Completers, participants Wanda, Helen and Peter, who had all shared emotional stories of loss, were either reinforced or shaken by their experience despite having different roles. Completer Wanda expressed more confidence because her patterns supported her future path. In contrast, Completer Helen also referred to emerging patterns but expressed diminished confidence and a need to rethink her future in terms of intimate

relationships. Seeker Peter, who had dismissed further entrepreneurship after his Seeker interview later re-opened the possibility after talking to his Completer.

Third, although emotions were not anticipated in the design and could lead to discomfort and re-thinking of career by Completers, surveys indicated that participants who had experienced strong emotions also expressed strong value from the meeting.

Role of Relationships. Other than an expectation that Seekers would meet and learn from a friendly Completer who was relatable in terms of demographics and values, the design did not address relationships. However, relationships emerged as an unexpected influence that could be related to the sense of vulnerability and safety in sharing emotional stories.

All Seekers withheld their personal career dilemmas, and only Peter revealed his after a prompt from his Completer and encouragement from me. During the meeting, all Completers attempted to relate to their Seekers, but only Peter and Wanda were able to relate throughout the meeting based on their previously-shared experiences. Within surveys, all Completers noted their desire to know about their Seekers, and Wanda noted that knowing more about her Seeker increased her sense of safety during the "intense" sharing of her emotional story. Similarly, Seeker Leonard (who only addressed his Seeker meeting) noted his surprise at his own detachment while being interviewed by me, which he attributed to a lack of relationship with his interviewer and a formality in the research focus.

Role of Interaction Style. Other than providing basic instruction on active listening and expecting that Seekers would ask questions related to career transitions, and Completers would answer them, the design did not address how the backgrounds of participants, such as professional training or habits, might affect the way they participated. However, the approaches to interaction demonstrated by participants emerged as an unexpected influence that shaped the nature of the dialogues.

The basic instruction on active listening comprised my defining and demonstrating active listening tips and asking participants to demonstrate the techniques by asking questions. The brief sessions were not analyzed for the study, but some style issues became evident. For instance, Peter continually praised me, Victor imposed a narrative on me with leading questions, and Leonard objected to the behaviour-based techniques because they conflicted with his philosophy that sharing should emerge from within participants rather than being subject to manipulative techniques.

Style issues also emerged from the interviews. For instance, Completer Wanda asserted her expectation for balanced vulnerability up front, empathized with the Seeker, and helped with problem-solving. Seeker Peter kept revisiting his traumatic experiences, explaining Wanda's success as luck, and objecting to applying her strategies to himself. As a result, their dialogue included more relating, comparing and contrasting, and deeper processing due to Wanda addressing Peter's objections. Seeker Victor used a lot of probes for basic facts then imposed motivations, explanations and identities on what he had heard rather than capturing the meaning offered by the Completer. As a result, his dialogue with Susan was primarily fact-based and lacked emotion, empathy or laughter, and his processing was abstract and offended his Completer. Seeker Leonard had the lowest participation. He observed and asked general questions, prompting for "spectacular failures" and triggering emotional sharing without follow-ups or empathizing. In response, the dialogue became lengthy and fatiguing for the participants but lacked any meaning-making.

Role of Processing to Create Meaning. Other than identifying and discussing patterns in systemic influences and navigation strategies that emerged during the dialogues, the design did not address other forms of meaning-making by participants.

Overall, participants differed in their processing phase. For Peter and Wanda, whose case included sharing of emotional losses that supported extensive relating, comparing and contrasting throughout the interview, processing became a phase of the Seeker grappling with what he had learned and his doubts about applying it, and the Completer empathizing with him and offering examples of problem-solving. For Leonard and Helen, whose case included emotional loss but no sharing by the Seeker, no processing occurred because the interview ran long, and Leonard wanted to stop due to fatigue. For Victor and Susan, whose case lacked emotional loss or sharing by the Seeker, processing was limited to labelling various events and the Completer herself, which led to offence.

Research Question 2: What Explanation of Midlife Career Change Emerged From Dialogues Designed to Elicit the Influences That Shaped Participants' Lifetime of Career Choices?

I answer this question by addressing the sub-questions below.

What Circumstances Prompted Career Change? Seekers faced career change pressure when they lacked balance between the extremes of working for others at the expense of their own needs, or working for themselves at the expense of work opportunities and income. Their career paths could take the form of alternating between prioritizing others and prioritizing the self. For Seekers, who were all male, personal needs related to the sensation and identity of being in love running a company, revealing the hidden beauty of people through theatrical stories, or experiencing direct, energizing engagement through coaching.

Similar to Seekers, Completers faced career change pressure when they lacked balance between the extremes of working for others at the expense of their own needs, or working for their own needs at the expense of work opportunities and income. For the Completers, who were all female, personal needs related to caring for children, a sick parent, or their own mental health, which could relate to identities as helpers, as well as cultural expectations of women performing unpaid care work. Their self-imposed limitations on career commitments led to giving up power and independence as a business owner, becoming a homemaker with meagre finances, retreating from senior administration into smaller roles that avoided conflict and offence, and contemplating the abandonment of a business dream in favour of nurturing personal relationships.

In contrast, for successful transitions Seekers pursued targeted training to turn a deferred, long-term interest with encouraging arousal and belonging identity into a new career. Similarly, Completers combined a pressing problem they had experienced in their lives, existing skills they enjoyed using which could address that problem, and training to upgrade and credential those skills to make a career out of addressing the problem.

What Role Did Individual Needs Play? Seeker identities established a role and a set of values in performing that role. In unsatisfying roles, identities served to exclude Seekers from the people they worked with by suggesting that the Seekers were superior or more enlightened. The sense of superiority or enlightenment related to a difference in values and priorities between the Seeker and their work environment. As such, career difficulties were related to Seekers' identities pushing them out of a group rather than drawing them into a group. Seekers excluded themselves

not only from professional roles but also from groups defined by a different language or cultural identity, or by a perceived difference in lifestyle or priorities in a local instance of an industry.

For Completers, traumatic events could undermine their identities as capable, wise and valuable, resulting in a sense of exclusion from the identity and a retreat from a position of authority. Completer identities could also conflict with their stated ambitions even after transition. Two Completers articulated entrepreneurial hopes but the work tasks in their career paths reflected their identities as helpers who listened to and empowered other people rather than persons setting the foundations for business. Finally, one Completer's prioritization of freedom to control her schedule and avoid immoral clients reduced her market opportunity. Additionally, her need to reinforce her helper identity by experiencing a regular feedback tempo of successful job-coaching was undermined by a community in which her clients struggled to get jobs.

In contrast, for successful transitions Seekers experienced belonging and encouraging arousal when they pursued and practised a role that had been a long-term but deferred interest. They could exercise high power because they created opportunities for work, and they had high freedom because they performed work according to their priorities. Similarly, Completers experienced a belonging identity with a role that combined a pressing problem they had experienced with existing skills they enjoyed using, along with freedom to perform the role according to their values, and encouraging arousal practising the role, even if they had to manage anxiety to engage in that performance.

What Role Did Actions Play? For unsatisfying career experiences, Seekers defined work narrowly in terms of tasks or structure imposed on them. They passively relied on others for contacts, opportunities and career direction with the expectation that their needs would be met. In terms of potential and actual employers and collaborators, Seekers expected to be trusted, or that they should be able to trust others to look out for their interests, without requiring evidence over time to earn that trust. Seekers might engage with opportunities, but they conducted limited exploration of options within their environments before making commitments to roles that undermined their needs. Seekers did not proactively monitor their environment for changing circumstances or potential threats or take actions to adapt and protect their interests. Instead, Seekers interpreted challenges and failure as innate reflections on personal value and a sign that they did not belong within a role even if they had made large investments into achieving it. Finally, Seekers were submitting in their career choices, allowing the judgment and priorities of other people to validate or invalidate them through acceptance or rejection for university study or a work role. During the intervention, Seeker pondered surveying his contacts and another requested the name of a career coach with each desiring to be told where they belonged. Although Seekers might submit to entry within a role, their identity could drive them to try to remake the role to accord with their own identity, and when they struggled to do so and experienced exclusion and undermining arousal, submit to exiting from the role.

Completers within unsatisfying phases of their career activity shared the same challenges as Seekers. Unhappy Completers defined their roles narrowly, giving up power to others or focusing on task-based roles. Completers passively relied on others who were already part of their environment to advise on expensive new business decisions, or provide word-of-mouth referrals for work or career advice. Such persons could be an existing services firm, a contact from a class project, a boyfriend or employer. Completers engaged in limited exploration of options or monitoring of environments for threats, which resulted in training or roles that did not meet their needs, and entrusting loved ones, business decisions, and career options based on

unproved sources that could provide damaging or biased advice or negligent care. Completers interpreted apprehension and failures innately, as evidence of exclusion from kinds of roles or levels of responsibility. As a result, unhappy Completers submitted, giving in to the judgment of others, reducing responsibilities, or taking on lower-level tasks.

In contrast, for successful transitions, Seekers broadened their scope to create their own work opportunities. They actively surveyed contacts to get them into a desired workplace or a school that matched their priorities and afforded a discount. They engaged with chance to take on gigs even while training. They embraced personal development to achieve their goal including training, persistence in pitching to a desired workplace, and developing competence in a local language to improve marketability. Finally, they pursued change purposefully by identifying a desired role and a set of values to guide its practice.

For successful transitions Completers could maintain a narrow scope of seeking gig work for tasks, or widen their scope to embrace problem-solving and strategic advising, or growing an opportunity from a professor's pet project into a fulltime role serving an entire university. Completers could rely on passive familiarity to secure opportunities from handy contacts, but they increased the number of possible contacts through graduate school classes, projects and gigs. A Completer could also actively survey for people needed to overcome problems such as enlisting faculty to overcome multiple rejections by graduate admissions. Completers relied on proved trust by demonstrating their values and abilities to others by meeting faculty to aid admissions, doing class projects that impressed classmates and employers, doing a research assistantship that impressed a supervisor, and building credibility with bosses over time. Completers grabbed opportunities such as training and gig work. In the process of learning and working, Completers embraced development through training and met challenges such as multiple rejections by a graduate program, or insufficient income early in a transition, by persisting, adapting and developing their personal value. Their navigation was purposeful because it accepted temporary constraints in income to secure work that fulfilled their values and priorities.

What Role Did Peripheral Activities Play? Career navigation was an activity driven by participants in which they took actions to enter, participate in and exit life and work roles. As part of that activity, Seekers engaged with peripheral activities that pursued other distinctive outcomes and could be driven by the Seeker or other people. Peripheral activities driven by others included gatekeeping (such as admissions to educational institutions), and connecting people to opportunities (such as networking, recruiting, or project sponsorships). Although peripheral activities existed to achieve certain outcomes, Seekers in unsatisfying career experiences misused them for other purposes. For instance, Seekers used school admissions activities to decide whether they belonged in a profession, when such an activity is meant only to determine whether an applicant was likely to succeed in that institution's program. Similarly, Seekers used networking, recruiting and project sponsorship activities to decide whether they belonged in a job or a local form of the industry. As a result, Seekers externalized decisions to others and embraced or abandoned degrees and professional roles based on the gatekeeping decisions of people who did not know the Seekers, and whose only purpose was to use a limited interaction with the Seeker to measure their potential ability to succeed with a specific opportunity at a specific time. The result was an inefficient approach of investing in something that would later be abandoned.

Completers within unsatisfying career experiences engaged with gatekeeping functions (such as admissions to educational institutions) and service functions (such as public schooling, accounting, business advice and product distribution). Similar to Seekers, Completers experienced challenges when they trusted peripheral activities to protect their interests. For instance, the school admissions activity could admit a Completer to various programs that she would finish but then abandon their intended roles afterward. Admissions could also reject a Completer multiple times despite alumni for a program believing that she belonged. As such, criteria used by admissions did not relate to whether a Completer belonged in or would successfully engage with a role or profession. Additionally, a Completer might rely on service provider activities to protect her interests despite their actual purpose being to sell services and maximize profits, or deliver instruction in classrooms rather than protect students from exposure to drugs on campus.

In contrast, for successful transitions, a Seeker could use a hobby activity, which was driven by them for their own purpose. A hobby activity could be used for ongoing explorations and experiences within certain disciplines, including experiencing services as a client, engaging in training, and performing services. The hobby activity developed knowledge of options, hands-on experiences of observation and participation, contacts to build a personal network, and suggestions for further exploration. The hobby activity provided experiences that the Seeker could compare to their identity and then make informed choices about further actions and commitments. Additionally, Seekers could use training to convert an interest into a career, while using training, grants, or pitches to create their own opportunities to start practice.

Similarly, Completers engaged with graduate school to join a desired community that valued their skills and priorities, then used class projects to make connections for work, and used theses to explore topics to support desired employment. Additionally, a Completer could work gigs in a nonprofit or research project to experience applying theory to practice, and develop contacts.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

Chapter Five applied a multi-phase analysis to the case studies and answered the research questions. This chapter provides implications to practice and theory for the dialogues and midlife career change, notes limitations in the study, and suggests future research.

Implications to Practice for Dialogues

This study investigated the use of a dialogue among a facilitator, a person seeking career transition (Seeker), and a person who had completed a transition (Completer) in order to explore the Completer's career pathway. Based on the results, I offer the following implications to practice.

Use Dialogues to Assist Novice and Expert Career Changers With Identifying and Refining Their Habitual Strategies

Dialogues helped Seeker and Completer participants experience insights about their career paths related to their identity, social connections, environmental affordances and decision-making. Their strategies were captured in activity system forms that listed each concept that influenced their career and the state of that concept on its continuum. As such, the forms become tools to identify which concepts are helping or impeding desired progress. For instance, participants might note that their referral style uses passive familiarity, and then shift to an active survey approach instead. The dialogues helped both novice career changers who were stuck and needed insight, and expert career changers who benefited from reflecting on their achievement to determine how to refine their strategy to move forward. Practitioners can use the guidance and templates for implementing and assessing dialogues provided in Appendix T. Results supported research that personal stories can be used to identify misconceptions and barriers and create new options and understandings (Savickas, 2015; Swanson & Fouad, 2015), and confirmed the need for tools to support data-gathering and debriefing (Brott, 2015). Although research on forced choices identifies how people make decisions by eliciting their values (Osborn, Kronholz & Finklea, 2015) and establishing opposing dimensions for those values to create explanatory constructs (Pryor & Bright, 2015), this study expands research by developing a system of interacting concepts that explain and diagnose midlife transition strategies across multiple people.

Implement Dialogues With Facilitators Trained in Active Listening and Systematic Interviewing and Note-Taking

Dialogues use exploration and meaning-making through conversation and require facilitation to assist participants with being systematic in exploring career paths, handling emotions, and scaffolding meaning-making. As such, facilitators require curiosity and discipline to avoid imposing explanations or advice, active listening skills to prompt participants to share and reflect, discipline to explore a participant's story systematically guided by theory, and the ability to take notes using the career strategy forms and walk participants through the forms to identify which parts of the strategy could be changed and how. Facilitators require the ability to notice emotions in participants as signals of concerns impeding their exploration, elicit those concerns, and invite participants to explore those concerns through discussion based on actual experiences. Facilitators may be career counselling practitioners, or people with the skillset but

different training such as psychologists or interns in psychology, sociology, coaching, change management or other interactive, data-gathering professions. Results support research on the need for skilled facilitation (Brott, 2015), and the need to guide facilitation with theory to minimize being biased by personal preferences (Pryor & Bright 2015), cherry-picking or mechanical data collection without meaning-making (McIlveen & Midgley, 2015). The results extend research by demonstrating such facilitation guided by the Systems Theory Framework, and using such facilitation not only to elicit career paths, but also to model and encourage systemic dialogue from participants.

Integrate Dialogues Into Triage, Reflection and Screening Functions

The exploratory approach requires a service provider willing to engage facilitators, and able to recruit and pair novice and expert career changers. Dialogues could be offered as part of a triage process for novices who feel stuck and unprepared for packaging themselves with resumes and mock interviews, and as part of a reflection process for experts who have completed a career change and would benefit from reflecting on their pathway to affirm or refine their ongoing strategy. In this study, career-changers misused neighbouring activities such as school admissions to provide external direction for career change. Such neighbouring activities could implement screening procedures to identify applicants who are relying on limited exploration of options, passive referrals, and a submitting change approach, and refer them to providers of dialogues to avoid applicants who invest time and energy in directions that don't meet their needs, and become reluctant or resentful participants or alumni. Results support research that highlights the costly inefficiencies of the interpretivist approach and the likely necessity of employing triaged offerings to reduce up-front costs (Colvin, et al., 2011). However, results extend research by noting greater longterm inefficiencies from not addressing how people misuse relationships and neighbouring activities to make career decisions, which can lead to a waste of time, energy and resources for them as well as the institutions and industries that invest in them.

Use Qualitative Instruments to Assess Influence of Dialogues

This study used multiple qualitative instruments: future career autobiographies, future plan surveys, and activity system / career strategy tables. First, Future Career Autobiographies (FCA) written by participants before and after the dialogue showed how their view of their future changed. Second, future plan surveys captured how participants intended to apply their new knowledge to achieve their future. Third, activity system forms captured the strategies participants used for navigating career change. Those strategies were expressed as a series of concepts with one of two opposing states. Practitioners should use these instruments to assess how the dialogues affected participant thinking and captured their strategies. Additionally, career changers could use their FCAs to capture their baseline thinking and changes they experience as they interact with others and attempt changes in their strategies. The results supported research on Future Career Autobiographies as a way of measuring influence based on changes in word counts and specifics (Rehfuss, 2015). Results extended research by coding FCA results based on systemic factors, comparing FCA changes to participants' plans of action for achieving change, and to an analysis of their decision-making strategies reflected in their existing career paths. Additionally, results extended research by using and comparing multiple instruments, which addressed concerns about relying on single, subjective measures; and by developing activity system forms to explore and label career strategies systemically, which addressed concerns about consistency in measures (Stead & Davis, 2015).

Expect "Completers" to be "Works in Progress"

Completers were affected by sharing and discussing their career paths. They expressed increased confidence, a confirmation of their direction, or a desire to pause and rethink their plans, showing that they were continuing to navigate their career and benefited from reflecting on their past. Interventions should expect Completers who are vulnerable and unaware of their own patterns. Practitioners may recruit a larger number and variety of Completers if they emphasize that (a) Completers are expected to be "works in progress" rather than experts with perfect stories of success; (b) Completers can benefit from sharing and reflecting on their career; and (c) Seekers benefit from stories of relatable Completers who overcame challenges. Additionally, practitioners should consider having Completers and Seekers discuss their post-meeting reflections so they can compare and contrast their conclusions and plans from their shared dialogue. Results support research on change being a continuing risk due to instability in modern society (Patton & Mcmahon, 2014), requiring a continuing need for guidance (Cort, et al., 2015). Results also supported research on the deepening complexity of life as people age and become constrained by the limitations of their life experiences, relationships, family responsibilities, locale and lifestyle (Bimrose & McNair, 2011; Richardson, 2012). Results extend research by highlighting the mutual benefit of career dialogue between Seekers and Completers.

Expand Dialogue to Include Constructive Use of Emotion

During the dialogue Completers and Seekers expressed emotions such as feeling vulnerable about sharing, wondering if sharing a painful "failure" had any value to listeners, expressing overwhelm at applying elicited strategies, or expressing offence at a reductive observation. Additionally, surveys mentioned anxiety, apprehension, and fatigue. However, participants who expressed emotions also provided positive comments in surveys, and those who described emotional losses also had the biggest changes in FCA word count. Additionally, emotions created opportunities for interactions beyond probing and responding such as participants empathizing with a struggle, raising objections to applying strategies, responding to objections with problem-solving, or sharing laughter to relieve tension, or the facilitator offering patterns that re-contextualized perceived "failures" in terms of participants navigating challenging systemic influences. Practitioners should leverage emotion for the benefit of participants. First, participants should be informed about emotions that emerge from dialogues and potential benefits. Second, empathy and paraphrasing should be demonstrated as ways of responding to emotion to ensure a disclosing participant does not wonder if their uncomfortable sharing was valuable. Third, in order to balance vulnerability between participants, introductions should have Seekers disclose their career challenges, and encourage Completers to ask about their Seekers. Fourth, participants should be encouraged to voice discomfort and doubts so the other participants can offer more information, assist with problem-solving, or address feelings of offence. Fifth, the practitioner should embrace the use of laughter as a stress relief. Sixth, the practitioner should help participants re-evaluate emotional "personal failures" in terms of the contributions of individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences. The practitioner could review FCAs and future plans with participants to explore influences they left out and ask what they might add to convert their dialogue experience into action to advance their career path. Results supported research on support groups where people express emotion, receive empathy and information and contacts (Chen & Yang, 2015) while learning from others' experiences (Meier, 2002) in addressing a particular challenge (Neville, 2014). Results extend

the research by embracing emotional aspects within career exploration, incorporating active listening training to navigate such emotions constructively, and using a systemic approach of interviewing, and regular synthesis to avoid the interaction devolving into venting or advice-giving, and instead encourage meaning-making and problem-solving.

Use Dialogues to Expand Views of Social Interaction

Participants changed their plans for social interaction after a dialogue. Their pre-dialogue FCAs described desires to prove themselves or be with people in safe, harmonious relationships with shared philanthropic values. After a dialogue, Seekers expressed surprise that people in different professions had similar life experiences and skillsets to their own. In post-dialogue FCAs participants expressed more practical intentions to seek out people to learn from and advance their careers. Practitioners can use dialogues as hands-on experiences to help participants view people, regardless of differences in profession, as resources to seek out and learn from for career navigation. Results supported research that participants can test and revise their emerging career identity stories by sharing it with others (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015), and extended research by including that sharing within the dialogue itself. Results supported research that people coauthor careers through relationships (Richardson, 2012) and can be limited by existing relationships (Motulsky, 2010), and extended research by using pairings in dialogues to trigger those insights and create new contacts, which prompted changes in career plans.

Use Dialogues to Expand Options For Career

Participants expressed new options to explore after a dialogue, including rethinking plans they had just shared. Options included new options for work using their skillsets, new training, starting a new business, abandoning independence to join a corporate environment, and rethinking retirement by consulting with others. Practitioners can use dialogues to help participants voice versions of themselves, explore and reflect on each others' career paths, and then reconsider and expand their vision. Results supported research that exploring past experiences can construct a personal identity to guide future action (Brott, 2015; Meijers & Lengelle, 2015), and such methods can be used to overcome premature circumscription of career options (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). The results extended research by demonstrating that such expansion could occur after a dialogue as part of reflecting and writing an action plan, despite not having their limiting ideas challenged during the dialogue.

Use Dialogues to Expand Participants' Self-Awareness

Participants expressed personal insights after a dialogue, including self-blame despite contextual influences, trying to fit where they didn't belong, recognizing ideas about trust that held them back, seeing their future more confidently based on their past, and rethinking their belief that their career change was complete. Practitioners can use dialogues to help participants rethink their self-perceptions within the broader context of social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences. Results support research about personal insights emerging from dialogue (Brott, 2015) and extend research by using a systemic framework to prompt reflections over a broad range of influences.

Structure Dialogues to Expand the Nature of Interactions

Dialogues differed in structure, participation, interaction and depth of interaction. Although all Completers later expressed a desire to know their Seeker better, only one Completer made the request. Although pairs were matched based on experiences, skills and values, and the

researcher pointed out areas of relatability, only one pair compared and contrasted their careers throughout the dialogue. Although two Seekers asked their Completer about negatives from their transition, only the third pair used their processing phase to challenge and problem-solve strategies. The dialogue of that pair was more interactive throughout: during the introduction, the Completer requested the Seeker's story to balance vulnerability; during story-elicitation, the Completer invited the Seeker to compare his experiences with hers; during processing, the Seeker expressed doubts and the Completer responded with problem-solving. Practitioners should adopt a similar structure to improve depth. First, the dialogue should be structured and explained in terms of introduction, story-elicitation, processing, and closing and the kinds of interactions expected in each phase. Second, introductions should prompt participants to briefly share their career challenges with enough detail to balance vulnerability and increase relatability. Third, participants should be prompted to note areas they find relatable in each other. Fourth, Completers should be encouraged to ask Seekers questions. Fifth, participants should be encouraged to compare and contrast their experiences throughout the dialogue. Sixth, the processing phase should be scheduled to ensure reflection and meaning-making. Seventh, Seekers should be encouraged to express their learning and raise their doubts, and Completers should be encouraged to address those doubts by sharing problem-solving experiences from their own career. Results support research that notes the variety of roles that can be played in dialogues such as empathy, information, and problem-solving through support groups (Chen & Yang, 2015), mentoring (Hooley, et al., 2016) and collaborative counselling (Colvin et al., 2011). Results extend research by highlighting ways of prompting and encouraging those multiple roles within a structured experience.

Maximize Relatability When Matching and Introducing Participants

Participants were matched based on shared skills, values, hobbies, training, and life experiences, but during the dialogue they used different strategies to relate to each other. Two pairs disclosed little during introductions and relied on asking questions about tasks and experiences they shared with the other person without disclosing their own experiences. In one such pair the Seeker appreciated seeing skills and gig-based work similar to his career being used in a different profession. In a third pair the Seeker disclosed a summary of his career challenges in the introduction. The result was a high amount of relating, comparing and contrasting throughout the dialogue, and deeper processing in terms of raising challenges and problem-solving. Practitioners should enhance relatability during matching and facilitating by (a) recruiting and matching participants based on relatable life experiences; (b) ensuring such relatable experiences are disclosed during introductions; (c) asking participants to note areas of relatability; and (d) encouraging participants to share, compare and contrast each other throughout the dialogue. Results support research on the kinds of roles possible in interactions such as support groups (Chen & Yang, 2015), mentoring (Hooley, et al., 2016) and collaborative counselling (Colvin et al., 2011), and extend the research by highlighting the importance of developing shared vulnerability and relatability in order to encourage and deepen those roles.

Use a Facilitator to Reduce the Burden of Participation by Guiding the Dialogue

Participants rated themselves highly on communication but lacked skills during the dialogue. Seekers provided perfunctory introductions that impeded relating; requested negative experiences then failed to demonstrate empathy and appreciation; focused on asking about tasks and experiences they could relate to rather than exploring navigational strategies; failed to reflect on what they had heard to make meaning for themselves; and offered synthesis that could be

incorrect and offensive. The facilitator assisted dialogues by prompting participants to share relatable information, eliciting the Completer's story in a systematic fashion to reveal a wide range of influences on career choices, inviting the Seeker to ask questions, offering syntheses for participants to react to, and prompting participants to reflect on and make meaning from what they had learned. Practitioners should offer facilitative resources to offload the burden of conducting a basic interview focused on systemic influences, structure dialogues with helpful phases, maximize sharing of relatable information, provide and model active listening and empathizing, prompt constructive interactions focused on career navigation, and scaffold meaning-making by offering synthesis, comparison and contrast for their reactions. Facilitation should allow participants to engage in the manner, frequency and style of their choosing. Facilitative resources could be trained persons or potentially chatbots or job aids in the form of guidelines. Results support the need for skilled facilitation to support learning through probing, reflecting, clarifying and interpreting (Brott, 2015). In contrast with workbook approaches that prompt users for answers and depend on their understanding in isolation (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2015), the results extended research by using facilitation to model and encourage questioning and meaning-making amongst participants in real-time.

Improve Recruiting by Building Relationships of Trust for Referrals

Multi-party dialogues relied on volunteers who were expected to disclose intimate details of their lives with strangers. Such disclosure may require trust. In this study, recruiting aimed at educational and employment institutions or social media failed. In contrast, recruiting that leveraged relationships of trust succeeded. Examples of such relationships were the researcher and his supervisor, the supervisor and his colleague, the supervisor and a community service organization he assisted, that service organization and its members, and the supervisor's colleague and her network of alumni. However, such networks may result in bias in the form of participants who share personal and professional characteristics, such as all Seekers being male and all Completers being female, or four out of six sharing a similar graduate training. Practitioners should seek and build relationships of trust with leaders in diverse communities to build a broad pool of participants for matching and relatability. The results supported research on social capital in several ways: first, that the researcher's sampling was limited by his own social capital; second, that the researcher was able to extend his social capital by leveraging that of his supervisor and colleague; and third, that such networks embodied certain class differences resulting in a sample with considerable privilege in terms of income and education (Bourdieu, 1986).

Embrace Participant-Driven Expansion of Their Roles

Participants expanded their roles beyond asking questions and sharing a career path, which enhanced the dialogues. For instance, Completers tried to relate to their Seeker, asked for Seeker backgrounds and referred to them during the dialogue, expressed empathy with Seeker challenges, checked whether their sharing was valuable to the Seeker, helped the facilitator explain information interview strategies, addressed the Seeker's doubts with problem-solving, and offered further contact outside the meeting. Seekers enhanced the dialogue by sharing their career dilemma and enabling comparing and contrasting, asking for negative aspects of a Completer's transition, raising challenges to applying Completer strategies, and following-up post-meeting with a Completer to address unintentionally-offending remarks. Practitioners should embrace a flexible design that encourages and accommodates expansion of roles, evaluates the impact of the expansion on the quality and depth of the dialogue, and incorporates

the expansion into the design. Results support research on the potential roles within dialogue such as support (Chen & Yang, 2015), mentoring (Hooley, et al., 2016) and collaborative counselling (Colvin et al., 2011), as well as concepts from participatory research about accommodating design changes offered by participants (Lincoln, et al., 2011).

Extend the Use of Dialogues Beyond Midlife Transitions

This study focused on mid-life career transition because it was not only an understudied phenomenon but also a period in life in which participants would have many experiences to draw on for dialogue and meaning-making. The dialogue not only provided value to Seekers but also to Completers who were further in their career journey and thus had more life experiences to draw on. For instance, a Completer who was in semi-retirement found the dialogue helpful for rethinking her plans for retirement.

Implications to Practice for Midlife Career Transition

This study investigated what explanation of midlife career transition emerged from multi-party dialogues that explored participants' career paths guided by the Systems Theory Framework. Based on the results, I offer the following implications to practice.

Address Tendency to Make Choices With Limited Exploration

Participants made major career and life choices despite limited exploration of options to meet their personal needs, and limited monitoring for threats over time. Even in satisfying careers, limited monitoring and exploration meant that participants were blindsided by new bosses and changing marketplaces. Such limitations may relate to experiences participants shared, such as losing confidence in their judgment after a traumatic experience, or noting that "stress really narrows your vision." Practitioners should assist career-changers with expanding that "vision." At a physical level, practitioners could encourage participants to employ commonly-prescribed anxiety management techniques such as controlled breathing and vigorous exercise. At a cognitive and affective level, practitioners can use the dialogue process to help participants review and compare career pathways to (a) revisit examples of successful judgment and personal vision; (b) identify and label the methods and degree of exploration in their career navigation strategies; and (c) focus participants on expanding their exploration strategies to generate a wider array of options to choose from in a more strategic and less reactive decision-making approach. Results support research, such as Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise on youth, that highlights how people circumscribe options and make career decisions with limited exploration, requiring a practitioner to help them re-expand their options (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Results expand research by noting how midlife adults can contract their options based on traumatic changes and moral stands, and can re-expand options on their own by reflecting on their positions after a dialogue.

Address Unbalanced Priorities

People experienced career change pressure in two situations: first, they were vulnerable financially if they prioritized personal needs at the expense of income and opportunity; second, they were vulnerable psychologically if they prioritized working for others at the expense of personal needs. Unproductive career changes occurred when participants alternated between the two extremes, such as shifting between being a boss or being a salesman. Practitioners should assist persons with identifying personal needs, recognizing any lack of balance of those needs with marketplace options, and actively seeking career options that provide a personal balance.

Results support research on work adjustment that highlights the importance of balance between personal needs and work requirements and the likelihood of seeking change when that balance is lacking (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Results also support research on kaleidoscope careers that attempt to balance work and life needs (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Results extend research by examining entire career paths and highlighting unhelpful strategies of alternating between extremes of disequilibrium rather than creating a desired balance.

Address Potential Differences in Personal Needs Based on Gender

Personal needs differed between Seekers, who were male, and Completers, who were female. Male Seekers expressed personal needs in terms of experiencing sensations and identity while doing tasks, such as being in love while running a company, revealing the hidden beauty of people while producing theatre, or experiencing energizing engagement while coaching. In contrast, female Completers expressed personal needs in terms of helping, such as caring for loved ones or their own mental health. Although the difference could relate to their status as Seekers and Completers rather than gender, female participants demonstrated a desire to care for others throughout their career paths. Practitioners should highlight gender-based differences in defining personal needs and help people explore whether the needs they express reflect personal desires or cultural pressures. Results support research highlighting tendencies for women to assume paid and unpaid care work (Richardson, 2012), and that women experience career change due to life disruptions (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). However, the results expand research by noting the differences in sensation seeking of males versus help-offering of females.

Address Strategies for Desirable Transitions That Incorporate Needs, Skills and Market Opportunity

Participants made satisfying transitions when they identified experiences of engaging with an interest and developing skills, they identified an alternative way of engaging with their interest and using those skills, and they pursued targeted training to support and credential that alternative. Male Seekers pursued alternatives that offered desirable experiences of doing a task. Female Completers pursued alternatives in which they helped others overcome problems that the Completers had encountered in the past. Practitioners should assist people with reviewing past experiences to highlight interests and skills; identifying personal needs; surveying alternative ways to employ their interests and skills in a way that meets their personal needs and is demanded in the marketplace; and identifying pathways for targeted training and credentialing to enter the marketplace. Results support the foundation of career guidance that seeks to match personal abilities to industrial needs (Patton & McMahon, 2014), as well as research about the positive impact of proactive, self-driven protean-style career searches that achieve faster and more positive transitions by leveraging social relationships (Baruch & Quick, 2007). Results extend research by highlighting different kinds of needs such as sensations, freedom, power and problem-solving, that may relate to gender differences, and the importance of exploring pathways that explicitly balance those needs with market opportunities.

Address the Influence of Identity on Career Engagement

In this study, identity emerged as a person's sense of membership in a role, group or community. Identity was belonging when participants felt affirmed in their subjective values and perceived abilities. Identity was excluding otherwise. Belonging depended on a person having the freedom to perform a role according to personal needs and experience encouraging arousal. Exclusion occurred when a role failed to meet personal needs, a trauma undermined personal

identity related to competence, or a career option felt unfamiliar or confining. Exclusion could lead people to limit participation, participate reluctantly or reject participation. Limiting participation deprived people of experiences, social connections, and environmental opportunities that could otherwise assist them in their career. In contrast, people who experienced belonging created opportunities for work, performed according to their priorities, and coped with anxiety in order to enjoy performance. Practitioners should assist people with identifying when they feel belonging or exclusion, what it means about their personal needs, and ways to seek roles, people and places that support belonging. Results supported research that highlights the role of identity in career choice, such as qualitative methods that review the past to construct an identity to guide future decisions (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015). However, results extended research by characterizing identity not in terms of a specific role but as a state of belonging or exclusion that (a) was affected by trauma, unmet needs, and unfamiliarity; (b) modified how people interpreted and acted on negative emotions about career options; and (c) could change based on new experiences and assurances.

Shift Personal Choices Away From Dependence

Unsatisfying career experiences related to dependent personal choices (relying on external judgment or chance events to determine direction) such as defining work narrowly to surrender goal-setting and judgment to others; interpreting challenges as personal failures or evidence of exclusion; and submitting to circumstances and the priorities of others when deciding whether to enter or abandon roles. In contrast, in satisfying experiences people could broaden scope to create work in their desired direction, embrace persistence and personal development in the face of failure, and pursue roles purposefully based on personal needs even in the face of anxiety, financial constraints, and rejection. Practitioners should assist people with identifying dependent personal choices and agentic alternatives. Results support research on personally-driven career theories such as protean careers in which people pursue their own needs while adapting their abilities to engage in the workforce; and kaleidoscopic careers where people adjust a balance of self and work (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The results extend research by noting the importance of broadening the conception of work beyond tasks, and embracing an adaptive and developmental approach to handling failure.

Shift Social and Environmental Choices Away From Dependence

Unsatisfying career experiences related to dependent social and environmental choices. Participants passively relied on existing or proximate contacts for opportunities and advice, and expected to trust or be trusted without establishing relevant competence or integrity. Participants also misused peripheral activities such as school admissions, training, networking, recruiting, project sponsorships, public institutions, professional services, business functions, and hobbies. Those activities had their own self-serving purposes, but participants depended on the activities to determine whether they belonged in a profession, role, or local industry, and expected them to protect and further participants' interests. As a result, participants allowed others to define their identity and priorities and suffered setbacks and entered or abandoned career directions based on limited or faulty information. In contrast, in satisfying experiences people actively sought contacts who could assist with entering a desired workplace or school that met personal needs, and sought opportunities to experience belonging, demonstrate competence and create contacts through hobbies, meetings, training, class projects and gig work. Practitioners should assist people with identifying ways to seek out and assess people, places and peripheral activities that serve personal needs and support a purposeful and developmental approach to demonstrating

competence over time. Results suggest that people seek the kinds of external categorization into groups that matching theories provide (Swanson & Fouad, 2015) by depending on the acceptance or rejection of others. Results support research that existing relationships can hold people back and new, purposeful relationships are needed to make meaningful changes (Motulsky, 2010). The results extend theory by highlighting the importance of using social contacts more strategically to obtain multiple perspectives and new options and connections, instead of categorization or advice.

Implications to Theory for Dialogues

This section addresses implications to research and theory on qualitative career assessments for midlife career transition.

Future Career Autobiographies (FCA) Changed Most for Participants Who Described an Emotional Loss

Before and after the career dialogue each participant completed an FCA by describing their life and work five years in the future. Using an FCA addresses criticisms that career assessments are conceptual or anecdotal without evidence (Stead & Davis, 2015). The efficacy of career counselling may be measured based on whether the second FCA is more focused, detailed, specific and hopeful (Rehfuss, 2015). However, in this exploratory study, the largest changes in FCA word counts related to participants who told emotional stories of significant losses and setbacks. Such participants either felt more confident about their plans or were reconsidering those plans. In contrast, participants whose stories lacked emotional losses had little change in FCA word counts even if they were considering new options for transitions.

Narrative Career Assessments Can Systematically Elicit Data for Discussion Rather Than Starting With Judgments and Conclusions

The facilitator walked participants backwards through their career and asked how and why they entered and exited each role. The process used semi-structured interviews to elicit “small stories” (Hartung, 2015) about events, decisions, people and contexts that could be compared and contrasted to make meaning (Maree, Ebersohn & Molepo, 2006) by revealing values, and strengths and helping participants consider new perspectives and possibilities (Harless & Stoltz, 2018; Bimrose & McNair, 2011). The approach was similar to the use of lifelines in which participants reframe past traumas in terms of their own choices so they can engage in future-oriented goal-setting (Tinsley-Myerscough & Seabi, 2012). The approach contrasted with life chronologies in which participants are asked to identify critical people and life incidents, label them as positive or negative, then explain why (Fritz & Van Zyl, 2015), which is an approach of starting with a participant's judgments and conclusions rather than building them by eliciting and discussing data.

Facilitation Can Elicit Systemic Influences Without Requiring Participants to Understand and Apply Theory

The facilitator used the Systems Theory Framework to probe for individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences, and then proposed patterns based on the emerging data so participants could see the impact of such influences on their career path. As a result, the positive or negative role of each influence can be identified. Participants can then address each influence purposefully by identifying personal needs and seeking social connections and environmental affordances that will help them make the most satisfying use of

chance events as they unfold. The facilitated dialogue contrasted with time-consuming approaches in which participants struggled to understand and apply the theoretical concepts of a system of influences as part of filling out a career assessment booklet (Yim, Wong & Yuen, 2015).

Facilitation Supports Dialogues in Which Participants Adjust Their Participation

The facilitator modeled interviewing and proposing patterns to a Completer while the Seeker shifted roles based on their needs. Seeker roles included observing, questioning, relating or empathizing, and challenging. Completers also shifted roles such as sharing, questioning, relating or empathizing, problem-solving, and inviting contact. By demonstrating how participants dynamically adjusted across multiple roles, the multi-party approach expands on literature on group career assessment, where participants listen to each other and contribute when they feel comfortable (Alexander, Seabi & Bischof, 2010).

Midlife Career Transition Can Be Explored as One Moment Within an Ongoing Career Navigation Activity in Which People Used Changing Strategies

Rather than focusing on midlife, the facilitator walked participants through their lengthy career paths, purposefully seeking individual, social, environmental, chance, and decision-making influences over time. Patterns in those influences showed the strategies participants used in the activity of navigating their careers. Participants maintained a strategy through multiple transitions until the activity failed in its purpose, and participants then modified their approach. Participants might use a successful strategy to achieve an unsatisfying result that met their goal but not their needs; an unsuccessful strategy to pursue a desired result; or abandon a successful strategy in the face of circumstances that undermined their identity. Dialogues triggered insights in participants such that they might express concerns about their strategy, satisfaction in its use, or increased confidence. By explaining career as an ongoing career navigation activity with evolving strategies, this study contrasted developmental theories that assume predictable stages of career progression, ignoring the potential for ongoing or backwards changes such as self-demotion or starting over (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Richardson, 2012). An ongoing career activity supports literature on protean careers where people must manage their own careers, create their own opportunities and adapt to meet changing needs (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Participants' use of gig work to navigate transitions supports literature on boundaryless careers where people work across organizations and employers, and post-corporate careers where people work in small firms, teams or in self-employment (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The strategies used by participants addressed identity, arousal, freedom and power, which supports literature on kaleidoscopic careers where people focus on authenticity to the self, work-life balance, and stimulating challenges (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). The emerging strategies support literature on the Systems Theory Framework by showing the roles of individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences on career navigation (Patton & McMahon, 2014). This study extended the literature in several ways: first, by applying the Systems Theory Framework to midlife career transition rather than young people lacking work and life experiences; second, by identifying emerging concepts that explained each systemic influence; third, by integrating the concepts into activity systems (Engeström, 1987) that represented career navigation strategies; fourth by using activity theory to explain how and why participants changed their strategies in response to stresses; and fifth by proposing the activity systems as diagnostic tools which a person can use to explore their own career navigations strategy and then consider how to manipulate the concepts in that strategy to produce a more satisfying approach.

Emotions Emerge During Career Dialogues, Which Affects Engagement and Requires Constructive Facilitation

Emotions emerged during and after the dialogue and as part of the explanation of career change. Overall, emotions related to apprehensions about participating in dialogues and trying strategies, and trying to determine whether discomfort was worthwhile by checking for safety and belonging. Participants responded to emotions with empathizing, confirming value, problem-solving and sharing laughter. Experiencing strong emotions while sharing and making meaning led to insights about identity with either increased confidence or pausing and rethinking plans. This study supports literature that identifies emotions as signals of “boundary experiences” that can be explored for potential life themes (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015), and that affect the amount of engagement with career exploration (Hirschi & Freund, 2014). Based on the multi-party dialogue structure, this study supports literature on collaborative counselling where people ask each other questions, consider multiple perspectives, and help with problem-solving (Colvin, Oozier, & Sampson, 2011). However, the role of emotion also links the study to support groups, which provide therapeutic and learning functions through emotional support, information, and networking with people with similar backgrounds (Chen & Yang, 2015) to learn from their career transition experiences (Meier, 2002), develop new perspectives on their situations (Chen & Yang, 2015) and improve their confidence and understanding of navigating transition (Neville, 2014). In contrast, the dialogues differed from support groups by comprising only three people: an experienced transitioner; a transitioner seeking guidance; and a facilitator who prompted participation and meaning-making to avoid pitfalls of support groups such as devolving into a few dominant voices (Chung & Chen, 2018), or venting of frustrations without challenging ideas (De Leon, Pena & Whitacre, 2010; Meier, 2002).

People Use Their Perception of Identity to Interpret Their Emotions

In this study, identity emerged as a person's sense of membership in a role, group or community. Identity was belonging when participants felt affirmed in their subjective values and perceived abilities. Identity was excluding otherwise. Participants experienced uncomfortable emotions while navigating their career, but responded differently based on whether their state of identity with a role was belonging or excluding. A sense of exclusion led to retreat or abandonment even if the person was capable, but a sense of belonging led to persistence and adaptation even if the person was unproved or rejected multiple times. Participants determined belonging in different ways. Some determined belonging based on third parties such as school admissions, recruiting employers, and career coaches. During dialogues, Seekers expressed a desire to have a third party tell them where they belonged. However, reliance on third parties to determine belonging resulted in participants entering roles that made them unhappy, and exiting roles despite expensive investments and limited efforts to make them work. This study supports social cognitive career theory, which treats emotion as a source of feedback people use to perceive their ability and likely rewards from a related career (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008), but notes the importance of identity and belonging in how a person acts on those emotions. Although this study contrasts with trait-matching theories that ignore emotions (Swanson & Fouad, 2015), it suggests that people may crave an authoritative "diagnosis" of where they belong (Pryor & Bright, 2015) rather than discovering it for themselves through career counselling as exploratory "therapy" (McIlveen & Midgley, 2015) or "learning" new skills for navigation (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015; McMahon & Watson, 2015).

Narrative-Based Assessments Expand Options and Self-Awareness

After a dialogue, participants expressed more options to explore and new perspectives about themselves, which supports literature that narrative assessments use life experiences to elicit values, interests, adaptability, and strengths, and broaden options for new transition possibilities (Harless & Stoltz, 2018; Bimrose & McNair, 2011).

Career-Changers Represent a Potential Community of Practice

To explore midlife career transition, the researcher recruited novices seeking a transition as well as experts who had completed one. The researcher used dialogues, first with a novice and then with the novice and a paired expert, to elicit the practices participants used to navigate career change. The resulting stories revealed that novices and experts had engaged in multiple career transitions while using and adjusting strategies over time, and that Completers had interviewed experts to aid their own transitions. Participants not only shared stories but also engaged in questioning and problem-solving. This study explains midlife career transition as a practice in which people are informally connected by the common purpose of pursuing roles that better met their needs (Wenger, 2010a), those people representing a community in which novices and experts try and adapt strategies and share them (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2010) through storytelling and networking (Snyder & Wenger, 2010). Capturing stories and strategies within case studies and providing a framework for dialogues creates tools for others regardless of their vocation, much like the boundary-spanning community of practice called Alcoholics Anonymous (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Participation in the community may be limited to brief consultations with authoritative voices like career coaches, or more deeply engaged with discussing experiences and strategies with others and embracing ongoing change.

Facilitation Can Convene Flexible Meetings That Span Vocational Boundaries While Scaffolding the Exploration of Career Transition

Participants came from different vocations, and demonstrated challenges with sharing or asking for personal information, focusing on transition patterns rather than relatable tasks, empathizing with emotional sharing, comparing and contrasting or making meaning for themselves, or expanding their participation beyond simple probes and responses. However, the facilitator used prompts, comparisons and proposals to improve transition-focused sharing and meaning-making, and supported participants when they expanded their interactions amongst each other to request more information, express doubts, explain concepts, problem-solve, or offer further contact. The study integrated theory and research with practice (Argyris & Schon, 1989) by establishing community spaces for sharing (Polin, 2010) using Zoom videoconferences, convening cross-boundary dialogues with novice and expert transitioners from different vocations (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), and using the Systems Theory Framework to guide participants through exploration and meaning-making using their own career transitions, while gathering data for analysis. The facilitator acted as a convener and broker, helping participants communicate across differences to discuss transition strategies (Brown & Duguid, 2001). The facilitator's role required skills in probing, reflecting, clarifying and interpreting (Brott, 2015), and crossed boundaries of research, adult education, and career counselling, which means the role was specialized and lacked a recognized career identity (Kubiak et al., 2015). The case studies, concepts and activity systems emerging from the study are boundary objects that explain career transition strategies across differences in age, gender and vocation (Kubiak et al., 2015) and provide templates for future dialogues (Star, 2010; Star & Griesemer, 1989).

Relationships Can Be Used to Co-Author Understanding of Career Transition Through Dialogue

Recruiting participants required leveraging trusted relationships among the researcher, colleagues and connected organizations. During dialogues, participants not only explored relationships affecting their career paths, but also attempted to relate to each other by balancing vulnerability, inquiring about shared tasks and experiences, comparing and contrasting, and problem-solving. Participants expressed surprise that people in other professions shared their experiences and values, and developed insights about the roles others played in their struggles. After dialogues, future career descriptions shifted from seeking safe, harmonious relationships and philanthropic partners to more practical intentions to seek out, learn from and work with people to advance careers. This study contrasted with individualistic approaches that examine interactions as sources of feedback to an individual about whether they perform well in a role (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008), or that encourage individuals to reimagine themselves as heroes advancing into the next chapter of their career story (Savickas, 2015; Leung, 2008). Instead, this study supports literature that explains career in terms of people coauthoring their lives through relationships with others (Richardson, 2012; 2012a), and expands on that literature by facilitating relationships between novices and experts in which they used life and work experiences, questions, comparisons and contrasts and meaning-making to coauthor new understandings of their career paths, and new ways of leveraging social interactions to coauthor progress in their careers. The degree of co-authoring depended on differences in the participants, but also on the level of trust established among participants, which in turn depended on how much they shared about themselves to establish common life experiences and career challenges. Co-authoring implies different results based on the nature of the coauthors. People who passively rely on co-authors who exist within their social sphere such as family and friends may be hindered in their career transitions (Motulsky, 2010), while people who purposefully seek out fresh co-authors may develop new insights and options. As such, dialogues can help participants enhance their social capital (connections within a desired social sphere) and cultural capital (knowledge of explicit and implicit career navigation practices and trouble-shooting) by employing time and effort to engage with relatable people to discuss their career transitions (Bourdieu, 1986) and develop options for escaping the limitations of their existing strategies and social networks.

Implications to Theory for Midlife Career Transition

This section relates this study to the literature to provide implications to theory for midlife career transition.

Pressure for Career Change Related to Conflicting Reasons for Work

People experienced career change pressure if they prioritized personal needs over income and opportunity, or if they prioritized working for others at the expense of personal needs. People could prolong dissatisfaction by alternating between those extremes. Personal needs differed based on gender. Male Seekers expressed needs in terms of sensations and identity such as being in love running a company, revealing the hidden beauty of people through theatre, or experiencing energizing engagement through coaching. Female Completers expressed needs in terms of being helpers caring for others or their own mental health. This study supports literature that highlights how social structures can establish expectations that preserve power for some while oppressing others (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). For example, career change

pressures may be explained by social discourses in which a privileged few create careers based on a personally-fulfilling passion (Stead & Bakker, 2010) while most should simply exploit their most marketable “talents” regardless of personal needs in order to serve the labour market (Arthur, 2014; Sultana, 2014). Differences between male and female participants may be explained by a social discourse in which women are expected to help others at the expense of personal ambition (Stead & Bakker, 2010), such as unpaid work for families and community (Richardson, 2012).

Career Transition Was Undermined When Career-Changers Focused on Sellable Skills Rather Than Desirable Forms of Practice or Meaningful Problem-Solving

In this study, identity emerged as a concept related to whether a person felt belonging or exclusion with a role, a group, or a community and depended on the freedom to perform a role according to personal values and experience encouraging arousal. Identity was excluding when a role, group or community conflicted with personal needs, a trauma undermined identity, or a new option did not obviously fit "who they are." Exclusion led to people participating reluctantly, limiting their participation, or rejecting groups of people to participate with or unfamiliar options. As a result, people not only engaged in unsatisfying roles but also deprived themselves of experiences, connections, and opportunities that could assist them if their roles matched their identity. In contrast, satisfying transitions related to identifying personally-meaningful experiences of engaging a skillset for problem-solving, discovering a more preferable form of engagement with demand in the marketplace, and pursuing targeted training for that alternative. Male Seekers pursued alternative forms of doing a task that produced desirable experiences related to identity. Female Completers pursued forms of using a task to help others solve personally-meaningful problems the Completer had encountered in the past. When the state of identity was belonging, people created opportunities for work, performed according to their priorities, and managed undermining arousal, such as anxiety, in order to enjoy their desired performance. This study supports social cognitive career theory in how it connects the practical and emotional feedback people receive from taking actions in the world to the career choices they make (Swanson & Fouad, 2015; Leung, 2008). However, this study extends the literature by noting that feedback about ability and perceived rewards was filtered by identity and personal meaning. People could reject roles they were good at if their identity excluded them, and people could persist with roles in which they experienced negative emotions and rejection if their identity was belonging. The role of identity is important because focusing on strong, marketable skills without considering whether they are supported or undermined by identity can lead to unhappiness and self-defeating limitations on engagement with a role, colleagues and community.

Social Relationships Coauthor Career Experiences and Require Purposeful Choices

People had unsatisfying career experiences when they passively relied on existing contacts, and expected to be trusted or trusted others without demonstrations of ability and integrity. In contrast, satisfying experiences related to actively surveying new contacts related to a desired direction, and seeking opportunities to demonstrate competence. People used peripheral activities such as a hobby, targeted training, class projects, gigs and sponsorships to develop helpful connections and gain insight through interactions with others. Such actions support literature on coauthoring careers through relationships, and the importance of actively seeking relationships with desirable influences (Richardson, 2012; 2012a) rather than relying on existing or proximate contacts who may hinder transitions (Motulsky, 2010). The need to develop new

social relationships to support career change supports literature on social and cultural capital, and the importance of spending time to develop connections with people whose own knowledge, connections and recognition can be leveraged through relationships to foster success in the desired career direction (Bourdieu, 1986).

Novice and Expert Career Changers Failed to Explore Widely Before Taking Action

This study supports the Systems Theory Framework because it highlighted "content" influences emerging from life stories such as identity, gender, social connections, and environmental resources, as well as "process" influences such as decision-making, adaptability to change, and engagement with chance events (Patton & McMahon, 2014). This study extends the literature by noting patterns in how people implemented a problematic "process" when they used a limited knowledge of "content" due to lack of exploration. Both novices and experts tended not to explore widely before making career choices, or to monitor for threats to anticipate problems. They often reacted to chance events they noticed rather than seeking out chance opportunities more strategically. They were unprepared for changing circumstances such as a new boss or changing demands in the marketplace. As a result, participants lacked data that would allow them to notice, identify and assess a broad array of chance opportunities, environmental resources, and social connections, and apply a strategic decision-making approach to meet their personal needs. As a result, they could use connections, complete training, market themselves and secure forms of work but remained unsatisfied.

Dissatisfying Career Experiences Related to Dependent Learning

Unsatisfying career experiences related to dependence and reactivity. First, people narrowed their responsibilities, submitted to others' goals, priorities and judgment, and interpreted setbacks as personal failure and exclusion. Second, people allowed peripheral activities such as school admissions, recruiting employers, and professional services providers to determine career and business directions despite those activities being driven by their own self-serving needs with little information or concern for others. Unsatisfying transitions related to relying on others to establish identity, goals and criteria for success, which reflect dependent learning (Price et al., 2017). Although people may try various strategies and use feedback to reflect on and improve their progress, they do so dependently when they pursue values and goals supplied by others that do not meet their personal needs (Price et al., 2017). Dependent learners may demand externally-determined goals, criteria and feedback and feel lost or angry without them (Price et al., 2017). In contrast, satisfying transitions were more reflective of independent learning where people set priorities and goals, then pursue their goals by managing emotions, taking actions, and using feedback and adaptation to overcome obstacles (Price et al., 2017). Dependent learners can be highly successful in seeking and performing against others' criteria and may require assistance to development insight, skills and distress tolerance for independent learning approaches (Price et al., 2017) to meet their own needs. In contrast, satisfying experiences related to broadening responsibilities, creating work to support a desired career, persisting and adapting to overcome failure, and pursuing meaningful roles despite anxiety, financial constraints, and rejection, all of which relate to the exercise of independence and agency, meaning a purposeful approach of taking steps, however small and iterative, to move closer to a personally-meaningful set of circumstances.

Implication to Theory for The Design of Learning Interventions

This section relates this study to the literature to provide implications to theory for the design of learning experiences.

Emotions Affect Engagement and Value of Learning and Can be Explicitly Addressed

During dialogues, participant emotions affected sharing of personal stories, empathizing with each other over familiar challenges, expressing doubts about applying what was learned, experiencing laughter and fatigue, and expressing value from the experience. Emotions affected how participants engaged with and experienced the intervention. As such, emotions were an important aspect of the learning experience that could be addressed through design and facilitation. For instance, encouraging a Seeker to share personal information and challenges during the introduction resulted in the Completer feeling safer to do the same. Encouraging sharing and comparing of experiences resulted in participants empathizing and finding common ground for problem-solving. Encouraging processing and reflection resulted in a Seeker sharing otherwise-secret doubts about using anything he had learned. His doubts prompted a Completer to empathize and share her experiencing of problem-solving. As such, addressing emotions resulted in deeper interactions with subject-matter and discussions about doubts and options for applying new knowledge. Such emotions are internal and subjective experiences for learners that affect engagement but are hidden from view. Such experiences are not typically addressed by instructional design, which grew out of military and industrial training and employed behaviourism, a learning theory that focuses on applying stimuli, rewards and punishments to induce desired behaviours while ignoring their thoughts and emotions. Training also employs cognitive theory to structure and sequence the way information is presented, but emotions remain unaddressed. Training is only one solution considered by practitioners of Human Performance Technology (HPT), an engineering-inspired methodology that considers how a system of influences affects how people perform tasks (Gilbert, 1978). For example, one model addresses a person's knowledge, capacity and motivation, as well as their environment's ability to provide needed information, resources, and incentives (Wilmoth, et al., 2002). However, like instructional design, HPT does not typically examine subjective emotional experiences beyond motivation, which in those contexts relates to a willingness to act on the priorities, materials and processes imposed by some authority. In training, motivation is addressed by Keller's (2016) ARCS-V model which focuses on getting an audience's attention, establishing relevance of material, encouraging an appropriate level of confidence in learners, proposing potential satisfaction to look forward to, and assisting their commitment to complete their performance. In contrast, this study highlights the importance of expecting, noticing, eliciting and managing participant emotions to improve trust, participation, questioning, problem-solving and perceived value in order for participants to make personal meaning of emerging knowledge. Such actions relate to the field of emotional intelligence, which "involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Mayer & Salovey, 1993, 433). Emotional intelligence is a "hot intelligence" that relates to "matters of personal, emotional importance to the individual" such as signals about threats to relationships and isolation (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004, 197). Emotions affect expectations about the future, prioritization of tasks, reacting to differences between expectations and reality, and addressing failures (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Managing emotions can be restrictive when people avoid triggering issues, or open if people shift to accepting feelings and seeking more information (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). People who are restrictive in managing emotions are less empathetic, and people who have difficulty regulating emotions suffer decreases in measured intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1993), which could affect problem-

solving ability. In contrast, higher levels of emotional intelligence relate to being better at stress management, interacting with others, and developing motivational statements about the future (Mayer et al., 2004). Applying emotional intelligence to design would require accepting the emotional component of learning (particularly in areas of personal importance such as career change) and facilitating, continually seeking awareness of emotions and labelling them, relating emotions to restrictive behaviours, and then purposefully seeking openness by accepting emotional discomfort and engaging curiosity with questions that assist with data-gathering, problem-solving and planning.

Limitations

This study was limited in a number of ways. First, as a qualitative study, the results help to generate theory to explain midlife career transition and the use of multi-party dialogues to explore it, but results are not generalizable. Second, the study relied on multi-party dialogue but took place during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required moving interactions into online videoconferences with digital note-taking and electronic survey requests. The pandemic and videoconferencing may have affected the willingness of participants to participate. Third, the small convenience sample primarily reflected a major city experience, all male Seekers, all-female Completers, university graduates, and post-graduate study in organizational development. Fourth, the sample participants enjoyed privilege in terms of economic capital (a lifestyle that enabled them to spend time discussing), social capital (connections that enabled their career transitions, and brought them into the study) and cultural capital (advanced degrees, capacities in listening and speaking, experience with social niceties) that broad aspects of the population may lack (Bourdieu, 1986).

Suggestions for Future Research on Dialogues

This study prompts future research for dialogues, and to assist such research, Appendix T provides guidelines and templates to implement dialogues. Future research could examine how the cases studies, concepts and activity systems emerging from this study could be used with participants to prepare for and enhance dialogues by providing more content for comparison, contrast and meaning-making. Research could also examine how participants could use templates based on the case studies and activity systems to analyze their own career paths and navigation strategies. Participants engaged in different kinds of roles based on their ability to relate to each other. Future research could examine how to enhance relatability by facilitating mutual sharing and comparing and contrasting early in the dialogue to increase the frequency and depth of ongoing interactions. Emotion played a large role in sharing, satisfaction and future plans, so research could examine how to use emotion to enhance those outcomes. A belonging identity helped participants manage setbacks while pursuing goals, so future research could examine how to help people establish belonging to assist them with employing a persistent and adaptive approach to transition. Facilitation guided dialogues through systemic influences and meaning-making, so future research could examine the required competencies and how to develop more scalable resources. Participants shaped the content and process of dialogues, so future research could explore how different pairing of participants affects dialogues and the resulting insights and plans. Participants represented an advanced level of privilege in terms of their economic, social, and cultural capital, so future research could explore how pairings of people with less privilege, or differing levels of privilege, can reveal, leverage and expand their social and cultural capital. Future Career Autobiographies (FCA) showed how participants changed descriptions of their future after a dialogue, so future research could examine how

adding prompts to FCAs to consider the career navigation concepts arising from this study might enhance the breadth and depth of FCAs.

Suggestions for Future Research on Midlife Career Transition

This study prompts future research on midlife career transition. Participants struggled to balance personal needs against labour market demands and used their identity as a reason to overcome obstacles or limit and undermine their participation in a role. Future research could explore how to assist participants with identifying how they define and use their identity in order to reduce self-sabotage in career navigation and enhance seeking and investment in more harmonious options. Male Seekers and female Completers defined personal needs differently. Future research could examine whether their differences related to gender or their seeker/completer role, and whether defining needs as individual ambition and desired experiences or as helping others solve a familiar problem affects success in career transition. Participants engaged with others during career navigation in ways that shaped their opportunities, successes and setbacks and reflected dependent learning strategies. Future research could explore how to help people develop independent learning skills that shift them towards more agentic approaches of defining, testing and adapting career navigation strategies to meet their own needs.

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Appendices List

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Appendix A: Referral Recruiting Letter

MIDLIFE CAREER TRANSITION

Looking for BOTH adults who MADE a midlife (aged 35-60) career transition OR WANT to make one
Offering a FREE HANDS-ON exploration of career influences requiring 2-4 hours

The purpose of the research is to develop, test and revise a learning experience that helps midlife adults

- understand the influences that shaped their ideas about career and career transition
- develop skills in gathering information from a similar person who has achieved a transition
- create an anonymous case study that can help others

Applicants who respond will first be checked for eligibility:

1. Fluent in spoken and written English at a basic conversational level
2. For any participant, at the time of transition:
 - a. Aged 35-60
 - b. Employed in any kind of work (paid or unpaid)
 - c. Lacked post-secondary education credential OR had a community college or vocational credential but never used it in Canada
 - d. Parents lacked post-secondary education credential
3. For a participant who completed a transition
 - a. Achieved a new post-secondary credential OR combined an existing credential with additional paid or unpaid work in a new field
 - b. Secured fulltime work in a new career using the credential
 - c. Achieved an increase in annual income of 20% or more

Diversity:

Seeking a wide range of participants based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, rural or urban, vibrant or economically-depressed locations

Exclusions:

Candidates with mental illness, addictions, intellectual disabilities, or currently receiving ongoing counselling services

Contact:

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Note:

This doctoral research has been subject to an ethics review by Concordia University (Montreal).

Appendix B: Direct Recruiting Letter

MIDLIFE CAREER TRANSITION

Are you 35-60 years old?

Are you seeking a career transition? Would you like to connect with someone like you who has already done it?

OR

Have you made a career transition as a midlife adult? Could you share your experiences with someone who could learn from your journey? Would you like to reflect on your progress to determine where to go next?

I'm offering a FREE HANDS-ON exploration of your career influences requiring 2-4 hours

The purpose of the research is to develop, test and revise a learning experience that helps midlife adults

- understand the influences that shaped their ideas about career and career transition
- develop skills in gathering information from a similar person who has achieved a transition
- create an anonymous case study that can help others

Applicants who respond will first be checked for eligibility:

1. Fluent in spoken and written English at a basic conversational level
2. For any participant, at the time of transition:
 - a. Aged 35-60
 - b. Employed in any kind of work (paid or unpaid)
 - c. Lacked post-secondary education credential OR had a community college or vocational credential but never used it in Canada
 - d. Parents lacked post-secondary education credential
3. For a participant who completed a transition
 - a. Earned a new post-secondary credential OR combined an existing credential with additional paid or unpaid work in a new field
 - b. Got fulltime work in a new career using the credential
 - c. Improved annual income by 20% or more

Diversity:

Seeking a wide range of participants based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, rural or urban, vibrant or economically-depressed locations

Exclusions:

Candidates with mental illness, addictions, intellectual disabilities, or currently receiving ongoing counselling services

Contact:

David Price, LL.B., M.A., Ph.D. candidate

Department of Education, Concordia University (Montreal)

d_pric@live.concordia.ca

Note:

This doctoral research has been subject to an ethics review by Concordia University (Montreal).

Appendix C: Consent and Eligibility Request letter

THANK-YOU!

Thank-you for expressing interest in my study about midlife career transition.

NOTE: this study does NOT provide job placement or career advice. This study helps you develop new skills in exploring career influences and successful career transitions.

I've included an infographic that explains how the study works and what you would be expected to do.

CONSENT FORM

I cannot proceed unless I have a signed consent form from you.

Please review the provided form and ask any questions you may have.

If you wish to participate, please sign the form, take a digital photo of the form, and send the photo to me by email. Please bring the physical copy when we meet.

CHECKING YOUR ELIGIBILITY

My study focuses on midlife adults who meet special criteria.

Please send me a copy of your Curriculum Vitae (or resumé).

Please also provide the requested information below. The information is CONFIDENTIAL and will not be connected with your name.

{INSERT APPENDIX E DEMOGRAPHIC INSTRUMENT}

Appendix D: Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Study Title: Midlife Career Transition: Assessment Through Action

Researcher: David W. Price, Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Technology

Contact: d_pric@live.concordia.ca
FG5.150 Dept. Education, 1455 de Maisonneuve W. Montréal, QC H3G 1M8

Supervisor: Saul Carliner, Professor, Education

Contact: Saul.Carliner@concordia.ca (514) 848-2424 x. 2038
FG6.323 Dept. Education, 1455 de Maisonneuve W. Montréal, QC H3G 1M8

Funding: No funding

You are invited to participate in the research study described below. Please read carefully before deciding if you want to participate. If you need explanations or want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to develop, test and revise a learning experience that helps midlife adults

- understand the influences that shaped their ideas about career and career transition
- develop skills in gathering information from others who have achieved a midlife career transition
- create anonymous case studies that can be shared with a community to help others

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to do the following:

- provide your resume (CV) and personal information to determine your eligibility
- participate in a Transition Interview by video-conference (90 mins)
 - describe your life and future career in 5 years
 - discuss the timeline of your life experiences shaping your career
 - use the timeline to create a brief summary of your career themes
 - FOLLOW-UP: describe your life and future career in 5 years
 - Rate and describe this experience
- if you are seeking a transition, also participate in Interview Training by video-conference (15 mins)
 - rate your ability to interview
 - learn and practice skills in interviewing
 - consider questions you want to ask a transition Completer
 - FOLLOW-UP: rate your ability to interview
- if you are seeking a transition, also participate in a second Transition Interview with a Completer by video-conference (90 mins)
 - describe how your life and future career might look in 5 years
 - follow the same procedure as the Transition Interview but as a co-interviewer

- FOLLOW-UP: describe how your life and future career might look in 5 years
- Rate and describe this experience
- Answer follow-up questions several weeks later to share plans you have made or actions you have taken, and your reaction to my analysis (20 minutes)

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

You might face certain risks by participating in this research, such as:

- Discomfort when sharing memories relating to events that affected your career experiences and hopes
- Concern that employers, family, friends or colleagues may feel threatened by your desire for transition

You might or might not receive personal benefits from participating in this research, such as:

- First-hand interaction with a role model for successful career transition (or acting as a role model)
- an understanding of the influences that shape career experiences and successful midlife transitions
- new skills in gathering data from people you can relate to in your community
- a helpful case study and community contact for midlife career transition

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

The researcher will not allow anyone to access your information except people directly involved in conducting the research. The researcher will only use the information for the purposes described in this form.

The researcher will protect the information by storing digital versions on the researcher's password protected computer. Paper will be stored in a locked container at the researcher's office. The researcher will destroy information after 15 years.

Your information will be identified by a code (**NOT your name**) and the researcher will have a list that links the code to your name. **The researcher intends to publish and present results but you will NOT be identified in the results.**

In certain situations, the researcher might be legally required to disclose your information (e.g. imminent threat of serious harm to specific individuals). The researcher will disclose information as required by law, despite what is written in this form.

E. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can ask that your information not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want the researcher to use your information, you must provide notification within 7 calendar days after your meeting. You agree, however, that your anonymous ratings and comments about the experience may still be used.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking the researcher to not use your information.

The researcher will not be able to offer you compensation if you are injured in this research. However, you are not giving up any legal right to compensation by signing this form.

F. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION OF CONSENT

At the start of the first video conference you will be asked the following:

1. Have you read and understood this consent form?
2. What questions do you have before deciding to participate?
3. Do you agree to the terms and conditions of this consent form?

4. If you accept, please state your name and the date for the record.

If you have questions about this research, please contact the researcher or faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix E: Demographic Instrument

This CONFIDENTIAL information will be used for the following reasons:

1. to determine your eligibility to participate
2. to match you to someone similar to you
3. to relate your personal characteristics to career transition and your experience of this learning opportunity

Date:

Personal Identifier (Initials of name + year of birth):

Email address (if filling this form out on paper):

EVERYONE COMPLETE THIS SECTION

Year of birth:

Country of birth:

Your ancestry (write as many as apply to you, examples below):

White Black Latin-American Aboriginal

East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Filipino)

South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)

Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, etc.)

West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.)

Other – specify

Gender you identify as (e.g., Male, female):

Sexual orientation (e.g., “straight”/heterosexual or one of LGBTQ):

Current relationship status (e.g., single, common-law, partners, married, divorced, widowed):

Current annual income range in 5k increments (e.g., \$10,000-15,000):

Current highest education credential (e.g., High school, college):

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED A CAREER TRANSITION, ALSO COMPLETE THIS:

Age JUST BEFORE transition:

Relationship status JUST BEFORE transition:

Annual income range in 5k increments (e.g., \$10,000-15,000) JUST BEFORE transition:

Highest education credential (e.g., High school, college) JUST BEFORE transition:

Divide your post-transition annual income / pre-transition income:

Your parents’ post-secondary credentials BEFORE transition:

Appendix F: Explanation Protocol

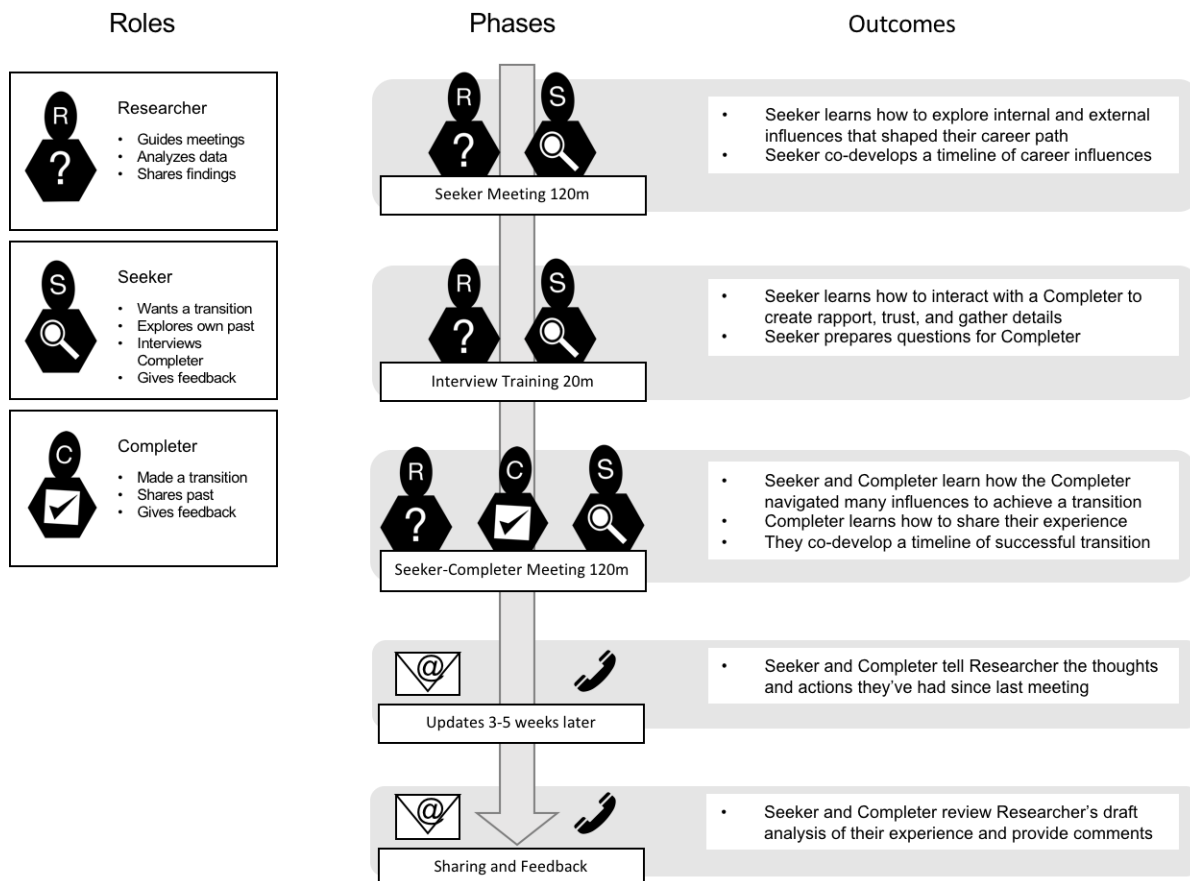
This study includes a Researcher, “Seekers” (people who want to make a midlife career transition) and “Completers” (people who have made a midlife career transition)

This study aims to research

1. barriers to midlife career transition
2. ways Completers overcame barriers to achieve a transition
3. how Seekers can develop skills in interviewing and exploring influences to learn about themselves and Completers, and to improve their outlook on making a transition

The following diagram shows the roles of each person and the overall process. As the researcher, I will guide each meeting. I am working with 6-9 pairs of people in order to test and improve this process so it can be used as a learning experience to help others.

Midlife Career Transition – Research Process for Seekers and Completers



Seeker meeting

- I will help the Seeker explore their past life experiences
- We will examine the many influences that shaped their career path
- We will develop a career timeline
- In the future, the Seeker will be able to think about career in terms of the many influences that can be identified and addressed to make a change

Training meeting

- I will help the Seeker learn how to develop rapport, build trust, and ask for details when talking to a Completer
- The Seeker will use these skills to interview a Completer
- In the future, the Seeker will be able to interview others as he/she needs

Seeker-Completer meeting

- I will help the Seeker interview a Completer
- We will examine the many influences that shaped their career path
- We will learn how the Completer overcame their challenges to make a transition
- We will develop a career transition timeline
- In the future, the Seeker will be able to refer to the Completer's case study and think about ways to overcome challenges to achieve a career transition
- In the future, the Completer will be able to help other Seekers constructively, reflect on their case study of transition, and consider where to take their career next (perhaps they want to find a Completer of their own)

I will be using some forms to help us gather data. I will explain each form before I use it.

What questions do you have before we get started?

Appendix G: Video Version of Explanation Protocol

[NOTE: I used PowerPoint to create a brief video posted on YouTube. The following pages show the slides used in the video. Narration is based on the slide content.]

The Midlife Career Study

David W. Price

Ph.D. proposal defended on June 19, 2019

Concordia University, Montreal

Who am I?



David William Price

- Former lawyer
- Instructional Designer
- University instructor
- Ph.D. candidate

<https://ca.linkedin.com/in/david-william-price-7a7a2a12>

What am I investigating?

1. How do adults change careers in midlife?
2. How do they navigate all their life challenges to do it?
3. How can other adults learn from interviewing them?

Who do I need for this study?



Completers



Seekers

Who do I need for this study?



Completers



Seekers

-
- Changed career when aged 35-60
 - Overcame doubts and challenges
 - Employed full-time
 - Improved income and credentials
-

Who do I need for this study?



Completers



Seekers

-
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| • Changed career when aged 35-60 | • Aged 35-60 |
| • Overcame doubts and challenges | • Seeking career change |
| • Employed full-time | • Not currently in counselling |
| • Improved income and credentials | • No mental illness or mental disability |
-

Does this sound like you? Or someone you know?



Completers

- Changed career when aged 35-60
- Overcame doubts and challenges
- Employed full-time
- Improved income and credentials



Seekers

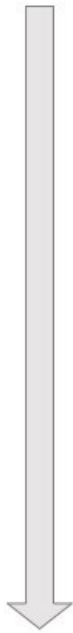
- Aged 35-60
- Seeking career change
- Not currently in counselling
- No mental illness or mental disability

How do we interact safely?



1. I'll ask everyone to read a consent form and provide oral consent
2. I'll match Completers to Seekers with similar life challenges
3. We'll meet through video-conferencing
4. You can participate from home with a smartphone, tablet or computer

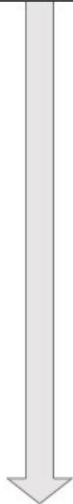
What will we be doing?



What will we be doing?



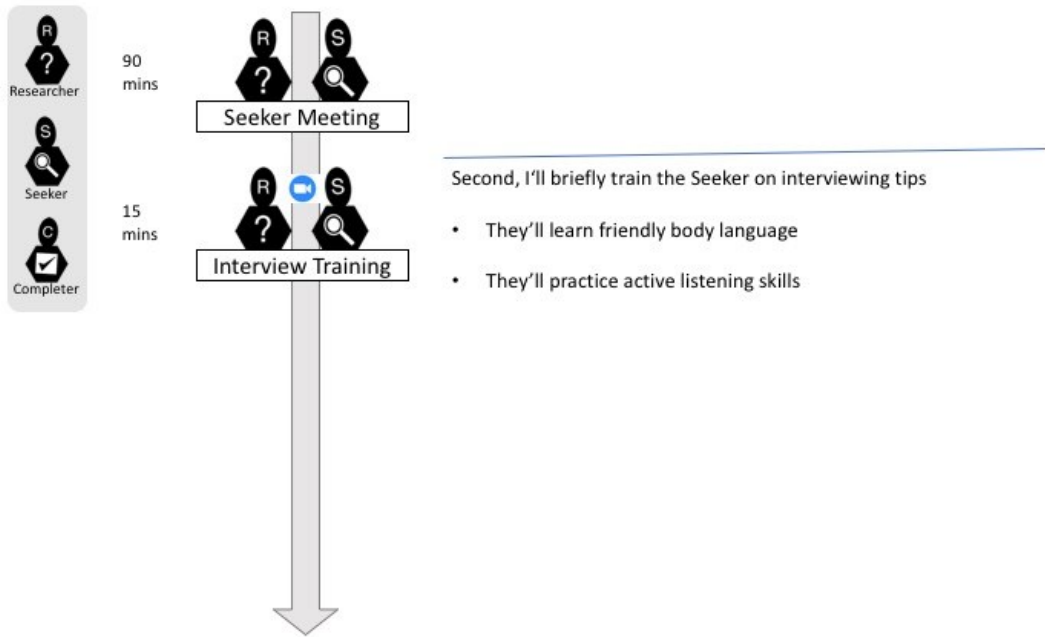
90 mins



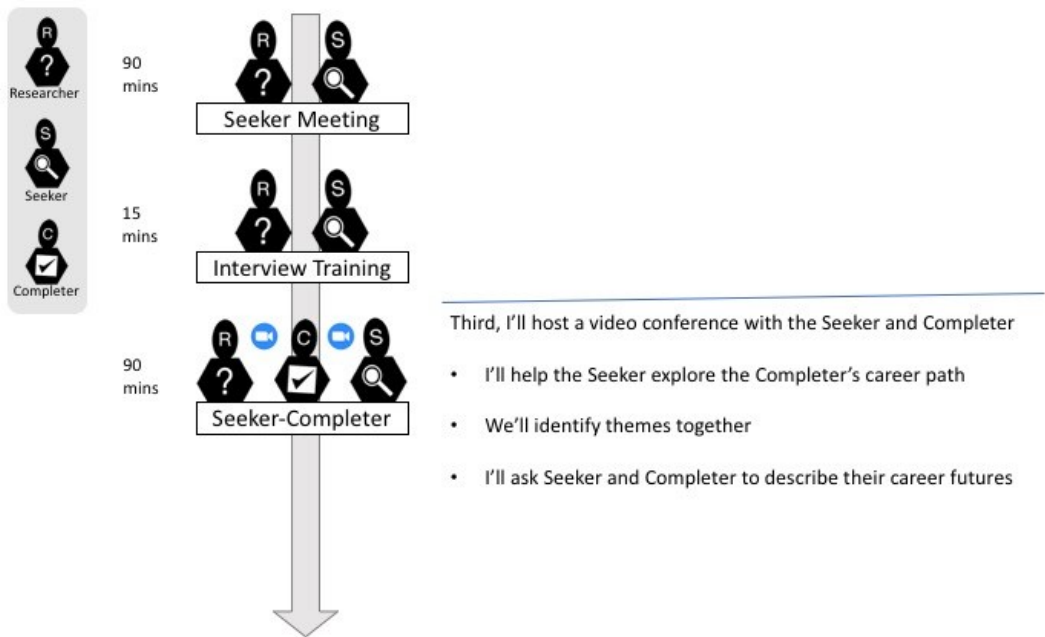
First, I'll meet with the Seeker via video conference

- We'll create a timeline of their career path so far
- We'll work together to identify themes
- I'll ask the Seeker to describe their career future

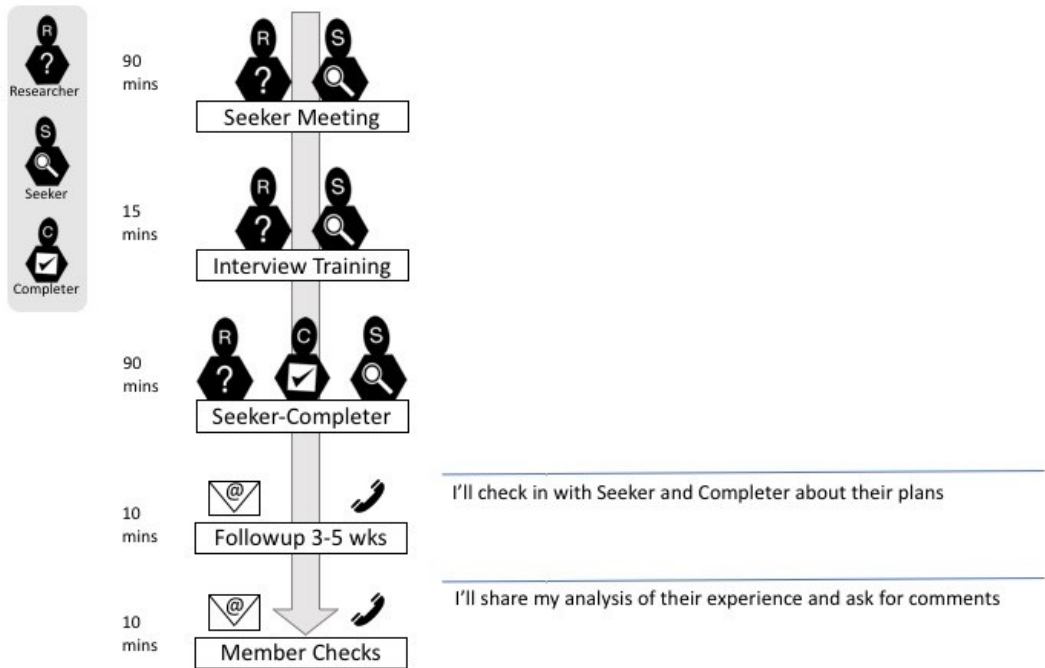
What will we be doing?



What will we be doing?



What will we be doing?



Contact me to learn more

E-mail: d_pric@live.concordia.ca

Midlife Career Study on Facebook: <https://bit.ly/2WL5KCi>



Appendix H: Future Career Autobiography

This form collects data on how you see your career future. We will use this form both before and after a session.

Date:

Time:

Personal Identifier (Initials of name + year of birth):

“Please use this page to write a brief paragraph about where you hope to be in life and what you hope to be doing occupationally 5 (five) years from now” (Rehfuss, 2015, p.155)

Appendix I: Qualitative Timeline

This form collects events from your life that affected how you entered your current career and employment.

We will start from today and work backwards.

For each event, I will ask you about how you think certain factors affected you. For instance, you might identify a job offer as an event and I might ask how your age, your family, and your location affected the way you perceive that offer.

Date:

Personal Identifier (Initials of name + year of birth):

Timeline (from current back to career transition trigger)	Individual (sex, race, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation)	Social (family, friends, co- workers, colleagues, neighbours)	Environmental (economics, geography, social services)	Decision- making (choice and main reason)	Chance (unexpected problem or opportunity)

Appendix J: Career Pathway Instrument

We will produce a 1-page case study of your transition experience that captures the key 5-10 events and influences that affected your career pathway. The information on this form, without your name, will be shared as a community resource for others.

Date:

Personal Identifier (Initials of name + year of birth):

Beginning career:

Ending career:

Key timeline elements (5-10) order from beginning to end:

Timeline (from current back to career transition trigger)	Individual (sex, race, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation)	Social (family, friends, co- workers, colleagues, neighbours)	Environmental (economics, geography, social services)	Decision- making (choice and main reason)	Chance (unexpected problem or opportunity)

Appendix K: Debriefing Instrument

An important part of this research is finding out what works and what needs to be changed. Please rate your experiences below. Your answers will not affect the help I provide.

Date:

Personal Identifier (Initials of name + year of birth):

Session (e.g., Seeker Meeting, Training, Seeker-Completer Meeting):

NOT HELPFUL (1) – (2) – (3) – (4) – (5) **VERY HELPFUL**

Please Rate the Impact of this Session	Rating
Understandable and satisfying?	
Addressed the complex influences in your life?	
Supported interaction and collaboration?	
Changed how you FEEL about career and transition?	
Changed how you THINK about career and transition?	
Helped you develop SKILLS in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	
Helped you develop CONFIDENCE in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	
Affected your likelihood of talking to people in your community about career transition?	
Tools Used in this Session (mark N/A if not used)	Rating
Future Career Autobiography (pre/post)	
Qualitative Timeline	
Career Pathway	
Training on SOFTEN, Active Listening, Probing	
Seeker interviewing the Completer	

What would you change & why?

What specific career transition actions do you plan to take in the next 3-5 weeks?

What surprised you most from this experience?

Appendix L: Active Listening Protocol

Whenever you want to learn from people, you need to do three things: build rapport, demonstrate active listening, and using probing questions. You can use the SOFTEN, SPA and TEE techniques.

RAPPORT BUILDING

Building rapport means helping people be comfortable with you and trust you. Show you are open and interested in what someone is saying. Use the SOFTEN technique.

SOFTEN stands for:

1. Smile [demonstrate frown then smile]
2. Open posture [demonstrate closed arms and legs then open]
3. Forward lean [demonstrate lean back then forward]
4. Touch [demonstrate as a hand-shake]
5. Eye Contact [demonstrate looking down then friendly eye contact]
6. Nodding [demonstrate nodding and tilt-head nodding]

Please tell me what SOFTEN means and demonstrate each technique for me.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening means demonstrating that you have heard what is said and want to understand it. Always focus on what someone is saying NOW— NOT on your next question. Use the SPA technique. SPA stands for:

1. Summarize what you heard and allow them to correct you or provide more detail
2. Pause and be silent for a moment to encourage them to continue
3. Acknowledge their emotions and feelings when they mention them (you don't have to agree with them! Just acknowledge they were angry or scared etc.)

Please tell me what Active Listening means and demonstrate each technique for me.

How could you use Rapport Building while listening?

PROBING QUESTIONS

Probing means asking follow-up questions. Too often, you will tell someone something and they never ask for any details. Use the TEE technique. TEE stands for:

1. Tell me more

- a. Ask WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY + HOW (5 w's + h)
2. Example — please give me an example of that
3. Explain — please explain how you did that from start to end

Please tell me what Probing Questions are and demonstrate each technique for me.

How could you use Rapport Building while listening?

Appendix M: Data-Gathering Ability Instrument

Date:

Personal Identifier (Initials of name + year of birth):

Please rate your comfort with the following forms of interaction.

VERY WEAK (1) – (2) – (3) – (4) – (5) **VERY STRONG**

Item	<u>Before Training</u> 1 to 5	<u>After Training</u> 1 to 5	<u>After Interviewing</u> 1 to 5	What would you change about this lesson and why?	What was helpful about this lesson and why?
Rapport Building (helping people be comfortable with you in conversation)					
Active Listening (focusing on listening, and encouraging people to share)					
Probing (moving a conversation deeper than small talk)					

Appendix N: Long-term Action Follow-up Instrument

Following their final meeting, the following email will be sent to each participant during the follow-up period:

Dear {participant name}

It has been {X} weeks since our final meeting for my research project on midlife career transition. Please help me by providing a follow-up on your activities since our meeting. We can do this by email, phone, Skype, or other method convenient to you.

1. What activities have you planned with respect to career and transition?
2. What activities have you taken with respect to career and transition?
Activities include sharing, discussing or updating the items we created in the research process; or requesting meetings with people and talking to them about your career goals and their career transitions.
3. What other comments would you like to share?

Appendix O: Counselling Services List

[REDACTED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY]

Appendix P: Concepts Emerging From Career Cases

This appendix reports the concepts emerging from the six career transition cases.

Analysis to Find Explanatory Concepts

In line with the Systems Theory Framework, statements in each career case study were first categorized according to the systemic influence they represented, namely individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making. Within each influence, statements were analyzed using constant comparison to identify emerging concepts that would explain the influence. This section reports each systemic influence and the concepts that explain it with their quantitative strengths and illustrative quotes. These concepts were used to form activity systems to explain how participants navigated career change.

What Was the Role of the Individual Influence for Participants?

Statements in case narratives were coded as the individual influence when they related to the participants' own thoughts, needs and feelings. The key concepts emerging from those statements were power, freedom, scope, identity and arousal.

Power. Power emerged as the authority to make decisions about initiating, maintaining or ending a venture in which the participant might play a role. Power was high when a participant could decide. Power was low when a participant played a role within someone else's venture. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.1.

Table P.1
Strength of Coding for Power by Participant Type

	High Power		Low Power		Total Power	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	13 (38%)	3	21 (62%)	3	34 (58%)
Seekers	3	14 (56%)	3	11 (44%)	3	25 (42%)
Subtotals	6	27 (46%)	6	32 (54%)	6	59 (100%)

High Power. Power arose from controlling a venture, investing in learning, engaging a professional service, or joining a professional association.

Controlling a Venture (n=10). There were ten instances of starting, maintaining or ending entrepreneurial efforts. For instance, Peter created a multimedia business, started and ended distracting parallel ventures, then held onto his declining business until he faced financial ruin. . Similarly, Wanda started a home-based business, and chose to adapt it in the face of devastating competition. Victor pitched and produced a theatrical production, funding it with a loan from a wheeler-dealer and selling it to a venue. In semi-retirement, Helen offered career counselling services to students and colleagues. A venture could also be a hobby leading to a career, such as Leonard coaching informally on weekends. Susan wanted to start her own consulting firm.

Investing in Learning (n=11). There were 11 instances of investing in learning such as formal education or training, independent study, and reflective sabbatical. Several participants used a Master's degree to change direction. For instance, Peter enrolled in an executive MBA to "sharpen my tools or get some new tools." Wanda enrolled in a Master's program because "I didn't feel like I had enough to give" in her desired role as a consultant. Susan enrolled in a Master's that would allow her to "do something with people." Leonard, despite having a Ph.D., enrolled in a Master's that "seemed to fit my perception of what I needed to do and wanted to do." When his Master's failed to connect him with work, Leonard enrolled in a dedicated coaching certificate program. Finally, Helen reacted to her unhappiness as a secretary by enrolling in a Master's program that would help her become a consultant. Independent graduate study was also possible. Victor left a communications career to re-enrol in an undergraduate theatrical production school, and when he was later rejected for graduate study by an advanced theatrical production school, he organized a grant-funded independent study to complete a theatrical production project. Still later, Victor was accepted into the advanced theatrical production school. Learning also included less-formal options. For instance, Leonard enrolled in a music therapy certification, and a mindfulness course for stress reduction. Finally, when Helen faced burnout in her career, she took a year-long sabbatical, funded by contract work, to reflectively journal about her highs, lows, sources of satisfaction and what she valued.

Engaging a Service (n=2). There were two instances of engaging a service to advance career progress. For instance, Susan consulted a career coach and enrolled in a job coaching program.

Joining a Professional Association (n=1). One participant exercised power by joining a social group. Helen joined a women's business association where she networked with, and learned from, successful women.

Low Power. Participants had low power when they relied on someone else's venture in the form of employment or gig-based work.

Employment (n=13). There were 13 instances of relying on employment. For instance, Peter relied on several roles in sales and purchasing. Victor took a role at a communications services company. Susan worked phone-based roles at a beer company and an anxiety disorders non-profit, and coached immigrants at an employment services non-profit. Helen worked as a secretary, several headhunter positions, job coordinator, assistant director and career counsellor.

Gig-Based Work (n=17). There were 17 instances of relying on gig-based work (being paid to perform a project defined, initiated, maintained and ended by someone else). For instance, Wanda worked for the purchasers of her failed business, and as a research assistant during her Master's. Victor pitched ideas to an entertainment company until they started hiring him for their projects, and he accepted an undesired gig for the CEO in order to preserve his source of ongoing work. Victor was "shunted out" of gigs, such as a theatrical production about competitors that he'd successfully pitched, and a production about a celebrity that he'd reworked. Victor used networking to find gig-based work but experienced difficulty building relationships with people who didn't share his humanistic values. While raising her children, Susan took word-of-mouth referrals to help organizations improve their call centres. Similarly, she later took three contracts in change management and gigs in workshop facilitation. After his Master's, Leonard tried facilitation and workshop projects. During his subsequent coaching certification, he secured coaching gigs that motivated him to build a business. Helen took "gigs" translating documents,

and realized she didn't like it. When she transitioned from headhunting to counselling, she relied on research tasks for headhunters while trying to increase job-coordinator roles for universities. She noted that, "I told myself... I wanted to have the ability to say no" to control workload and types of clients, but the unstable flow of work left her "depressed and so scared."

Freedom. Freedom emerged as the ability, within an established venture, to reject tasks or clients, or structure and modify workload, processes, and scheduling according to values and preferences. Freedom was high when a participant could make those choices, and low otherwise. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.2.

Table P.2
Strength of Coding for Freedom by Participant Type

	High Freedom		Low Freedom		Total Freedom	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	17 (68%)	3	8 (32%)	3	25 (58%)
Seekers	3	9 (56%)	3	8 (44%)	3	18 (42%)
Subtotals	6	27 (63%)	6	16 (37%)	6	43 (100%)

High Freedom (n=27). Freedom arose when participants could align work with their values, control their schedule, place or workload, or control tasks based on preferences.

Align With Values (n=14). There were 14 instances of aligning roles and explorations for new kinds of roles based on values. First, there were eight instances of participants aligning roles. For instance, Wanda enjoyed "creating an environment in which [clients] can solve their own puzzles." Victor used his independent study grant to work for free with an artistic theatrical producer, then made his own production that portrayed an athletic discipline as a form of dance. When Victor took assignments from an entertainment company, "I would just kind of run with it and turn it into what I wanted... I would work hard to bring in kind of my perspective." Despite his lack of interest in competition shows, he pitched a competitor-themed theatrical production that focused on his fascination with unsung heroes. He grew an interviewing gig into an opportunity to remake a celebrity-focused theatrical production with a humanistic narrative, and explored his own genealogy by "making a theatrical production about me." Susan hesitated to accept employment with consultants because she wanted to avoid industries such as porn and tobacco. Finally, Helen enjoyed a boss "who engaged us all in consensus process... you feel a sense of ownership." Second, there were five instances of participants aligning explorations for new kinds of work. Based on reading LinkedIn blogs, Susan approached people in her desired profession to learn how to succeed. After the collapse of her business, Wanda sought training that would allow her to help clients identify and solve their own dilemmas. Helen joined a women's business association to learn from and network with successful business women. She sought training that would leverage her creative strengths rather than expose her quantitative weaknesses. Finally, Helen took a sabbatical from a headhunting career to reflect on her priorities for a new direction.

Control Location, Schedule or Workload (n=8). There were eight instances of controlling location, schedule or workload. There were four instances of participants controlling location. For instance, Wanda started a home-based so she could homeschool her children. Susan embraced consulting so she could be at home for her children after school, and she worked at a non-profit because the phone-based work let her work from home or from hotels when her children travelled for sports events. Peter moved his declining business into his house to try to save it. Additionally, there were four instances of participants controlling scheduling and workload. Susan hesitated to accept employment with consultants so she could control her schedule and quality of life. Leonard nurtured an interest in coaching by doing it on weekends and "whenever I have extra time or energy." Helen used self-employment to choose clients, limit her assignments, and use her free time to bicycle with her partner. When she semi-retired, she structured her time to assist students and colleagues, teach yoga and do sports with friends.

Control Tasks (n=5). There were five instances of controlling the performance, avoidance or diversification of tasks within a role. Three participants used creative problem-solving. For instance, Wanda initially saved her company by pivoting sales of her products to juvenile trade shows "where they had never seen or imagined such a thing." Victor convinced a school and a production company that the other one wanted his project, and he borrowed money from a wheeler-dealer to produce it. Helen demoted herself from assistant director to career counsellor where "they gave me my way in terms of creative expression, and they sought my opinion." Additionally, two participants avoided or diversified tasks. As a boss, Peter could ignore "all the preparation, all the process" that "I hated to do and never did." As a consultant for a friend's non-profit, Wanda performed a variety of services based on her own interests and standards of performance.

Low Freedom (n=16). Freedom was low when participants had to comply with tasks or compromise their values and priorities.

Comply With Tasks (n=9). There were nine instances of complying with tasks. For instance, in sales and purchasing roles, Peter had to comply with "all the preparation, all the process" he'd avoided as an entrepreneur, endure a boss's micromanagement, and navigate sales tools and a "top to bottom" corporate culture that led him to complain that "I need to be free... I don't think I'm made to be in a machine." Under contract to the new owners of her business, Wanda was frustrated that they wouldn't let her help them with their logistics problems. As a Master's student, the traditional classroom hierarchy of professors lecturing students drove her "nuts" because she couldn't contribute herself to the learning process. Susan avoided further work from one source because she wasn't able to interact with stakeholders. As a facilitator of mental health workshops, she was required to use off-putting slide decks and tried to compensate with jokes and anecdotes. Helen had low freedom as a translator because she "had to spend all my day in a dictionary" and translate into her non-native language, "which you're really not supposed to do." As a secretary, she had "to follow the rules of the firm for literally every single detail."

Compromise Values (n=7). There were seven instances of compromising values and priorities. For instance, Victor rejected the management track at the communications company because he wasn't telling peoples' stories. When a client wanted him to make a theatrical production about a personal adventure, Victor was reluctant because it seemed self-promotional for the client, but he worried that he could lose a future stream of work. Leonard sought a constraint on freedom when he chose the "reliability, predictability, hard code realities" of

science over "something that was just "blah-blah-blah" in social science, and he had to focus on publishable cognitive knowledge and use "very clear procedures and steps" such that "there was no room for me to be who I really am." As a headhunter, Helen wanted to help candidates but was required to narrow candidates to a single winner for a client. When she self-demoted under a new boss, Helen constrained her freedom by self-censoring her expertise and opinions.

Scope. Scope emerged as a participant's breadth in a role in terms of tasks, dimensions or responsibilities. Scope was wide when participants pursued or expanded a role with multiple tasks, dimensions or responsibilities. Scope was narrow otherwise. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.3.

Table P.3
Strength of Coding for Scope by Participant Type

	Wide		Narrow		Total Scope	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	11 (33%)	3	22 (67%)	3	33 (49%)
Seekers	3	15 (44%)	3	19 (56%)	3	34 (51%)
Subtotals	6	26 (39%)	6	41 (61%)	6	67 (100%)

Wide. Participants had a wider scope when they expanded a role, managed a business, explored career options, created a preferred role, or confronted expanded responsibility.

Expanding a Role (n=9). There were nine instances of expanding a role to meet their preferences. Wanda expanded her role with a friend's non-profit to encompass "strategic development... organizational interventions... social media...constructing their website." During a process consulting project, Wanda was presented with a staff retention problem but noted the "many other factors" related to it and "I love figuring it out... my brain is lighting up in all places." When Victor was rejected by an advanced theatrical production school, he expanded a grant into an independent study that let him intern for an experienced director, and create his own theatrical production. Working for others, Victor took assignments and made them "into what I wanted" and chose to "overdeliver" to earn "bigger and bigger projects." He expanded a story about a personal adventure of an executive into a tale about a unique group of adventurers. He expanded an interviewing role for a celebrity-focused production into reframing the entire narrative and working "crazy hours" to implement it. Leonard incorporated personal interests in music, movement and mindfulness into his science post-doctorates. Helen expanded her secretarial role by taking colleagues' complaints to management and working with a consultant to address the issues. Over time her career centre role expanded with promotions from coordinator to assistant and then acting director.

Managing a Business (n=5). There were five instances of managing a business. As an entrepreneur Peter not only started one business but also another five to 10 parallel businesses that distracted him. He "wore all the hats... hiring, firing... accounting... production... equipment repairing, shipping." He explained, "I build it. I'm going to go get the clients... I'm going to be part of the project. I'm going to deliver. I'm going to collect the money... It's like I'm part of

something," and in contrast with being a salesman "pimping" services for someone else's business, he built trust with customers that he would still be around in the future. When Wanda ran her business, her partner focused on operations while Wanda "did pretty much everything else" and "had my hands on everything that was happening" including homeschooling.

Exploring Career Options (n=5). There were five instances of broadening scope through exploring career options. Leonard explored music therapy and stress-reduction mindfulness and practised life coaching as an informal hobby "whenever I have extra time or energy" and found his interest "just kept growing." Helen explored a broader identity than her secretarial role by attending businesswomen's meetings, and after years of headhunting, used a sabbatical to explore her experiences and expand her desired role from headhunting to career counselling.

Creating Preferred Role (n=4). There were four instances of creating a role rather than expanding an existing one. Victor recruited a producer and pitched his own competitor-focused production, and later pitched a project about tracing his own genealogy. To be home after school for her children, Susan moved into consulting gigs on call centre quality. In semi-retirement, Helen moved into counselling gigs for university applicants.

Confronting Expanded Responsibility (n=3). There were three instance of participants confronting expanded responsibility. In his recent sales role, Peter didn't realize that he was expected to "become a leader" and then admitted reluctance because "I don't know if I can do it." After Wanda's son developed a drug problem and her mother became terminally ill, she confronted caring for them as well as running her business, admitting "instead of understanding every single process... I left it to experts" and failed to "ask questions all the time." After losing her business, she felt unprepared for consulting because she had been a "small business person who learned to do many, many, many things" without specific expertise.

Narrow. Participants had a narrower scope when they accepted a non-preferred role, enrolled in training, or accepted a preferred role.

Accepted a Non-Preferred Role (n=18). There were eighteen instances of accepting a non-preferred role. Peter took sales jobs because they "the only kind of transferrable knowledge I was able to take with me." Peter took a job in purchasing because an acquaintance needed the help outfitting retirement homes. When Peter quit purchasing, he attempted to rebrand as a client success manager but lacked the required experience for jobs posted on LinkedIn. After a year of unemployment, Peter took a job as a sales account manager "because I can make people believe I can sell" and "there's nothing else I know how to do." Victor agreed to create a theatrical production about a personal adventure of an executive to avoid "cutting ties with the company." Victor sought roles in a central city and accepted work directing small productions where he had to manipulate "real stories" to "fit what the venue wanted" and "I didn't like the experience." Susan's first job after her undergrad was a brewery call centre. Susan took a referral for change management work but "didn't like the way they worked" because of a "very big lack of human contact." Susan performed regular workshops but noted "I don't write this stuff" and she has to adapt alienating materials to her audiences using humour and personal anecdotes. Unable to secure desired work, Susan accepted a job coaching role at a nonprofit. Leonard increasingly found his science work to focus on "clear procedures and steps" to maximize tenure or publications rather than "genuine discovery." Leonard had no clue what "real work" in change management looked like, and without success in getting hired, he accepted facilitation and workshop gigs. After graduation, Helen "got a few gigs" translating documents but disliked

spending days in a dictionary. Helen used her bilingualism to secure a secretarial job even though "I thought that was really beneath me." After her romantic breakup, Helen abandoned consulting to accept a headhunting position. Helen moved into an accounting firm hoping to move into consulting but continuing with headhunting. To support her sabbatical, Helen guided bicycle tours and interviewed colleagues at branch offices. To survive in self-employment, Helen supported headhunting firms by doing telephone research.

Enrolled in Training (n=13). There were thirteen instances of participants enrolling in focused training. Peter enrolled in an MBA to "sharpen my tools or get some new tools." Wanda enrolled in a Master's to repackage her business experiences with "theory... mentoring and some practice" to become a consultant. Victor applied to theatrical production school, then to a communications course that was "kind of similar," and then again to theatrical production school and on two occasions to a graduate study program to access more opportunity in a central city. Susan enrolled in a Master's to leverage her experience and skills into a more lucrative credential, and she focused her thesis on a personally-challenging topic of overly-empathizing with employees over employers. Leonard enrolled in science to study human nature using "reliability, predictability, hard-coded realities," earned a Master's in organizational development to redirect his career into "what I needed to do and wanted to do," and then completed a course in professional coaching to fulfill his desire to turn his hobby into a business. Helen pursued a Master's in organizational change to help her become a consultant.

Accepted a Preferred Role (n=10). There were ten instances of participants accepting a preferred role (any later expansion of which is reported above). Victor pitched ideas to an entertainment company until they gave him assignments as their "go-to theatrical producer," and he later took an interviewing gig for a celebrity-focused theatrical production. After her divorce, Susan took a phone support role at a nonprofit. She left a job coaching role to take her first change management gig where she enjoyed interviewing stakeholders and presenting findings. At the time of the interview, she was considering an invitation to apply to a change management firm she enjoyed working with. Helen shifted from headhunting into her preferred role of helping students find jobs, and took on more advanced roles in the same area. When she lost a promotion, she self-demoted into a comfortable role of career counsellor, which she continued part-time in semi-retirement along with teaching yoga for a beloved instructor.

Identity. Identity emerged as a person's sense of membership in a role, group or community. Identity was belonging when participants felt affirmed in their subjective values and perceived abilities. Identity was excluding otherwise. The strength of the coding is shown in Table P.4.

Table P.4
Strength of Coding for Identity by Participant Type

	Belonging		Excluding		Total Identity	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	15 (50%)	3	15 (50%)	3	30 (55%)
Seekers	3	12 (48%)	3	13 (52%)	3	25 (45%)
Subtotals	6	27 (49%)	6	28 (51%)	6	55 (100%)

Belonging (n=27). Participants had a belonging identity when they embraced a role or category based on external validation, personal habits, desire to become, past roles or relationships with others.

External Validation (n=13). There were thirteen instances of self-definition based on validation. Peter felt low self-worth after losing his business but took a sales job saying, "it was a good job because it paid me over \$100,000." Similarly, he took a sales job "because I can make people believe I can sell... there's nothing else I know how to do" and after a year of unemployment, "these guys they took me in... it was nice." Susan initially rejected a Master's program because "if I don't understand the title, I don't think I should be doing the course" but she subsequently persisted with repeated applications because a career coach said, "it's all you... it's who you are," a program director said, "you're exactly the right kind of candidate," and a professor said "this is the kind of person we want here." Leonard felt strengthened in coaching because "people seemed to be, for whatever reason, quite interested in working with me" unlike employers in organizational development. Helen found that a women's business association "helped me to define myself more as a professional and less as a secretary" because she was "surrounded by some really interesting role models." When she saw a job ad that listed "everything that I'd ever done... I knew with clarity that was the perfect job for me." When a toxic boss led her to self-demote into career counselling, she felt that she was still "probably seen as one of the most creative people in that unit... they brought me in on projects and they gave me my way... and they sought my opinion."

Personal Habits (n=7). There were seven instances of self-definition based on personal habits. Wanda valued a research assistantship because "I bring myself to it... I like the feeling of being able to contribute to something that we're all growing together" similar to her home-based business. Susan noted that her Master's required "so much introspection" to identify biases such her inclination to empathize with workers against management. She valued her work interviewing stakeholders because "I'm curious by nature so it's fun," and "I have an ability to make people feel very comfortable," and "I'm just a natural helper... I'm everyone's go-to person in life." Helen noted that secretaries "complained to me a lot. I was the one who listened" because "I'm the woman on the plane that listens to the person next to them and gets their life story." She also said, "I come from a bit of a workaholic family" and after experiencing divorce and "unhealthy" hours, "I think I started to question some of that." She admitted that she flunked an interview because "I'm a bit of a Pollyanna... they kept asking me about problem situations and all I could think about were wonderful things that happened... I'm somebody who... remembers the rosy." In semi-retirement, she explained, "I tend to do my learning a bit backwards" in that she starts with "the concrete experiences and then I have to go back and do the learning."

Desire to Become (n=6). There were six instances of self-definition based on a desire to become something. Peter "always knew that I wanted to start a business and be a boss." Wanda chose organizational development because she wanted to be "like a good coach [who] will ask you questions that make you solve your own dilemmas." Victor knew "the biggest thing that I wanted to be my whole life... was a theatrical producer" which led to abandoning an "entrenched" overseas life and career because "I felt like I needed to go to [theatrical production school]." Leonard always had "this interest, curiosity and probably skills around inquiring into

human nature." After headhunting, Helen "gave myself one year to... rethink who I wanted to be" and realized that "I felt more comfortable with the people who didn't get the job... I'm more the social worker than the business person."

Past Roles (n=4). There were four instances of self-definition based on past roles. Two entrepreneurs described a deep integration with their role. Peter missed his days as a boss building a company and feeling "like I'm part of something." Wanda felt that "my life and my business were so enmeshed" such that "it was me; I was it." Victor described himself as the "go-to theatrical producer" for an entertainment company over twelve years. Susan noted being able to connect with diverse stakeholders because "I've been the employee, I've been a manager and a boss, so I can really look at things with different lenses."

Relationships With Others (n=3). There were three instances of self-definition based on relationships. When Victor initially abandoned theatrical production school, "I created a whole new identity... I really entrenched myself" overseas with new friends, citizenship and a communications career. When struggling with networking in a central city, Victor noted "I grew up in an eastern city. I have an insane amount of friends here... It's my community... I speak their lingo and I've won awards in their community" For his genealogical theatrical production, Victor described his desire to find his roots as part of a "reverse midlife crisis" where he could discover "who these people are, why they've made choices" while "doubling down to commit to my life."

Excluding (n=28). Participants had an excluding identity when they rejected a role based on perceived lack of fit, internal contradictions, external invalidation, or traumatic loss.

Perceived Lack of Fit (n=12). There were 12 instances of excluding based on a perceived lack of fit. At a renewable energy company, Peter felt that "I didn't feel like I belonged" with so many engineers, and he "didn't see how I was going to move up." Peter distinguished between selling as part of his own business and selling for someone else: "I'm doing sales but it's not me." In his latest role, Peter was expected to "become a leader" but "deep down inside... I don't want to do it... I don't know if I can do it." He worried that focusing on jobs instead of being a boss would "go against the grain too much. Then I'm not going to feel like myself." Victor "kept skipping the interview" for theatrical production school because "I didn't have the experience. I wasn't a theatrical producer. I just had ideas." Susan was a "party animal" who didn't study hard during her political science undergrad, resulting in a "kind of a useless degree." When she wanted to return to school, she realized "I don't want to do an MBA because that's really not who I am. I needed to do something with people." She also initially rejected organizational development because "if I don't understand the title, I don't think I should be doing the course." Leonard wanted to quit science because "the person who was going to work in the lab was not me, and there was no room for me to be who I really am." Helen left translation and "thought I would plug my nose and get a job as a secretary even though I thought that was really beneath me" because it was a way to enter a management consulting firm. She later sought ways to leave secretarial work because "I hate my job, it's boring, it's not good enough for me. I'm better than this." When she demoted herself from assistant director to career counsellor, she self-censored her knowledge and experience, believing her colleagues would wonder "'who the hell does she think she is? She's just a career counsellor... and they would have been right."

Internal Contradictions (n=6). There were six instances of excluding based on internal contradictions. During a year of unemployment, Peter "was banging my head against the wall... it's the perfect opportunity for me to reinvent myself" but he feared he would not be able to make

a living. In struggling to accept sales jobs, Peter labelled himself as "lazy," "dangerous because I'm very all-or-nothing," and "like a wounded animal... doubting myself." After losing her business, Wanda struggled with "how am I going to package myself?" and admitted, "I don't feel like an expert. I feel like a small business person who learned... many things." As a student struggling with classroom hierarchy, Wanda labelled herself as "incredibly vulnerable to [experts] but resistant at the same time." Beginning her new career, Susan experienced "imposter syndrome... who do I think I am?" and she managed her anxiety using EFT tapping and "glasses of wine at the end of the day." Leonard felt a contradiction between his science research and mindfulness practitioners because, "I am the one doing research, however... these people actually seem to make the real discoveries."

External Invalidation (n=5). There were five instances of excluding based on external invalidation. After losing his business, Peter "believed I was worth a lot, but in reality, I wasn't worth a lot" because he couldn't get a job with a salary of \$200,000-250,000. At a sales job, a colleague told him "I don't understand what you're doing here... you could be doing so much better." Victor had difficulty establishing relationships because, in an eastern city as a cultural outsider "you're completely a minority," and in a central city, "it's more about the surface... more of a product... more grandstanding." Leonard abandoned organizational development because "people seemed to think of me as someone who doesn't know anything about that world because I have a very different background" compared to classmates with backgrounds in "human resources... or community development or social justice." Helen complained about burnout at an accounting firm because despite years of service "you're never as good as your last assignment."

Traumatic Loss (n=5). There were five instances of excluding based on traumatic loss. When her child became addicted to drugs, Wanda started giving in to advisers because "I really lost confidence... it felt like such a personal failure." After losing her business Wanda "felt a terrible loss of purpose" and "I had to divest myself of the persona." When Helen was dumped by a romantic partner who had championed her Master's and transition into consulting, "my identity took a huge beating. I didn't know who I was, what I was going to do" so "I had no kind of heart or energy to do the search for a consulting job." When she lost an expected promotion "a whole part of my identity had been kicked in the teeth" because she'd been thinking "Aren't I the greatest thing since sliced bread? I've got all this experience and knowledge and wisdom." As Helen's new boss took control, it was "soul-destroying to watch your baby get taken apart piece by piece... without your consultation for something that you used to have ownership."

Arousal. Arousal emerged as a subjective emotional state in relation to a life or work experience. Arousal was encouraging when participants interpreted it positively. Arousal was excluding otherwise. The strength of arousal is shown in Table P.5.

Table P.5
Strength of Coding for Arousal by Participant Type

	Encouraging		Undermining		Total Arousal	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	18 (49%)	3	19 (51%)	3	37 (49%)
Seekers	2	19 (49%)	3	20 (51%)	3	39 (51%)

Subtotals	5	37 (49%)	6	39 (51%)	6	76 (100%)
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Encouraging (n=37). Participants had encouraging arousal when they enjoyed a role, were attracted to a role, were encouraged by the potential of a role, or were initially relieved by the role.

Enjoyed a Role (n=16). There were sixteen instances of participants enjoying a role. As a boss Peter had a "gut feeling" that was like "how you feel when you're in love." Wanda described the growth of her business as "a miracle and a joy," and although "extremely stressful... I truly loved it." Working collegially with a professor, Wanda noted "I like the feeling of being able to contribute to something that we're all growing together" and in her Master's project, Wanda noted "I love figuring it out... my brain is lighting up" and "I love watching people work through the puzzles," and "I love encouraging them, empowering them." Susan described her phone work with a nonprofit as "just listening and sometimes making some recommendations, and I like doing that." She found job coaching "was really good... when I could help people." In change management she enjoyed interviewing stakeholders because "I'm curious by nature so it's fun," and "people would open up and I just would love the work... I'd leave happy" and "I'm just a natural helper... I like to empower people." During facilitation gigs, she shared her own challenges with audiences and enjoyed when they related to her or hugged her. Leonard found that his Master's was "great from the self, personal development side" but he found that coaching provided a "more direct... more embodied" experience helping people, which gave him fulfillment and excitement. His mindfulness and coaching hobbies were "the things that I had the greatest interest, energy, feeling of capacity." Helen found "really interesting role models" at a businesswomen's association who helped her take herself more seriously as a professional and encouraged her to "go out and practice those interpersonal skills" despite feeling like an "introvert." As a headhunter, Helen loved hearing career stories of candidates, and as a counsellor she worked for "the most amazing boss" who "engaged us all in consensus process... you feel a sense of ownership." She returned to career counselling after self-demotion because "I always love working with students and I like the creative part of building programs."

Attracted to a Role (n=14). There were fourteen instances of attraction to a role. Starting his first business, Peter "knew deep down inside it was going to work" an approach he described as more "heart" than "head" and relying on "courage." Victor made many feelings-based choices: he abandoned a life overseas because he "felt like I needed to go" back to theatrical production school in North America; he felt compelled to make a theatrical production about an art form after meeting an injured athlete on the street; he created a production about competitors after finding them "so compelling" as characters in documentaries; and he developed a theatrical production on family migration because "I kind of go on gut feelings... I had a feeling it's going to be a beautiful story." Susan followed a career coach's recommendation to do his Master's because he "brought me to another option and that was what was really strong for me." Leonard made many feelings-based choices: he chose to "trust his gut" and pursue a girlfriend despite feelings "screaming she was not the right person"; she led him into music therapy where the teacher "blew my mind"; he met a mindfulness practitioner and felt "bang, oh wow... I want to do the course with him" which Leonard suggested followed a pattern where "some kind of introduction happens and there is quickly a strong sense of, 'you've got something that I need'"; and finally, Leonard "trusted my gut" when committing to a \$9,000 coaching program because

he felt "timing was actually more important than picking the perfect program." Helen pursued a career centre position after reading a job ad and "adrenaline went through my body because I knew with clarity that was the perfect job." In semi-retirement, she agreed to teach yoga because "I love, love, love the yoga studio owner," and she pursued a role helping students apply to college after seeing Facebook ads and feeling "I would love to do this."

Encouraged by Potential of a Role (n=5). There were five instances of feeling encouraged by the potential of a role that didn't otherwise feel right. Although Peter felt "they took me in... it was nice" at his current sales job, he was eager to find something else. Although his girlfriend "kind of grounds me and I like it" he still feared losing himself by giving up on being an entrepreneur. Although the idea of becoming a leader at his sales job "excites me" he was reluctant risk potential failure. Although Helen planned to become an independent consultant several times, noting on the second occasion that "I was keeping a journal and writing about how excited I was to leave the firm and build my own company," she abandoned the plans each time when a relationship broke up.

Initially Relieved (n=2). There were two instances of taking a role and feeling initial relief. Peter described his first job after losing his business as "a good time" because he was paid well and travelled. However, his next job in purchasing "was cool because it was new, and it was a small company" and he was "happy to step out of the process" of the previous company.

Undermining (n=39). Participants had undermining arousal when they disliked an experience, were anxious about failure, or were lost or devalued.

Disliked the Experience (n=18). There were seventeen instances of disliking a role. After securing his first sales job, Peter ended his marriage because "I was miserable... I was dead inside." He learned "all the stuff I hated to do... all the preparation, all the process," and found the lack of sales "wasn't motivating. It was a lot of effort, but I didn't see anything." For his purchasing job Peter "was miserable" from his boss's micromanagement and lack of heating in the office. During her Master's Wanda found the hierarchy of an expert-driven classroom "drives me nuts." Victor "didn't like the experience" of directing a series of short theatrical productions because he was changing "people's real stories" to fit the desires of the venue, and "I don't particularly like [the central city] in terms of the way people treat one another" which he found to be superficial. When a theatrical production producer agreed to substantial work but refused to pay or credit him, Victor "was surprised but I wasn't gutted." Based on betrayals, Victor wanted a career where "I like the people I'm working with... instead of being in a situation where I have to protect myself the whole time." In his personal life, he ended a relationship because it "could not stand the pressure" of his girlfriend's years-long immigration, failed training and dependence on Victor. For Susan, being a job coach "was taking a toll on me... it was tearing me apart" because clients weren't getting jobs. In change management she avoided contracts from a referral because "I didn't like the way that they worked and the way they treated their consultants" due to "a very big lack of human contact." For Leonard, science research became "devastating" because "this feels completely artificial, useless, hopeless." Finally, for Helen she abandoned translation because "I didn't want to live in a book." She found secretarial work "mind-numbingly boring" because of the rules and details, and she and her colleagues felt they lacked variety and responsibility and felt like "second class citizens." As a headhunter, she disliked screening candidates rather than helping them, and as a recruiter at an accounting firm, she was "burned out" and felt "you're never as good as your last assignment," and "I can't live like this."

Anxious About Failure (n=12). There were twelve instances of anxiety about failure. Peter was "fed up" after a year of job applications but rejected monetizing a hobby because he feared "it's going to become something I'm going to hate." Contemplating a leadership role at his sales job Peter admitted "deep down inside me, I don't want to take it on" because "I don't know if I can do it." Although he "kind of appreciate[d]" how his girlfriend grounded him from pursuing new businesses, he feared going "against the grain too much. Then I'm not going to feel like myself anymore." Finally, he avoided working with his brother because he feared "we will end up hating each other." Victor got an interview at theatrical production school but found it "a hard experience. I kept skipping the interview" because "I didn't think they were going to let me in." When he interviewed the first time at an entertainment company he admitted, "I'm terrified" but "I go all out" with his pitch. When the CEO wanted Victor to create a theatrical production about a personal adventure Victor was reluctant, fearing it would focus too much on celebrity but that refusing would cost him future business. For Susan, she "suffered from severe anxiety" during her Master's but felt "this has to work" because she'd invested everything into it. When she started change management, she "had a bit of the imposter syndrome... can I really do this?" and "there might have been some tears... but I got through it somehow" with EFT tapping and glasses of wine. During one project she felt "the French are so strict with their French. God, I was so stressed about using the proper vocabulary," but she sought guidance from her boss. For Leonard, after earning a Master's to change his career, he felt "a certain sense of incompetence... because I didn't know what to do with all these ideas and theories." For Helen, as a contractor trying to bridge from headhunting to career counselling, she "was having trouble making enough money" and "was so depressed and so scared" that she wrote a description of her ideal job to help her move forward.

Lost or Devalued (n=9). There were nine instances of feeling lost or devalued. After Peter's business failed, "I wasn't worth a lot, so I can't even get a job" so he returned to school "looking for hope." In his first sales job, he "was unhappy. I was like, shit, what am I doing here?... It was a tough year" to adjust to the loss of his business and marriage. When Wanda's child became a drug addict, "it felt like such a personal failure" and damaged her confidence, and when she lost her business "it's really sad for me... I felt a terrible loss of purpose." Working for the new owners was "a really hard experience" because they didn't ask for her help, which "made me crazy." Despite her business experience, Wanda "didn't feel like I had enough to give" to be a consultant, because "I don't feel like an expert." She admitted "stress really narrows your vision" which led her to focus on repackaging herself and her "failures" with a Master's. For Helen, despite earning a Master's she was "devastated" by her consultant boyfriend's infidelity and she "didn't have any confidence" to search for consulting work. Later when a new boss dismantled Helen's accomplishments without consultation, Helen would "cry on the way home" and "ended up seeking counselling... I was just so demoralized."

What Was the Role of the Social Influence for Participants?

Statements in case narratives were coded as the social influence when they related to interactions of participants with others, such as colleagues, family and friends, that affected their career navigation. The key concepts emerging from those statements were referral style, priority alignment, member agency, and trust.

Referral Style (n=56). Referral style emerged as the approach participants used to develop contacts for work or support. Referral style was active survey when a participant

canvassed their environment for people who could help move them in a desired direction. Referral style was passive familiarity when participants relied on existing contacts or chance encounters. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.6.

Table P.6
Strength of Coding for Referral Style by Participant Type

	Active Survey		Passive Familiarity		Total Referral Style	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	2	6 (21%)	3	23 (79%)	3	29 (52%)
Seekers	2	4 (15%)	3	23 (85%)	3	27 (48%)
Subtotals	4	10 (18%)	6	46 (82%)	6	56 (100%)

Active Survey (n=10). Participants actively surveyed contacts when they engaged in targeted or general networking.

Targeted Networking (n=7). There were seven instances of using targeted networking by seeking people for help in achieving a specific goal. Three participants used networking to handle rejection. When a graduate theatrical production school rejected him, Victor sought a professor to mentor an independent study. When an entertainment company rejected him, Victor sought helpful connections there until he was accepted. When Susan was rejected from a Master's program, she sought help from a director and faculty member who got her accepted. Two participants used networking for advice. Susan canvassed practitioners on LinkedIn for helpful tips on entering the profession. Leonard consulted a senior coach and a professor to help him choose a systematic coaching program and negotiate a discount. Additionally, there were two instances of seeking help. As a secretary, Helen took her colleagues' complaints to management, which resulted in working with a consultant. Later, when she wanted a position at a major accounting firm, she canvassed people who could help her get in.

General Networking (n=3). There were three instances of using general networking to create connections or opportunities without a specific goal. Victor visited agents and networking events to build relationships in a central city but found them unsuccessful. Susan similarly found networking unsuccessful for creating work. Helen joined a businesswomen's association, which helped her take herself more seriously, but did result in specific help.

Passively Familiar (n=46). Participants used passive familiarity when they relied on chance encounters with colleagues and clients, friends and acquaintances, family and lovers, classmates and educators, and service providers. Additionally, some participants avoided familiar contacts despite the potential for help.

Colleagues and Clients (n=13). There were thirteen instances of relying on colleagues and clients. When Peter's business declined, he relied on remaining customers until his financial collapse. Victor found himself progressing into the management track at a communications services company because of his boss's plans. Later as a theatrical producer, Victor reluctantly accepted a job creating a theatrical production about a personal adventure because the client was his major source of other work. A call from a friendly colleague led to him pitching a

competitor-focused production, and he supported the pitch by engaging another colleague who had a production company. His interviewing gig for a theatrical production similarly came from a referral from an acquaintance. Susan's consulting work for call centres relied on word-of-mouth referrals, and her workshop facilitations relied on on-demand calls from an employee assistance organization. Helen acted on the complaints of secretarial colleagues, which led to new responsibilities. Those new responsibilities led to a female consultant who connected her with a businesswomen's association that helped Helen take herself more seriously. On occasions when Helen was devastated by infidelity and abandoned plans for consulting, her internship employer gave her full-time work headhunting, and her accounting colleagues offered her a writing contract to fund a sabbatical. When Helen lost a promotion, she self-demoted within the same workplace.

Friends and Acquaintances (n=11). There were eleven instances of relying on friends and acquaintances. A mutual friend connected Peter with his purchasing job. For Wanda, friends were her partners in starting her business, and hired her at a nonprofit when her business was sold. Victor met a theatrical producer at a party and worked for him for free. A friend of that theatrical producer inspired Victor to make artistic theatrical productions, and he chose his subject based on an injured performer he met on the street. Victor funded the theatrical production with a loan from a wheeler-dealer, and his contact from the party shared his theatrical production with an entertainment company, which offered Victor an interview. Victor's latest theatrical production project arose when his friends urged him to join them on a trip and trace his genealogy. For Susan, mutual friends connected her with the outgoing director of a nonprofit, which resulted in her taking the job. A mutual friend connected Susan with a career coach who encouraged her to apply to a Master's program in which the coach had friends who supported her application.

Family and Lovers (n=9). There were nine instances of relying on family and lovers. Peter's entrepreneurial family shaped his need to be a boss and loaned him money for his business. When Peter lost his purchasing job, he worked with his brother for no pay. Victor abandoned his original acceptance to theatrical production school and followed his mother overseas because he didn't think he could support himself. Leonard credited his psychiatrist mother and researcher father as influences in his choice of science. He explored music therapy because his girlfriend was taking it, studied mindfulness because his mother had worked with a practitioner, and enrolled in a Master's program because his girlfriend had taken it. Helen's lover at a consulting firm was "instrumental" in helping her enrol in and complete a Master's, and a former boyfriend on Facebook posted about a student advising business that interested her, and provided a reference for her.

Classmates, Educators and School Projects (n=6). There were six instances of relying on classmates, educators and school projects. Peter found a sales job through one MBA classmate, and a Chinese supply contact through another. Wanda found a research assistantship through a classmate she'd worked with on a project. A contact Susan made during a class project recruited her for her first and subsequent professional gigs, which led to an invitation to apply to the consulting firm full-time. Helen attended an alumni event where she and a favourite professor created a job for her to help students find work experience.

Service Providers (n=4). There were four instances of relying on service providers. Susan was offered a position with a job coaching service she was using for herself. Later, she received a referral for a contract through a hairdresser. Helen relied on the advice of a mental health

counsellor when she stayed in a toxic workplace. After retirement, she was invited to teach yoga by the owner of a studio she attended.

Avoiding Familiar Contacts (n=3). There were three instances of avoiding familiar contacts. Peter's family pressured him to work with his brother who Peter feared was too unstable, and although he had his own connections, Peter avoided them because he doubted himself. Although Helen's friend advised her to leave a toxic workplace, Helen took opposing advice from a counsellor.

Priority Alignment (n=95). In contrast with identity, which related to a sense of belonging to a specific group, priority alignment emerged as a harmony of interests and values among members of a relationship. Priority alignment could be high or low. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.7.

Table P.7

Strength of Coding for Priority Alignment by Participant Type

	High		Low		Total Priority Alignment	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	30 (58%)	3	22 (42%)	3	52 (55%)
Seekers	3	23 (53%)	3	20 (47%)	3	43 (45%)
Subtotals	6	53 (56%)	6	42 (44%)	6	95 (100%)

High Alignment (n=53). Participants had high priority alignment when someone shared their interests, valued their experience or abilities, supported their general success, facilitated constructive cooperation, or supported achievement of a specific goal.

Shared Interests (n=20). There were twenty instances of alignment based on shared interests and values. Peter's friend shared his interest in wellness and offered him work at a gym. Wanda's friend shared her interests in children and offered her work at an anti-bullying nonprofit. Wanda took a research assistantship because "it's all about coaching. So, I love it," and she enjoyed her staff retention project because "I love watching people work through the puzzles" using her methodology. Victor worked for free with an artistic theatrical producer. A friend of the theatrical producer inspired Victor with his artistic theatrical productions and shared Victor's theatrical production with an artistic employer, resulting in an interview. A friend connected Susan to a career coach who encouraged her to enrol in his Master's program based on their shared values. Susan overcame rejections by that program by connecting with the director who said, "you're exactly the right kind of candidate," and a professor who told the decision-makers "this is the kind of person we want here." During a class project, Susan connected with a practitioner who became a friend, ally, mentor and continuing source of work and she enjoyed her new career, which aligned with her desire to listen to and empower others. Leonard embraced multiple changes based on interests: science because it combined his interest in "figuring out people" with his father's research rigour; music therapy and mindfulness because their embodied approaches were more "what I'm actually interested in." Leonard described such practitioners as having "a certain combination of lightness and depth... helping me and others

come to new ways of seeing, feeling and taking action." Intrigued by his girlfriend's Master's program, Leonard attended an event led by a professor and felt that it "fit my perception of what I needed to do." For Helen, her upbringing had embraced workaholicism, which she unquestioningly accepted as a headhunter until she faced burnout. Later, when she attended an alumni event, she saw "one of my favourite profs... we had a lot of joint interests," which resulted in a job-coordinator position. She maintained Facebook contact with an ex-boyfriend who advertised a student-advising business that interested them both.

Valued Experiences or Skills (n=10). There were ten instances of alignment based on experiences or skills. Peter's employer appreciated his experience of "getting a company going." For Wanda, when her business suffered, she replaced her partners with someone focused on logistics. Susan's call centre work qualified her for a phone-based non-profit. She sought advice from practitioners on LinkedIn. When she was unable to find work using a job coaching service, they hired her based on her listening and advising skills. After several successes contracting with a consulting firm, they asked her to apply for a position. Leonard sought help from a respected coach and professor to choose and negotiate fees for a coaching program. When Helen left her cheating husband, her firm "cut me slack" and partners "share[d] some of their own challenges of marital breakdowns." When she found a job ad that incorporated "everything that I'd ever done," she knew "that was the perfect job for me." When she embraced yoga practice, the owner offered her a role as a teacher.

Supported General Success (n=9). There were nine instances of alignment through general support. Victor left his life overseas for a theatrical production school in an eastern city where his "surrogate family" of friends could support him. He emphasized, "I have an insane amount of friends here... It's my community" in contrast with an unwelcoming central city scene. His friends invited him to search for his family roots, which inspired a new theatrical production. For Susan, her babysitter and hairdresser connected her with another client because she supported Susan's career transition. For Leonard, he and his girlfriend supported each other in upgrading their training using a Master's and a coaching certification. When Helen pursued a Master's, her employers supported her application. When her lover betrayed her after graduation, her internship employer invited her to "work with us just 'til you heal." When she faced financial anxiety, her life partner encouraged her to find stable employment, which led her to finding her dream job. When she faced a toxic boss, her friend advised her to leave because "you'll hate it every minute."

Facilitated Constructive Cooperation (n=8). There were eight instances of alignment through working cooperatively. Peter described his original team as sharing his love of his business. Wanda started her business with like-minded friends. When her business grew her children "were all part of it." When her business collapsed under a lawsuit, she still had distributors and "a staff to die for." Victor wanted a career where he didn't have to "protect myself the whole time" but could "feel like it's something where we can share." When Susan had to present workshops using tone-deaf slides, she bridged the gap by using relatable humour and personal experiences. When Helen presented secretarial complaints to management, she was paired with a consultant to address the issues and referred her to a businesswomen's association. At a career centre, Helen had "the most amazing boss" who "engaged us all in consensus process... you feel a sense of ownership."

Supported Specific Goal (n=6). There were six instances of alignment based on a specific goal. Peter's retail family shaped his drive to start a business. His father, martial arts teacher, and

friend supported his desire to end his marriage. His girlfriend supported him in keeping his sales job rather than making another change. For Victor, a manager put him on the management track. When Victor was rejected by an advanced theatrical production school, a professor agreed to mentor his independent study. For Helen, a businesswomen's association provided role models who inspired her to take herself seriously as a professional.

Low Alignment (n=42). Participants had low priority alignment when they had diverging interests and priorities, experienced undermining interactions, were undermined in a specific goal, or their experience and value were disregarded.

Diverging Interests or Priorities (n=17). There were seventeen instances of diverging interests or priorities. Peter experienced many divergences. He diverged from his entrepreneurial family because he never wanted to work retail. He diverged from his ex-wife because she didn't have to work but envied his freedom, employment and travel. His parallel businesses failed because he trusted the "wrong" people. At his first sales role, he diverged from the "bunch of engineers" running a slow, process-driven business. As a purchaser, Peter diverged from his employer who had a personal cook but no heat in the winter. He diverged from his brother who wanted to work with him but didn't share his work ethic. For Wanda, she diverged from her partner's husband who became "afraid" of the ongoing business debt. Victor diverged from a major client who wanted a personal adventure turned into a theatrical production, leading Victor to negotiate a broader story and bigger financial reward. Despite speaking their "lingo" he diverged from the industry in an eastern city because as a cultural outsider "you're completely a minority." Susan, as a "party animal," diverged from her political science program, which she felt was useless. She diverged from her workaholic ex-husband, who was rarely present for the children. She rejected work that diverged from her priority of interacting with stakeholders but had trouble sourcing work she wanted from her network. Leonard diverged from science colleagues as he grew more interested in embodied experiences. Helen diverged from her consulting firm colleagues' workaholicism after years of 12-hour days without a sense of accomplishment. Her piecework career transition initially diverged from her life partner who had a single, stable lifetime job.

Undermining Interactions (n=11). There were twelve instances of undermining interactions. As Peter struggled with transitioning into his first sales role, his marriage had become "mental abuse." When he agonized over quitting a sales job to start a new business, his risk-averse girlfriend "kind of grounds me... and sometimes I don't like it" because he was afraid of losing himself. For Wanda, her business was damaged from intense mudslinging from competitors. She recovered, but then her son's drug addiction and her mother's terminal illness damaged her confidence and pulled her away from controlling her business. Victor found relationships hard to build in a central city because of "cutthroat competition." When his girlfriend failed to succeed in training, she became dependent, which caused stress and a breakup. For Susan, she left job coaching because her clients' inability to find work became an emotional burden. In change management, some clients "[don't] want to hear" from people "at the bottom," don't allocate money to make changes, allow bullying of employees, or don't engage help until "the shit hits the fan." For Helen, her first marriage ended because she was a workaholic and he had shift work, so "we never saw each other, and whenever we did, we'd fight." When she faced a new boss at the career centre, "nothing I did was right in her eyes" resulting in Helen's misery.

Undermined A Goal (n=11). There were eleven instances of a goal being undermined. For Peter, a supplier failed to deliver so his boss blamed him and ended his job. For Wanda, a distributor could not wait for repayment after a mix-up and their lawsuit ended her business. For Victor his parents broke up and his mother left for overseas which undermined his acceptance at theatrical production school. When he planned his first theatrical production, the art school and production company he approached both rejected him. When he got his competitors-focused production accepted, he was "pushed aside" by his production partner and had to fight for credit. When he finished reworking a celebrity-focused theatrical production, he was "shunted out" and had to fight for payment. Susan was rejected by graduate studies several times based on undergraduate grades despite being wanted by the program director and faculty. As a workshop presenter, she had to use prepared slides that alienated her audience, requiring her to "read a room and change quickly." When Helen finished her Master's, her boyfriend's infidelity and sending her back to [a central city in Canada] led to abandoning her consulting goal, devastated. When Helen interviewed for a promotion, the interviewer asked for examples of problem-solving, but Helen kept talking about positive experiences and lost the opportunity. When Helen sought advice to handle a toxic new boss, a counsellor advised her to stay until the boss moved on, which resulted in Helen's misery and self-demotion.

Disregard of Experience and Value (n=3). There were three instances of experience or value being disregarded. Wanda was unable to help the new owners of her business because "they didn't come to me... that made me crazy." When Leonard graduated from his Master's he felt "incompetence... because I didn't know what to do with all these ideas and theories" and employers did not see how his past aligned with the degree. Helen's secretarial colleagues complained that consultants did not provide the respect and responsibility due their university educations.

Member Agency (n=34). Member agency emerged as the distribution of power and resources within a relationship to allow each party to advance in their desired direction. Member agency could be balanced or unbalanced. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.8.

Table P.8
Strength of Coding for Member Agency by Participant Type

	Balanced		Unbalanced		Total Member Agency	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	12 (55%)	3	10 (45%)	3	22 (65%)
Seekers	2	4 (33%)	2	8 (67%)	3	12 (35%)
Subtotals	5	16 (47%)	5	18 (53%)	6	34 (100%)

Balanced Agency (n=16). Participants had more balanced member agency when they sought a rebalance of power, power was shared to them, or power was shared from them.

Seeking Rebalance of Power (n=7). There were seven instances of seeking rebalance of power. After losing her business, Wanda realized that she had needed "a good coach" who would "ask you questions that make you solve your own dilemmas" and sought to become that balanced

role. In his next career Victor wanted work to "feel like it's something where we can share" instead of having to "protect myself the whole time." When Susan separated from her breadwinner husband she realized, "I need to get my shit together" to find work that would support her family and let her travel with her children's athletic competitions. To improve her success starting out, Susan contacted practitioners and experienced "great conversation" that provided tips and introductions. Starting his coaching career, Leonard felt "urgency" to support his family and "spend significant time with [his] baby." After several bad relationships that derailed her career, Helen sought counselling to avoid them in the future. Her conservative life partner became "an influence in terms of me putting boundaries around my work" so that she avoided the extremes of piecemeal and workaholic.

Power Shared to Participant (n=5). There were five instances of receiving power from someone else. As a research assistant, Wanda enjoyed a collegial relationship with a professor, in contrast with hierarchical classrooms. Susan's first employer became "a big ally" who taught her a lot such that "we had to find a balance" between friendship and work. Victor's friends engaged him in "a quest" to trace his family roots where they visited locations, searched institutional records, and talked to generous locals. When Helen ended her marriage and plans to become a consultant, her firm funded her sabbatical by providing contract work. At the career centre, Helen had a boss who engaged them as "a kind of team... you feel a sense of ownership."

Power Shared from Participants (n=4). There were four instances of sharing power to someone else. When Wanda revamped her business, she engaged a scientific partner who took over operations and logistics. As her business grew, she hired people who were "smarter than myself" and "learned how to ask for help." In her new career, she enjoyed "creating an environment in which [clients] can solve their own puzzles." For Leonard, he and his girlfriend alternated supporting each other through their Masters' and re-training.

Unbalanced Agency (n=18). Participants had unbalanced member agency when they had or created dependence, relinquished power, or wanted more power.

Having or Creating Dependence (n=9). There were nine instances of having or creating dependence. When Peter paid for everything, his wife focused on childcare but missed the employment, travel and freedom he had. When he lost his business and she found work, their "roles were reversed." Before Wanda started a business she was home-schooling and depended on her husband's irregular income. When her mother fell terminally ill and her son developed an addiction, she focused on caring for them at the expense of her business. Victor abandoned theatrical production school because he depended on his mother financially and she was going overseas. He reluctantly agreed to a client's personal project to protect a "lucrative and creative" source of desirable work. When he supported his girlfriend's immigration, she became dependent and created stress until their relationship ended. Raising her children, Susan was dependent on her workaholic husband who was rarely home. Later as a coach, she suffered because her emotions depended on her clients' ability to secure work.

Relinquishing Power (n=5). There were five instances of relinquishing power. Peter was expected to take a leadership role but confessed, "I don't want to have to fight for it. I want to be supported. I want to have a collaboration." Facing her son's addiction, Wanda lost confidence in her judgment and started giving in to her advisors' plans despite being "completely over my head." Victor admitted that he often "assumed people are going to be fair" and "didn't protect myself contractually" which resulted in later fights over pay and credit. Helen admitted that

"relationship breakdowns... totally reorganized my career" when the infidelity of a boyfriend and then a husband both led to abandoning plans to become a consultant. When a new boss took over the career centre, Helen gave up her assistant-directorship and self-demoted into a self-censoring career counsellor.

Wanting More Power (n=4). There were four instances of wanting more power. As a purchaser, Peter chafed under a micromanaging boss. As a Master's student, Wanda chafed from a classroom hierarchy where "experts are in charge" and she was "a student that somebody's dumping information into." Susan rejected work from a client that restricted her from interacting with stakeholders. As a secretary, Helen perceived "a pecking order. Consultants are... the elite... we're just there to help them look great" with long hours and little variety or responsibility, despite being university graduates.

Trust (n=63). Trust emerged as the basis on which participants expected the surrender of power, control and resources. Proved trust depended on demonstrated ability or trustworthiness. Unproved trust was given or expected without evidence. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.9.

Table P.9
Strength of Coding for Trust by Participant Type

	Proved		Unproved		Total Trust	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	27 (79%)	3	7 (21%)	3	34 (54%)
Seekers	3	15 (52%)	3	14 (48%)	3	29 (46%)
Subtotals	6	42 (67%)	6	18 (33%)	6	63 (100%)

Proved Trust (n=42). Participants relied on proved trust in themselves or others when they suspended trust based on performance, proved from working experience, or proved from personal interactions.

Suspended Based on Performance (n=8). There were eight instances of suspending trust based on past performance or lack thereof. Peter resisted becoming a leader in a sales role because he was "doubting myself, if I can even do that distance." He resisted working with his brother because he was "not very stable" and didn't share his work ethic. He resisted using his own connections because "I'm scared to ask now... doubting myself." Wanda believed she had originally succeeded in business "because I didn't really rely on experts" who had expected her to fail. After losing her business, Wanda felt too inexperienced to be an expert consultant and sought training. She enjoyed her new career where instead of posing as an expert, she created "an environment in which [clients] can solve their own puzzles." Helen lost confidence and abandoned plans to transform into consulting on two occasions when she experienced infidelity: first from a boyfriend who had been "really instrumental" in helping her get her Master's; second from her first husband.

Proved From Working Experience (n=16). There were sixteen instances of trust based on work experience. Wanda was able to depend on "a great accountant, from the birth of the

company." When her business collapsed, a friend invited her to apply her skills to a non-profit. Wanda was invited to a research assistantship from a classmate who'd enjoyed class projects with her. At the telephone company, Victor's performance resulted in his manager placing him on a management track. To enter an arts company, Victor kept pitching projects over 12-18 months until they tried him, and then he "overdelivered" to earn "bigger and bigger projects," including the CEO asking him to create a theatrical production about a personal adventure. When Susan started call-centre consulting, she depended on word-of-mouth referrals. During a class project for her Master's, she met a consultant who would later hire her on multiple gigs, and support her full-time application to the consulting firm. Susan's work with an employee assistance program led to ongoing facilitation contracts. When Leonard wanted a rigorous coaching program, he sought advice from professors with whom he'd learned and worked. After Helen's first breakup led to abandoning consulting, her internship employer hired her back. During her divorce, her firm funded a sabbatical with an interviewing contract. At a career centre she worked for "the most amazing boss" who "engaged us all in consensus process" and supported her promotions. When Helen faced a toxic new boss, she self-demoted into a career counsellor position where "they gave me my way in terms of creative expression, and they sought my opinion."

Proved From Personal Interaction (n=18). There were eighteen instances of trusting or being trusted based on personal interactions. Victor left his overseas life for an eastern city where he knew his "surrogate family" of friends would support him, and later joined his friends when they invited him to go on a quest to trace his roots. When a school and venue rejected his theatrical production proposal, he persisted with them over six months to win acceptance. When Susan's Master's application was repeatedly rejected, she met with faculty to demonstrate her compatibility until she was accepted. When she was unable to get work while participating in a job coaching program, the program hired her. Her babysitter and hairdresser supported her career transition, and introduced her to another client. Based on experiences shared by his mother, his girlfriend and her classmates, Leonard tried music therapy, mindfulness stress reduction, and a Master's program in organizational development. He and his girlfriend supported each other through their Master's and his coaching training. For Helen, a consultant she worked with to resolve secretarial complaints referred her to a businesswomen's association where she met successful role models. When Helen applied for a Master's, consultants helped with her application and gave recommendations. When Helen met a well-loved professor at an alumni event, they co-created a job-coordinator position. After 5 years of piecework as a coordinator, Helen accepted her life partner's encouragement to find more stable work. When Helen faced a toxic new boss, her friend advised her to leave because "you'll just hate it every minute," which Helen disregarded to her later regret. When enjoyed practising yoga with a studio owner she loved, the owner offered her a job teaching it. When Helen approached a student advising business she saw on an ex-boyfriend's Facebook page he provided an unsolicited recommendation for her.

Unproved Trust (n=21). Participants showed unproved trust when they gave trust without proof, or expected or received trust without proof.

Gave Trust Without Proof (n=8). There were eight instances of giving trust without proof. Peter started parallel businesses going "all in" while trusting the "wrong" people. He relied on a former classmate to recommend a supplier in China that let him down. Wanda moved her homeschooled children to nearby public schools that exposed her son to drugs and addiction. As

a result, Wanda lost confidence and gave into the advice of new advisers, which led to the end of her business. Victor relied on his girlfriend's incorrect assurances about her work eligibility when he supported her immigration. When he pitched a competitor-focused production, he relied on an acquaintance to protect his legal rights and was "pushed aside" when the show was made. Victor worked "crazy hours" to rework a celebrity-focused production and "assumed people are going to be fair" but they later refused to pay. When Helen sought counselling because of a toxic boss, she followed her counsellor's advice to remain in the job until the boss moved on, which resulted in misery and self-demotion.

Expected or Received Trust Without Proof (n=13). There were thirteen instances of expecting or receiving trust without proof. When Peter started his first business, he received large loans from his family and a bank despite lacking experience or customers. He was hired as a purchaser despite a lack of experience because the owner believed "I don't think you'll have a problem" and yet Peter complained that the owner would "micromanage everything" and didn't trust him. As a sales manager Peter complained that "When I was selling for my company... people trusted me" because of his integration in his business whereas when working for someone else, "I'm doing sales but it's not me." Peter wanted to "make sure people trust what I'm going to do" because "I don't want to have to fight for it. I want to be supported. I want to have a collaboration." When Wanda sold her collapsed business, the new owners did not ask for her help which "made me crazy, feeling like I couldn't help them." Victor found building relationships in a central city difficult because people were "more status conscious" than in his hometown, and he wanted a new career where he didn't "have to protect myself the whole time." Susan's Master's application was rejected "because of my grades... I was a party animal... It's like, are you kidding me?" When Leonard graduated from his organizational development Master's he was frustrated in his job search because "people seemed to think of me as someone who doesn't know anything about that world" due to his science background. In contrast, he found that people wanted to hire him as a coach, which provided "more ease of access" for a new career. When Helen interviewed for a promotion, she felt "I've got all this experience and knowledge and wisdom" but when they asked her for examples of problem-solving, she only gave positive experiences, leading to a "really bad interview." Facing a new boss, Helen felt "nothing I did was right in her eyes" as everything Helen had done was dismantled without her input.

What Was the Role of the Environmental Influence for Participants?

Statements in case narratives were coded as the environmental influence when they related to interactions of participants with their broader community rather than specific individuals. The key concepts emerging from those statements were market opportunity, resource availability, feedback tempo, presentation, stretch, and local qualifications.

Market Opportunity (n=49). Market opportunity emerged as the demand in a community for products and services that supported what a participant had to offer. Market opportunity could be supportive or undermining. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.10.

Table P.10

Strength of Coding for Market Opportunity by Participant Type

	Supportive		Undermining		Total Market Opportunity	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances

Completers	3	27 (90%)	2	3 (10%)	3	30 (61%)
Seekers	3	15 (79%)	3	4 (21%)	3	19 (39%)
Subtotals	6	42 (86%)	5	7 (14%)	6	49 (100%)

Supportive (n=42). Participants encountered supportive market opportunity from ongoing needs, expansion, or addressing challenges.

Ongoing Needs (n=15). There were fifteen instances of ongoing needs. Wanda's business had "incredible products...a great customer base... a really good reputation in the market" up to the end. During her Master's, a professor needed a research assistant to study coaching. For Victor, a communications company needed graduates. When he pursued theatrical production, he moved to a city where an arts-focused venue required content, and where the producer a celebrity-focused production needed interviewers. For Susan, a brewery needed call centre workers to do sales, a nonprofit needed someone to take calls from anxious people and provide recommendations, a job-coaching non-profit needed coaches to help immigrants find jobs, and an employee assistance program needed bilingual workshop facilitators. For Leonard, universities in [an eastern city in Canada] required post-doctorate researchers in his discipline, and people in his community wanted consultations with a professional life coach. Helen's city included a motorcycle dealership that needed translation of business documents, a consulting firm that needed bilingual secretaries, and boutiques and accounting firms that needed headhunters. When Helen decided to self-demote at a career centre, they still needed career counsellors.

Expansion (n=16). There were sixteen instances of expansion. Peter benefited from expansion many times: his first business capitalized on a growing multimedia market, his first sales job addressed a growing demand for renewable energy, his purchasing job arose from a demand for retirement homes, and his sales account job arose from a services business expanding into a nearby city. Wanda's business benefited from "a huge boom in the industry" and her pivot to distributing through stores tapped into "the industry... taking off again." She moved into consulting because her friend's nonprofit wanted to expand into a national consultancy. Victor succeeded for years when his major client was "really riding their wave... at the crest of where they can go." He networked in a central city because he felt "the industry was successful" and he pitched a competitor-focused production when a venue was seeking new content. His girlfriend immigrated from overseas because her profession was in demand. For Susan, her jobs arose from a growing niche of transportation clients undergoing major changes. Helen's city had a growing demand for talent that required headhunters, and a growing demand for cooperative education in universities that needed job-coordinators and then managers of career centres. When she retired, a new yoga studio needed more instructors.

Addressing Challenges (n=11). There were eleven instances of addressing challenges. A youth protection organization needed Wanda's help to solve their "high rate of attrition." The CEO of Victor's main client needed someone to create a production about his personal adventure in a remote location. Many people on social media were looking for answers about a massive migration scheme at Victor's birthplace. In Susan's city, call centres had quality problems they needed fixed, a school board needed workshops for parents, and major transportation companies needed help shepherding employees through major organizational changes. For Helen, her

accounting firm had communication problems with its European branches, her alma mater had students needing jobs, and a U.S. business helping students apply to universities was open to Helen addressing the challenge of Americans applying to Canadian schools.

Undermining (n=7). Participants encountered undermining market opportunity when they failed to connect with opportunities, or faced changed expectations.

Failure to Connect (n=4). There were four instances of failing to connect with opportunity. Over three years as a renewable energy salesman Peter failed to make a sale in an expanding market. Victor felt there was more opportunity in a central city, but "cut-throat competition" reduced his ability to get it. After graduation, Leonard had "a lot of trouble getting any opportunity" in organizational development. When Helen was transitioning between the two needed functions of headhunting and career counselling, "there were lots of times where I didn't have enough work."

Changed Expectations (n=3). There were three instances of participants facing changing expectations. Peter's multimedia business declined due to changes in his industry. Wanda's clothing business declined when competitors started a negative marketing campaign about her style of products. Helen's promotions stopped and reversed when her decades of "experience and wisdom" were disregarded in favour of someone younger with a hierarchical, business-results style.

Resource Availability (n=50). Resource availability emerged as the ability to access assets and services to pursue a role. Resource availability could be high or low. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.11.

Table P.11

Strength of Coding for Resource Availability by Participant Type

		High		Low		Total Resource Availability
Completers	3	22 (79%)	2	6 (21%)	3	28 (56%)
Seekers	3	19 (83%)	2	4 (17%)	3	23 (44%)
Subtotals	6	41 (80%)	4	10 (20%)	6	51 (100%)

High Resources (n=41). Participants had high resource availability when they could access training resources, network connections, helpful suppliers, and financial support.

Training Resources (n=17). There were seventeen instances of accessing training resources. Peter found a local 4-day per month executive MBA that accepted him without an undergraduate degree. Wanda found a local executive MBA as well as an organizational development degree that better matched her desire to work with people. Victor found a local, "super sought-after" theatrical production program that he applied to twice, and overseas he found a "kind of similar" communications course. Susan found a local political science program, and later a better-suited program in organizational development. In his native country, Leonard applied to two nearby universities offering social sciences and science. In [an eastern city in Canada], he embraced local courses in music therapy, mindfulness-stress-management, and yoga, he entered a local Master's in organizational development, then completed a local coaching

certification. Helen accessed a distant linguistics program in [an eastern city in Canada]. Back in [a central city in Canada], she found a typing course to move into secretarial work, then a Master's program to move into consulting, and in retirement she accessed a new yoga studio.

Network Connections (n=10). There were nine instances of accessing networking resources. Peter used the LinkedIn network to monitor sales job postings. Victor attended parties where he met a successful theatrical producer and got work experience and contacts from him. A friend connected Susan to a career coach where she learned about his Master's degree. Susan used LinkedIn to find practitioners in her new industry who provided tips and contacts, and her own LinkedIn profile resulted in job offers from recruiters. Susan used a job-coaching and networking service, which led to a job offer from them. Her hairdresser and babysitter supported her career transition and connected her to another client. Helen joined a businesswomen's association where she met inspiring role models, she attended an alumni reunion where she learned about the need for co-op job coordinators, and she maintained a Facebook connection with an ex-boyfriend whose posts alerted her to a business opportunity.

Helpful Suppliers (n=7). There were seven instances of accessing a supply of products, services or cultural content. When Peter needed a supplier to fulfill his purchasing role, a classmate connected him to a Chinese supplier. When Wanda started her home-based business, she sourced bulk products from Pakistan. When her business was too busy to allow homeschooling, public schools were available nearby. When Victor was looking for the subject of an artistic theatrical production, he found a unique arts training school. The same city was famous for a celebrity, resulting in a theatrical production that needed interviewing help. When Helen shared secretarial complaints to management, consultants were made available to help resolve the issues. When Helen created a part-time job-coordinator position, she accessed job listings using the Workopolis website.

Financial Support (n=7). There were seven instances of accessing financial supports. Peter started his first business with no customers but obtained \$250,000 in bank loans and a three-year office lease. Wanda's new accountants encouraged her to grow her business based on government tax breaks. Government and union funding supported Wanda's efforts to help her friend's nonprofit expand into a broader consulting firm. Victor obtained government grants to fund his independent theatrical production study, and preliminary work on his genealogical theatrical production. Susan's husband supported her family while she raised children and did piecework consulting for call centres. Leonard sourced \$9000 to take a coaching program after abandoning his Master's discipline.

Low Resources (n=10). Participants encountered low resource availability when they faced a financial gap or a supplier gap.

Financial Gap (n=8). There were eight instances of facing a financial gap. As Peter's business declined, his debt increased and he lost everything. Years later, he admitted, "I don't have the resources anymore... I'm naked and I'm starting from zero." Wanda's business faced a three-part gap: despite massive spending based on expert advice, she didn't get expected tax breaks; a distributor demanded repayment for a "big mix-up" and commenced a lawsuit; and the husband of her partner wanted to end their support of the company debt. Victor's girlfriend immigrated for work but learned too late that she had to retrain without pay, her dependence on Victor breaking their relationship. Although Victor saw more opportunity in a central city, he felt it was more expensive with a lower quality of life than an eastern city. When Susan's husband

left, she lost his financial support and sought more steady income than piecemeal call centre consulting.

Supplier Gap (n=2). There were two instances of supplier gap. Wanda's access to a youth protection organization to finish her Master's thesis was limited during COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Susan quit her nonprofit job because she lacked help raising her kids while completing her Master's.

Local Qualification (n=16). Local qualification emerged as a location-specific consequence of a participant's capacity. Local qualification could be helping or hindering. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.12.

Table P.12

Strength of Coding for Local Qualification by Participant Type

	Helping		Hindering		Total Local Qualification	
Completers	3	7 (70%)	2	3 (30%)	3	10 (63%)
Seekers	1	2 (33%)	2	4 (67%)	3	6 (38%)
Subtotals	4	9 (56%)	4	7 (44%)	6	16 (100%)

Helping Qualification (n=9). Participants had helping local qualifications when they had language abilities, or enabling status or background.

Language Abilities (n=6). There were six instances of helping language abilities. As a cultural outsider of the eastern city, Victor was still able to speak their "lingo" and work and win awards in their community. Susan's bilingualism enabled many opportunities: her first gig in change management, which required both French and accent-free English; subsequent work at a Quebec security company with branches in English-speaking North America; employee assistance workshops that needed English and French versions on the same day; and a francophone commuter transportation company. Helen's bilingualism helped her get into a consulting firm as a bilingual secretary.

Enabling Status or Background (n=3). There were three instances of helping status or background. As a graduate student, Wanda qualified for a research assistantship in coaching. As the son of an immigrant Victor qualified for overseas citizenship, study and work. Susan's people-oriented, empathic background impressed members of a Master's program who secured her acceptance despite low undergraduate grades.

Hindering Qualification (n=7). Participants had a hindering local qualification when status or background, or language deficit impeded progress.

Disabling Status or Background (n=5). There were five instances of status or background being a barrier. As a cultural outsider, despite being able to speak the local "lingo" Victor felt that he had fewer opportunities in the eastern city. For Susan, despite fitting the values of a Master's Program, she was rejected twice because of low undergraduate grades. Leonard found it difficult to get organizational development work because his science background seemed

incongruent or irrelevant. For Helen, despite her experience in the job and industry, she lost a promotion because she expressed herself as a positive "Pollyanna" instead of a results-oriented problem-solver. After she self-demoted to career-counsellor, she self-censored her administrative experiences so she wouldn't "dominate the conversation around the career counsellor table" and make people "uncomfortable."

Language Barrier (n=2). There were two instances of language being a barrier. Victor's immigrant girlfriend believed she could work in Victor's country but learned that she had to retrain at her own cost. Leonard wanted to provide coaching in a Francophone community, so he chose to study in a French program.

Feedback Tempo (n=22). Feedback tempo emerged as the timing of participants to experience validating results. Feedback tempo was short when participants had validating results without substantial frustration and persistence. Feedback tempo was long otherwise. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.13.

Table P.13

Strength of Coding for Feedback Tempo by Participant Type

	Short		Long		Total Feedback Tempo	
Completers	3	4 (36%)	2	7 (64%)	3	11 (50%)
Seekers	1	2 (18%)	3	9 (82%)	3	11 (50%)
Subtotals	4	6 (27%)	5	16 (73%)	6	22 (100%)

Short Tempo (n=6). Participants experienced a short feedback tempo when they had a manageable incoming pace of work, or experienced validation in the moment.

Manageable Incoming Pace (n=2). There were two instances of a manageable pace of incoming tasks. Leonard secured coaching work while still training and perceived more "entryways" than organizational development. For Helen, the cycles of work in her career centre not only avoided the extremes of workaholism or piecework, but also provided her with increasing responsibilities and promotions over time.

Validation In the Moment (n=4). There were four instances of validation in the moment. Starting change management, Wanda experienced desired results: "I've seen it just so far in the work that I've done... it was incredible, the changes that can happen." Susan adapted tone-deaf workshops to make them audience-friendly and enjoyed the audience coming up to relate to her stories or hug her. When she interviewed stakeholders in change management, she found that "It's fun... people would open up and I just would love the work... and I'd leave happy." Leonard found that his rewards in coaching were a "much more direct... much more embodied" experience where he was "right there and then helping someone who is sitting right in front of me."

Long Tempo (n=16). Participants experienced a long feedback tempo when validation was too infrequent to continue, required persisting and adapting over time, or seemed unachievable.

Too Infrequent to Continue (n=7). There were seven instances of a feedback tempo that was too infrequent to motivate persistence. Victor's immigrant girlfriend had to retrain at her own cost and the four years it took to become a citizen broke their relationship. For Susan as a job coach, her immigrant clients' inability to find work "was tearing me apart" such that "I can't do this anymore." Leonard found that it took a long time to produce science research, which might not be publishable, might not be accepted or read widely, and might have no benefit to readers. As a translator, Helen disliked spending "all my day in a dictionary" and she didn't want to "live in a book." As a bilingual secretary, she and her colleagues "felt unappreciated" because they worked long hours without much variety or responsibility. As a headhunter, she worked "unhealthy, insane" hours and yet felt "you're never as good as your last assignment" and "you always had a list, your arm long, of more things you had to do." As a self-employed headhunter transitioning into career counselling, she found that there were "lots of times where I didn't have enough work."

Required Persisting and Adapting (n=6). There were six instances of persisting and adapting to succeed. Victor demonstrated persistence on many occasions: he persisted with pitching ideas to an entertainment company for 12-18 months until they accepted him; despite rejection by an advanced theatrical production school he successfully reapplied eight years later; he successfully pitched a competitor-focused production but it took two years to get made; to secure funding for a genealogical production, he had to write an outline with sample stories to secure seed funding to make the next phase. In her new career, Susan noted that sometimes clients don't want to listen to or take action on her data, but she can help them identify "quick wins" to accommodate employees while explaining why their other issues have to wait. Susan secured a referral from her hairdresser, but it took almost a year to secure the contract.

Unachievable (n=3). There were three instances of an "unachievable" feedback tempo. As a salesman in renewable energy, Peter was unable to secure a deal within three years, which undermined his need for monthly results to be "fairly entertaining and keep me going." At the same company Peter couldn't see "how I was going to move up" through promotion. After finishing his Master's, Leonard "had a lot of trouble getting any opportunity" and "I didn't know what to do with all these ideas and theories" so he abandoned the discipline.

Presentation (n=32). Presentation emerged as how a participant's expectations for an organization or resource reflected their actual experience of it. Presentation was consistent when the expectations of participants matched their experience. Presentation was inconsistent otherwise. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.14.

Table P.14
Strength of Coding for Presentation by Participant Type

		Consistent		Inconsistent		Total Presentation	
Completers	2	5 (28%)	3	13 (72%)	3	18 (56%)	
Seekers	2	6 (43%)	3	8 (57%)	3	14 (44%)	
Subtotals	4	11 (34%)	6	21 (66%)	6	32 (100%)	

Consistent Presentation (n=11). Presentation was consistent when participants experienced fulfilled expectations, or safety or dependability.

Fulfilled Expectations (n=8). There were eight instances of fulfilled expectations. Victor noted that theatrical production school classmates went on to become "really successful and interesting theatrical producers." When Susan conducted interviews in her new career, "I'm curious by nature so it's fun" and "I just would love the work." After she completed several contracts, a consulting firm encouraged her to apply for a permanent position. Leonard found music therapy "very inspiring," a mindfulness course led him to feel "Oh wow," and a systematic coaching program "was more usable... I was able to start doing it although I didn't have a lot of previous experience." Helen felt able to take herself more seriously after meeting role models at a businesswomen's association, and when she moved into a career centre, she found the "university environment tends to respect lifestyle" so she had manageable and predictable work.

Safety or Dependability (n=3). There were three instances of safety or dependability. After a number of disappointments, Victor sought a career where "I like the people I'm working with... instead of being in a situation where I have to protect myself the whole time." Despite feeling a divergence of values, Leonard found that science labs had good energy and he was friendly with coworkers. When Helen was dumped by her lover, her headhunter internship employer took her back fulltime so she could "heal."

Inconsistent Presentation (n=21). Presentation was inconsistent when participants experienced undermined expectations, or a disruption of safety or dependability.

Undermined Expectations (n=13). There were ten instances of participants having undermined expectations when they engaged with an experience. Peter was frustrated when he was hired to do purchasing, but was micromanaged and had no heat in the office during winter. Wanda found her Master's program, marketed as "transformational collaborative experience," was actually "still hierarchical. It's still the experts are in charge." Victor's girlfriend said she could immigrate and find work, but she had to retrain at her own cost and failed. Victor sought opportunity in a central city but felt that the industry was "not about substance. Its more about the surface" and "more of a product" with "more grandstanding." Susan found that management hired her team but sometimes "just doesn't want to hear it" or "don't have the funds" to make changes to fix problems. One client prevented her from interacting with stakeholders, a staple of her work. When she presented workshops, she needed to compensate for tone-deaf presentation materials. Leonard found that science research "has some real elements of toxicity" because the culture projects objectivity but decisions were based on "maximizing your chances of academic success" rather than "genuine discovery." He found that his Master's left him with "a certain sense of incompetence... because I didn't know what to do with all these ideas and theories." For Helen, her linguistics program failed to include translating work, which turned out to require days stuck with a dictionary.

Disruption of Safety or Dependability (n=8). There were eight instances of a disruption of safety or dependability. A supplier Peter relied on charged extra fees and delivered a "whole container" with wrong materials, which ended his job. Wanda enrolled her son in a public high school where he became a drug addict. She hired accountants for her business, but calculation errors resulted in years of "accumulating catastrophic losses." Experts advised her to make costly investments based on expected government repayments, but the payments never came. Victor pitched a competitor-focused production with a friend but got shunted aside without credit for his

work. He dedicated 16-hour days to rework a celebrity-focused production, but the producer shunted him out and refused to pay. Susan felt overwhelmed as a job coach because qualified immigrants were unable to find work. Helen's consulting firm required university degrees for its secretaries, but left them bored and unappreciated with simple, highly-controlled tasks. Helen's accounting firm required insane work hours but even after seven years of 12-hour days, she felt unable to manage workload or feel secure in her accomplishments. When Helen interviewed to make a promotion permanent, her positive outlook was rejected by new management seeking a problem-solving focus. She watched the new boss make decisions without consultation and dismantle her years of work.

Stretch (n=53). Stretch emerged as the amount of travel required to engage with an opportunity or resource. Stretch could be high or low. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.15.

Table P.15

Strength of Coding for Stretch by Participant Type

		High		Low		Total Stretch
Completers	2	4 (15%)	3	23 (85%)	3	27 (51%)
Seekers	3	11 (42%)	3	15 (58%)	3	26 (49%)
Subtotals	5	15 (28%)	6	38 (72%)	6	53 (100%)

High Stretch (n=15). Participants had high stretch when they changed country or continent, region, or city.

Changed Country or Continent (n=8). There were eight instances of travelling between countries or continents. Peter's first sales job required frequent travel for training and business. As Wanda's business took on "clients all over the world" she "traveled a ton" and as her mother grew ill in the U.S., Wanda travelled to care of her so she could "die at home." When Victor's mother moved overseas, he moved with her and started a new life in communications. He later returned to North America to re-apply to theatrical production school. When he created a theatrical production of a personal adventure for a major client he lived for months in a remote country. Leonard moved from Europe to North America for his post-doctorate positions. Helen took a contract reporting on European branches of her consulting firm to pay for a sabbatical to rethink her career.

Changed City (n=5). There were five instances of travelling between cities. For his new sales role, Peter commuted to another city 1-2 days per week. To pursue opportunities, Victor applied to a central city theatrical production school several times and lived there for a year. He pitched a competitor-focused production to a central city venue, and networked in the city to seek more opportunities.

Changed Region (n=2). There were two instances of travelling between regions. To develop a genealogical production, Victor travelled to the east coast. To study linguistics, Helen moved to Quebec City.

Low Stretch (n=38). Participants had low stretch when they remained in the same city, organization, neighbourhood, or their own home.

Same City (n=28). There were 28 instances of participants remaining within the same city. For his first business, Peter found local funding, office space and customers. To re-train after his business collapse, he took a local 4-days-per-month executive MBA. Wanda took a local Master's in organizational development to become a consultant, and she used her thesis to help a local youth protection organization. To fulfil his theatrical production dream, Victor applied to a "super sought-after" program in his own city. After moving overseas with his mother, he attended a communications program and worked at a communications company. Back in the eastern city, his first theatrical production relied on connections made at a party, an injured artist he met in the street, the artist's school, and an arts-focused venue in his city. After persistent pitching, Victor got his start with a major entertainment company in his city. He was later enlisted to work on a theatrical production about a celebrity from the city. Susan half-heartedly completed a local political science program but was more of a "party animal." After graduating with a "useless degree" Susan she took call centre work at local brewery. She then offered call centre consulting based on word-of-mouth referrals. Her friend got her a lunch meeting with a local career coach who connected her to a local Master's program and the professors teaching it. After graduating, Susan used LinkedIn to find practitioners willing to meet and share tips. She enrolled in a local job-coaching and networking group to find work. Her career break arose from a contact she'd made in a class project pursuing a niche practice of serving several transportation companies headquartered locally. Leonard applied to universities local to him overseas and completed multiple degrees. After moving to [an eastern city in Canada], he enrolled in local courses in music therapy and yoga. He attended a local incubator event for his girlfriend's Master's program which inspired him to enrol. Failing to secure work, he enrolled in a local coaching program in French. Helen switched from translation to bilingual secretary by taking a local typing course in [a central city in Canada]. She joined a local businesswomen's association, and she escaped secretarial work by reviewing university calendars at her library and applying for a local Master's program. She later attended a local alumni event and co-created a job coordinator position with a former professor. Helen took a full-time position at a career centre for another local university.

Same Organization (n=4). There were four instances of transitioning in the same organization. While taking her Master's Wanda took a research assistantship to make money while exploring a topic she loved. When Helen lost her boyfriend after graduating from her Master's, her internship employer took her back full-time. At the career centre, Helen interviewed for a promotion to director. When she faced a toxic new boss, she self-demoted into a career counsellor and increased working from home.

Same Neighbourhood (n=3). There were three instances of travelling within a neighbourhood. When her business grew, Wanda enrolled her son in a school "next to my office" that turned out to be a "drug school." Through mutual friends, Susan was offered the directorship of an anxiety nonprofit in her neighbourhood. Helen enrolled in a new yoga studio in her area, which led to work as a yoga teacher.

Same Home (n=3). There were three instances of working from home. When Peter's business declined, he moved the equipment into his home. Wanda started her business in her home. For Helen's transition into counselling, she took headhunting research contracts where she spent all day on the phone calling candidates.

What Was the Role of the Chance Influence for Participants?

Statements in case narratives were coded as the chance influence when they related to events over which participants had no control, but which influenced their life and career. The key concepts emerging from those statements were engagement with chance, and alignment of engagement.

Engagement With Chance (n=93). Engagement with chance emerged as the degree to which participants monitored events and took action. Engagement could be high or low. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.16.

Table P.16

Strength of Coding for Engagement With Chance by Participant Type

	High		Low		Total Engagement with Chance	
Completers	3	38 (75%)	3	13 (25%)	3	51 (55%)
Seekers	3	31 (74%)	2	11 (26%)	3	42 (45%)
Subtotals	6	69 (74%)	5	24 (26%)	6	93 (100%)

High Engagement (n=69). Participants had higher engagement with chance when they explored options, pursued training or support, indicated interest in a role, built their own venture, accepted an offer based on performance, demonstrated competence, or prioritized family support.

Exploring Options (n=15). There were fifteen instances of engaging by exploring options. Looking for a Master's Wanda contrasted the spreadsheets of an executive MBA with the people focus of an organizational development degree. Similarly, Susan noted that an MBA was "not who I am. I needed to do something with people." She discovered organizational development by having a chat over lunch with a career coach. She explored ways to advance by engaging practitioners on LinkedIn with comments on their posts and requesting chats. Leonard found opportunities by exploring experiences he heard from others: he attended his girlfriend's music therapy course, his mother's mindfulness stress-reduction course, and a social event for his girlfriend's organizational development Master's. Unsatisfied with that degree, he sought guidance from coaching professors to find a systematic training program and negotiate a discount. When Helen's secretarial colleagues complained, she chose to take their concerns to management, which resulted in a referral to a businesswomen's association and experiencing career talks and group work using material from their archives. To escape her secretarial work, Helen dismissed an MBA due to her weak quantitative skills in favour of a Master's in environmental studies, which focused on people, and she sought help from her firm to apply. To move from a headhunting boutique into executive recruiting at an accounting firm, she "did a lot of networking" to find a way in. After a marriage breakdown, she sought counselling and planned a year-long sabbatical to explore her needs, and shared her plan with her firm, which supported her. During her shift toward career counselling, she attended an alumni reunion and explored options with a favourite professor. After reflecting on her ideal job, she monitored job ads and was able to identify a good fit with a career centre.

Pursuing Training or Support (n=14). There were fourteen instances of engaging by pursuing training or support. After Peter lost his business, he pursued an executive MBA. After Wanda lost her business, she pursued a Master's in organizational development. Victor applied several times to a "super sought-after" theatrical production program, which he initially abandoned to go overseas where he applied to a communications course. To support post-graduate study, he applied several times to a central city career development program. Susan applied several times to the Master's in organizational development, then enrolled in an over-40s job-coaching and workshop program. Leonard applied to two universities overseas and left his career direction up to whichever accepted him. In North America, he applied to an organizational development Master's and then a coaching certification. Helen applied to a linguistics program, a typing course, and finally a Master's program.

Indicating Interest in a Role (n=14). There were fourteen instances of engaging by indicating interest in a role. Peter asked an MBA classmate in charge of an expanding business to keep him in mind for sales jobs. He applied to LinkedIn listings for client success roles and sales positions despite a lack of experience. Overseas, Victor applied to a communications services company for related work. In North America, he spoke to agents and networked in a central city. After her political science degree, Susan applied for a call centre job with a brewery. In her neighbourhood, she indicated an interest in taking over an anxiety disorders helpline, and contacted a referral from her hairdresser multiple times. She indicated availability to perform in English and French to an employee assistance program. Leonard applied to postdoctoral positions in North America, and after his Master's, he applied to organizations that seemed to be recruiting. Helen applied for work as a bilingual secretary and translator at a motorcycle company, as a secretary at a consulting firm, and as a bilingual secretary. When Helen saw a Facebook post for a student advising service, she indicated interest in helping them in North America.

Building Their Own Venture (n=12). There were twelve instances of engaging by building their own venture. Peter saw an emerging digital video industry and started a business along with five to 10 parallel businesses. Wanda saw a need for juvenile clothing, and started a business, then rebuilt it after devastating competition by creating new distribution opportunities. Victor created a series of ventures: he created an independent theatrical production including a loan from a wheeler-dealer and deals with a school and a venue; he pitched ideas to an entertainment company until they hired him; he pitched a competitor-focused production to a venue; he grew an interview task on a celebrity-focused theatrical production into a job reworking the entire narrative; and he turned his personal genealogy into a theatrical production pitch to a government sponsor. Susan left a call centre job and started consulting on call centre improvement. Leonard integrated his interests in music and mindfulness into his science research. Helen took control over headhunting work by shifting to contract research for headhunters.

Accepting Offer Based on Performance (n=9). There were nine instances of engaging by accepting an offer based on past performance. Two participants took roles related to past business tasks. Peter accepted a purchasing role from an acquaintance who expected him to handle it without problems; and Wanda accepted a role providing strategic and web services to expand her friend's nonprofit. Wanda took a research assistantship with a coaching professor based on a recommendation from a classmate she'd worked with on projects. Based on Victor's being the "go to theatrical producer" for a client, he accepted a role creating a production about

his client's personal adventure. Susan accepted an offer to become a job coach after participating in the job-coaching service. She accepted her multiple contracts in change management that related to impressing a practitioner during a class project and in subsequent work. Helen accepted a full-time headhunting role from her internship employer after abandoning plans for consulting, and she took a teaching role from a yoga studio after practising with them.

Demonstrated Competence (n=3). There were three instances of engaging by working to demonstrate competence. Wanda worked a group project during her Master's that led to a job referral by a classmate. Similarly, Susan worked a class project that connected her with a change management practitioner who would later hire her. After his Master's, Leonard facilitated workshops to develop relevant experience.

Prioritized Family Support (n=2). There were two instances of engaging by prioritizing family support. When Wanda's mother was terminally ill, Wanda prioritized caring for her in-person despite the travel. When Victor's mother moved overseas, he prioritized following her to maintain financial support for himself.

Low Engagement (n=24). Participants had lower engagement with chance when they lacked awareness and contingency, or avoided engagement.

Lacked Awareness and Contingency (n=16). There were sixteen instances of lacking awareness and contingency. Peter didn't notice changes in his industry because he "wasn't focused" and got distracted with parallel businesses. When Peter chose to enrol in an MBA, "I didn't give it too much thought." The end of his marriage was "long, long coming" and he blamed his business failure, but admitted that his wife had later confessed to being jealous of his career and freedom while she was stuck with childcare. He relied on a former classmate's referral for a major supplier, and was unfamiliar with their approach and reliability. Six months into his sales manager job, he was surprised to learn he'd been expected to take a leadership role. Wanda put her homeschooled son into a public high school next to her office, which turned out to be a "drug school." When her long-time accountant died of ALS, she hired replacements who made a catastrophic calculation error over years. When she lost confidence after her son's drug addiction, she capitulated to advisors whose plans led to disastrous investments. One of her distributors was facing financial pressure from its bank, so when her business had a "big mix up" the distributor resorted to a lawsuit rather than patience. The husband of her business partner was uncomfortable with the growing debt and his anxiety led to the end of the business. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Wanda delayed her thesis for six months because she could not access her participants. Victor supported the immigration of his girlfriend without realizing she failed to meet local requirements to work in her field. When he pitched a competitor-focused production he trusted a friend without protecting his own rights, and when he accepted a role reworking a celebrity-focused production, he trusted the producer without getting a signed contract because he lacked other work. At the accounting firm, Helen lacked awareness of how workaholicism shaped her family, her work at the firm, and resulted in rarely seeing her husband who started cheating on her. At a career centre she expected a promotion due to her "experience and knowledge and wisdom" but didn't anticipate or respond to the problem-solving style expected by a new boss.

Avoided Engagement (n=8). There were eight instances of avoiding engagement. Peter rejected an opportunity to work with a friend at a gym because he was worried about "making a living" and coming to hate something he loved. He avoided working with his brother because he

was "not very stable" and "I think we will end up hating each other." He avoided asking contacts for help because "I'm scared to ask now." When Susan was an undergrad, she avoided studying political science in favour of partying. When she was encouraged to apply for full-time work at a consulting firm, she hesitated because she would lose her ability to control her work and clients. Helen avoided plans to become a consultant when a boyfriend cheated on her, and when her first husband cheater on her. When she lost a promotion in a career centre, she avoided further conflict or the risk of transferring elsewhere, by self-demoting into a career counsellor, and self-censoring her ideas.

Alignment of Engagement (n=89). Alignment of engagement emerged as how well monitoring and engaging with chance produced a desired result with the environment. Alignment was high when the consequences of a participant's actions supported their intent. Alignment was low otherwise. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.17.

Table P.17

Strength of Coding for Alignment of Engagement by Participant Type

	High		Low		Total Alignment of Engagement	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	30 (61%)	3	19 (33%)	3	49 (55%)
Seekers	3	26 (65%)	3	14 (35%)	3	40 (45%)
Subtotals	6	56 (63%)	6	33 (37%)	6	89 (100%)

High Alignment (n=56). Participants had high alignment when they obtained acceptance aligned with needs or unaligned with needs, achieved fit performing a role, bridged to a new role, or when "the stars were aligned."

Obtained Acceptance Aligned With Needs (n=9). There were nine instances of obtaining acceptance aligned with needs. Wanda was accepted by a Master's that met her needs to help people solve their own problems. Victor was accepted into his dream theatrical production program on two occasions, his grant proposal for an independent study was accepted, which launched his artistic theatrical production career. He used that study and persistent pitches to win acceptance from an entertainment company and a decade of contracts. Susan was accepted to run an anxiety helpline that met her needs for listening and recommending. After two rejections, Susan was accepted by her organizational development Master's thanks to professors who saw her fit with the program. She got her "big break" when a consultant accepted her for a bilingual change management gig that led to ongoing work in listening and communicating and an invitation to apply for fulltime work. Leonard was accepted by a coaching certification that meet his needs for a systematic approach and entry into practice. Helen was accepted by a university careers centre that fulfilled her needs to help candidates connect with jobs and grew her responsibility over time.

Obtained Acceptance Un-aligned With Needs (n=21). There were 21 instances of obtaining acceptance un-aligned with needs. For Peter, an executive MBA program accepted him despite his lack of undergraduate degree and not giving the choice much thought. His spouse

found a job when he was unable to, and he performed childcare. A classmate connected him with a sales job in a highly-regimented energy business he disliked, and an acquaintance offered him a purchasing role in a micromanaged family business he disliked. An engineering services firm offered him work where he disliked the top-down structure and was anxious about taking a leadership role. For Victor, he was accepted into a communications program and then into a management-track position at a communications company, despite his interest being in artistic theatrical production. He accepted a role creating a production about a client's personal adventure because he was afraid of losing future business. Although his second application to a central city theatrical production school was accepted, he disliked his interactions in the city and found it difficult to source work that was not "superficial." Although his was able to grow an interviewing gig into an intense job to rework a theatrical production, he lacked the commitment he thought he'd got from the producer who later refused to pay or credit him. For Susan, she was accepted into political science despite not connecting with the topic, and she took a telesales role with a brewery because her degree was "useless." She was offered a role in a job coaching program that left her miserable because clients couldn't find jobs. Although her LinkedIn profile attracted offers, workshop gigs required the use of slides that alienated audiences. For Leonard, his rejection from a humanities university and acceptance by a science university led to a science career that left him unhappy, such as two post-doctorates in which he was miserable. His acceptance by a Master's in organizational development led him to a degree that gave him a sense of "incompetence." For Helen, she was accepted into a linguistics program that never offered her desired translating experience. She was accepted as a secretary despite feeling it was beneath her. Helen was accepted by a Master's program that left her lacking confidence when she graduated, and she never used it to pursue her consulting ambition. She took a fulltime headhunting position instead of pursuing her consulting ambition, and persisted with headhunting at an accounting firm despite hoping she could enter the firm and become a consultant.

Achieved Fit Performing Role (n=11). There were eleven instances of achieving fit performing a role. Wanda loved the collegial approach of her research assistantship. Her role with a friend's non-profit provided "a very interesting synergy" with her Master's and "it's really part of my education." Her Master's fit her desire to "help people work better together," and "it was incredible, the changes that can happen." Victor won awards for his work as a student and professional in multiple languages. Susan described change management as "fun" and "I'd leave happy, I would say 95% of the time," and she enjoyed workshops when audiences related to her. Leonard found music therapy "bang, blew my mind" and his meeting a mindfulness-stress reduction leader triggered "bang, oh wow... I want to do the course with him." He resonated with an organizational development Masters but only with its personal development aspects. He felt a coaching program "was more usable... I seemed to have the right skills... I was able to start doing it although I didn't have a lot of previous experience."

Bridged to a New Role (n=8). There were eight instances of bridging to a new role. Susan used a contact from a Master's project to enter her new career. She enlisted LinkedIn contacts to gather tips and connect with more contacts. Helen took secretarial concerns to management which resulted in working with a consultant and getting a referral to a businesswomen's association that helped her take herself more seriously as a professional. She enlisted the help of her firm to apply for the Master's. She obtained a contract from her accounting firm that funded her sabbatical to rethink "my sources of satisfaction." At the alumni reunion, Helen and the professor co-created a job-coordinator position to support the growing co-op placements required

by the university. When Helen was still trying teacher training, she was enlisted as a yoga instructor at her local studio.

Stars Were Aligned (n=7). There were seven instances of "the stars were aligned." Peter's digital business succeeded because "the good stars were aligned" between his offering and an emerging market. Wanda's business benefited first from a "huge boom in the industry," and then after securing new sales channels, the "industry just started taking off again." Victor, inspired by successes in artistic theatrical productions, made his own and sold it to a venue. His pitch for a competitor-focused production was accepted by a venue seeking content. His pitch for a genealogical production related to large-scale family migrations that affected many people on social media and secured seed funding. Susan's move into call centre consulting benefited from word-of-mouth referrals from call centres needing improvements.

Low Alignment (n=33). Participants had low alignment when they experienced a betrayal of expectations, an unsatisfying role, business failures, lack of fit to get a role, a crisis of confidence, or a lack of resources to support their direction.

Betrayal of Expectations (n=7). There were seven instances of betrayal of expectations. Peter's marriage became "mental abuse" after his business failed and his wife expressed resentment over never having her own freedom and career. His purchasing career ended when the main supplier charged extra fees and failed to deliver properly. Wanda faced years of "accumulating catastrophic losses" because her accountants did not detect a calculation error. She lost hundreds of thousands of dollars when she followed the advice of accountants and made expensive business investments that the government refused to repay. Victor's girlfriend became a stressful dependent when she immigrated without checking eligibility for practising her profession in North America. Victor was "pushed aside by somebody who I trusted" without proper credit, after getting a pitch accepted for competitor-focused production. He was "shunted out" of a celebrity-focused production project without pay or credit after reworking it without a contract.

Unsatisfying Role (n=7). There were seven instances of dissatisfaction with a role. When Susan's coaching clients could not find work, "it was touching too much of a chord" and she decided "I can't do this anymore." She avoided further work from a referral by her hairdresser because she was isolated from stakeholders. For Leonard, his research wasn't creating desired discoveries and practical benefits. Helen's linguistics degree did not include translation tasks. Her translating work left her unhappily stuck in a dictionary all day. Headhunting for an accounting firm, she started to question the long working hours leading to burnout. At a career centre, after self-demotion into a career counsellor, she self-censored to avoid conflict and found her boss's dismantling of her work "soul-destroying."

Business Failure (n=6). There were six instances of business failure. Peter's main business failed when he failed to adapt to the changing industry, and his parallel business failed when he shut them down after trusting the "wrong people." During three years at a renewable energy company, he was unable to close a sale, and they started restructuring. After a "big mix-up" by Wanda's business, her distributor commenced a lawsuit, and her partner's husband refused to support the business debt, which led to its collapse. For Helen, her self-employment while transitioning out of headhunting often did not have enough work, which led to seeing more stable employment.

Lack of Fit (n=6). There were six instances of lack of fit. After losing his business, Peter's job-hunting failed to produce "a decent job with a decent salary" in line with his previous executive-level responsibility and salary. His applications for client success roles, for which he had no experience, failed to produce interviews. For Victor, a central city was more expensive than an eastern city and "more about the surface" such that "relationships are harder to foster," and he tired of having to protect himself legally. For Susan, her lax studies in political science resulted in poor grades and "kind of a useless degree." Her first applications to the Master's were rejected due to her poor undergraduate grades despite support from professors. After Leonard graduated from his Master's he "had a lot of trouble getting any opportunity," which he attributed to a lack of experience in human resources or activism.

Crisis of Confidence (n=5). There were five instances of crisis of confidence. For Peter, when his boss told him that he was expected to become a leader, he expressed the need to "step up to the plate" while feeling "I don't want to do it... I don't know if I can do it." When Wanda's son "slipped through my fingers" and became a drug addict, she lost confidence in her judgment. When Helen was dumped by her boyfriend, she abandoned her consulting ambition and took a headhunting role, and when her first husband cheated, she again abandoned her consulting ambition and retreated to headhunting. When she failed to secure an expected promotion and faced conflict with a new boss, she sought counselling, self-demoted and self-censored.

Lack of Resources (n=2). There were two instances of lack of resources. Wanda's frequent travel to care for her mother took time and energy that distracted from monitoring complex investments in the business. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she lost access to her client, which delayed her work by six months.

What Was the Role of the Decision-Making Influence for Participants?

Statements in case narratives were coded as the decision-making influence when they related to how participants made a choice about an event or opportunity. The key concepts emerging from those statements were personal value, and change approach.

Personal Value (n=69). Personal value emerged as a participant's interpretation of obstacles when pursuing a role. Personal value was developed when participants treated obstacles as something to overcome with persistence, learning, or adaptation. Personal value was innate when participants interpreted success or failure as proving or disproving their fit with a role. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.18 .

Table P.18

Strength of Coding for Personal Value by Participant Type

	Developed		Innate		Total Commitment	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	20 (57%)	3	15 (43%)	3	35 (51%)
Seekers	3	20 (59%)	3	14 (41%)	3	34 (49%)
Subtotals	6	40 (58%)	6	29 (42%)	6	69 (100%)

Developed Value (n=40). Participants had a developed personal value when they built on their past, embraced learning while doing, adapted to achieve success, sought insight from mentors, pursued learning to change direction, or managed negative arousal.

Built on Their Past (n=9). There were nine instances of building on their past. When Peter's business failed, he enrolled in an executive business degree "looking for hope, answers skills, something," thinking "maybe I need to sharpen my tools or get some new tools." When the new owners of Wanda's business didn't accept her help, she enrolled in an organizational development Master's because "what I really wanted to do is... figure out how to help people run their businesses better" but "I don't feel like an expert. I feel like a small business person who learned how to do many many many things" so "I needed to have some theory... mentoring and some practice." Victor applied to a central city theatrical production school several times because it was a prestigious career development program and might open more opportunities. With his genealogical theatrical production, he embraced his first time "making a theatrical production about me, where I'm a driving force" and where he would "not shy away from what could be a potentially difficult experience." Susan built on her call centre experiences by starting a consulting business to train call centre employees on "how to talk to people," and then by taking over an anxiety disorders helpline. She sought a Master's degree as a way of using the same skills to earn more income based on a career coach's assurances. Leonard sought training to professionalize his coaching hobby with systematic best practices grounded in theory and offered in French to help him serve his desired clientele.

Embraced Learning While Doing (n=8). There were eight instances of embracing learning while doing. Peter felt that if he could succeed at a renewable energy company, he could do anything because "I learned more there than at the MBA" and it was "all the stuff I hated to do and never did when I had my company... all the preparation, all the process." He took a purchasing job accepting the founder's statement that he had "experience in sales but I need purchasing. I don't think you'll have a problem." Wanda had an art-history education but built a home-based juvenile clothing business, noting "the success of my business was because I didn't really rely on experts" who expected her to fail. She enjoyed a collegial research assistantship because "I bring myself to it" such that "we're all growing together." While doing her thesis project to assist a youth protection service, she noted "I love figuring it out... I've read a lot of associated theory... my brain is lighting up in all places." For Victor, his first job working for a communications company led to management tasks and the promise of a promotion. Leonard distinguished his research work from his pursuit of mindfulness and coaching that led to "real discoveries... changing the way I think I feel, changing the way I do things in the world, changing the way I approach others."

Adapted to Achieve Success (n=7). There were seven instances of adapting to a challenge to achieve success. When Victor was rejected by a central city theatrical production school, he revised a grant into an independent study that let him work for free with an accomplished theatrical producer and make his own production. To make his own theatrical production, he refused to accept rejections from the school he wanted to work with or the venue he wanted to present it with, and over six months convinced each of them that the other wanted the project. When he was rejected after an interview with a major entertainment company, he "would not take no for an answer" and pitched ideas over 12-18 months until accepted. When a venue objected to competitor-based productions, Victor persisted until his version was accepted. When a theatrical production producer refused to pay or credit him, Victor used their email

correspondence not only to secure compensation but also to prove to the sponsor that he had improved the theatrical production, which resulted in new referrals. Although Susan's workshops required slides that alienated her audience, she learned to "read a room and change quickly" by adding humour and personal experiences. As a bored secretary, Helen took colleagues' complaints to management, and embraced working with consultants to address the complaints.

Sought Insight from Mentors (n=6). There were six instances of seeking insight from mentors. To find work in her new career, Susan sought tips and contacts from practitioners on LinkedIn, and joined a job coaching group. Starting her new career, she sought guidance from her boss, which "was honestly like a whole education in itself." Leonard experienced "a strong sense of 'you've got something that I need to develop, I need to absorb'" from a music therapy teacher who "blew my mind," a mindfulness practitioner, and faculty in his girlfriends Master's program. Helen attended a businesswoman's association to "practice those interpersonal skills" and enjoy "learning about different people's careers because women would... talk about how they got to where they are" which helped her take herself more seriously as a professional.

Pursued Learning to Change Direction (n=5). There were five instances of pursuing learning to change career direction. When Victor moved overseas, he enrolled in a communications course as part of becoming "entrenched" in "a whole new life," and when dissatisfied, he returned to an eastern city to enrol in theatrical production school. Helen repurposed her linguistics degree by taking a typing course to qualify as a bilingual secretary. When she realized "I hate my job," she pursued a Master's to move into consulting. When she ended her marriage and abandoned her consulting plans a second time, she sought counselling and took a sabbatical to "rethink who I wanted to be" and realized that she'd rather help people get jobs versus screening them out to help one client.

Managed Negative Arousal (n=5). There were five instances of managing negative arousal to pursue success. Wanda admitted, "Stress really narrows your vision" and when choosing her Master's, she focused on "how am I going to package myself... regardless of the failures" but still leveraged her people orientation with an organizational development degree "instead of the executive MBA." During his first pitch to an entertainment company, Victor was "terrified" due to his lack of experience but went "all out" during his pitch and returned multiple times after rejections until he was accepted. He was reluctant to create a theatrical production about a personal adventure for a client but preserved his relationship by negotiating a vision that had a more humanistic story and paid better. During her Master's Susan devoted her thesis to addressing her own weakness of over-empathizing with employees against management, and managed anxiety during study and "a bit of the imposter syndrome" during her first gigs, using "EFT tapping" techniques.

Innate Value (n=29). Participants had innate personal value when they felt invalidated or validated by circumstances, pursued validation of themselves, or avoided invalidation by circumstances.

Invalidated by Circumstances (n=17). There were seventeen instances of invalidation by circumstances. After losing his business, Peter realized "I believed I was worth a lot but in reality, I wasn't worth a lot, so I can't even get a job." When a supplier failed to deliver, Peter's boss told him he was "done" with China and with Peter. Peter "applied to so many jobs... I was fed up" and when he tried to rebrand himself into "client success" roles, his applications didn't get interviews. He dismissed his desire to start another business because "I lost everything... I'm

naked and I'm starting from zero." When Wanda's son became an addict, she "really lost confidence" because "it felt like such a personal failure." When she lost her business "I felt a terrible loss of purpose" and when the new owners didn't want her help it "made me crazy." Victor found a central city industry to be "not about substance" but "more of a product" and reflected on a gig where he had to use "people's real stories and you're cutting the corners... to fit what the venue wanted... I didn't like the experience and I wasn't particularly, phenomenally successful at it either." Reflecting on a partner who didn't protect his interests for a competitor-focused production, and a theatrical producer who refused to pay, Victor wanted a career where "instead of being in a situation where I have to protect myself... it's something where we can share." Susan called herself a "party animal" during her "kind of useless" political science degree. When her job coaching clients could not find work, she decided "I can't do this anymore" because "it was taking a toll on me." After completing his Master's, Leonard "had a lot of trouble getting any opportunity" and felt "a certain incompetence... with all these ideas and theories" and believed "people seemed to think of me as someone who doesn't know anything about that world." Helen's first translating gigs convinced her to quit to avoid "all my day in a dictionary." On two occasions when a boyfriend or husband cheated, she abandoned her ambition to become a consultant feeling "everything just fell apart in terms of what I thought I wanted to do." After years of long hours in executive recruiting, she decided she was "burned out" and "I can't live like this... It's not healthy." When she lost a promotion at a career centre, it was "my most spectacular failure" and "a bit of a hard blow" because she'd thought of herself as having "all this experience and knowledge and wisdom." When her boss destroyed her work without consultations, she "ended up coming to terms with myself... it was too late in my career... to move on" so she self-demoted into a familiar role of counselling students.

Validated by Circumstances (n=5). There were five instances of validation from circumstances. Leonard found with coaching "I was able to start doing it although I didn't have a lot of previous experience" and "people seemed to be, for whatever reason, quite interested in working with me." When Helen's internship employer offered a fulltime position as a headhunter, it was "a career that I hadn't even thought of for myself" but which was "getting me out of the admin and secretarial work." During her transition into job-coordinating, when she saw an ad that matched her needs, "adrenaline went through my body because I knew with clarity that was the perfect job for me." In semi-retirement, when she saw a Facebook ad for helping students with college applications, she felt "oh my God I would love to do this," and return to work she had done in the 1980s. When she was offered a yoga teaching job, she accepted despite lacking training because "I tend to do my learning a bit backwards... I end up getting the concrete experiences and then I have to go back and do the learning."

Pursued Validation (n=4). There were four instances of pursuing validation. Peter started his first business without any track record because "I knew deep down inside it was going to work" because he believed he was a "boss" so he relied on "courage" rather than balancing "heart" with "head." He pursued the executive MBA admitting "I didn't complete my Bachelor" and no one in his family had a degree, so he wanted to "finish what I started." When he took a sales job shifting from being a boss to an employee, "I told myself, if I'm able to do this, I'll be able to do anything I want after... everything else will be easy." When he was offered a sales job after a long stretch of unemployment, he felt "I can make people believe I can sell" and he felt grateful that they "took me in" and he believed his girlfriend would want him "to prove to everybody that I can do it."

Avoided Invalidation (n=3). There were three instances of avoiding invalidation. Peter wanted to leave his current position saying, "I need to show them that I can do it" but "deep down inside me, I don't want to take it on" because "I don't know if I can do it." When Victor applied to his dream theatrical production program, he kept skipping the interview because "I wasn't a theatrical producer. I just had ideas and I didn't think they were going to let me in." When Susan was encouraged to join a firm full-time, she hesitated because she didn't want to be faced with clients or work that did not meet her values and priorities.

Change Approach (n=73). Change approach emerged as a participant's motivation for changing a role. Change approach was purposeful when participants pursued change to improve fit with their preferences, and was submitting when they accepted a role due to perceived lack of choice. The strength of coding is shown in Table P.19.

Table P.19

Strength of Coding for Change Approach by Participant Type

	Purposeful		Submitting		Total Commitment	
	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
Completers	3	28 (78%)	3	8 (22%)	3	36 (49%)
Seekers	3	18 (49%)	3	19 (51%)	3	37 (51%)
Subtotals	6	46 (63%)	6	27 (37%)	6	73 (100%)

Purposeful Change (n=46). Participants had a purposeful change approach when they sought to improve fit with their desired identity, arousal, freedom, power, scope or social trust.

Improve Identity Fit (n=16). There were sixteen instances of improving fit with identity. Peter started his first business because he "always knew that I wanted to start a business and be a boss." After losing her business Wanda dismissed herself as an expert and wondered "How I'm going to use what I have... regardless of the failures?" and chose organizational development to "help [clients] find their solutions" rather than give them expert advice based on an MBA. Victor abandoned his friends and communications career overseas to pursue his theatrical production identity in an eastern city, and he went on to apply multiple times to a school for career development in theatrical production in a central city. His choices in work reflected a mission to offer "a humanistic perspective that is immersive, compassionate and character driven." For instance at a party, he met theatrical producers making artistic productions for a venue and felt "I need to do the same thing" and turned a meeting with an injured artist into his first project. He developed a competitor-based production because he found the people were "so compelling" as characters. He grew an interviewing job into a broader role of reworking a theatrical production such that it moved from celebrity interviews towards exploring "a human being from somebody who knew them up close." He started a theatrical production about the historical circumstances of family migration "to commit to my life even more," and fulfil his philosophy that "if you experience things in your life that in any way can help people, then you should share." Susan persisted with applications to a Master's despite several rejections because a career coach and faculty agreed that she was "the kind of person we want here," and she persisted with her transition despite anxiety and imposter syndrome. Leonard pursued science to "inquire into the

topics of my mother" (a psychiatrist) by "using the repertoire of my father" (a rigorous scientist). Disappointed in his Master's, he refocused on coaching that was systematic and grounded in theory. Helen was raised in a "workaholic" family but felt more like a "social worker" who preferred to listen and help. She left translation because she was "stuck in a book" for work as a secretary in an intense consulting firm. Feeling she was "better" than a secretary, she attended a businesswomen's association to hear stories from "trailblazer" women who helped her take herself seriously as a "professional," and then applied to a Master's that would "draw more on my creativity" rather than math skills of an MBA. She detoured into headhunting but then used a sabbatical and an alumni event to shift into work helping students find jobs.

Improve Arousal Fit (n=15). There were fifteen instances of improving fit with desired arousal. Wanda embraced a research assistantship because "it's all about coaching. So, I love it." She focused her thesis on addressing staff attrition at a youth protection service, noting "I love working with people... encouraging them, empowering them." Susan started consulting on call centre improvement because "I needed some stimulation" other than childcare. She quit job coaching because clients' challenges were "touching too much of a chord" and she had the opportunity to practise change management where "I like to empower people" through listening. She rejected gigs where she could not interact with stakeholders, and adapted workshops with alienating materials to relate better to audiences using personal anecdotes. Leonard pursued multiple experiences based on arousal. He pursued music therapy and mindfulness because he found practitioners inspiring, and took a Master's in organizational development after meeting faculty because it "seemed to fit my perception of what I needed to do." He shifted into coaching, which provided the "direct... more embodied" experiences of "helping someone who is sitting right in front of me" that he had experienced for himself. Helen took a sabbatical from burnout at her recruiting career to find "where my highs came from, where my lows came from, where my sources of satisfaction were." Later, as a contractor seeking more stable work, she saw a university position that matched her needs and "adrenaline went through my body." She avoided full retirement because "I still feel a pull to create resources to support young people," and she started teaching yoga because "I love, love, love the yoga studio owner."

Improve Freedom Fit (n=7). There were seven instances of improving fit with desired freedom. Peter shifted from sales into purchasing because "it was a small company" and "I was happy to step out of the process of a [multinational] company." Wanda's first business "was all about creating income and being able to stay home with my kids." Susan became a call centre consultant so she could schedule her time and allow her children to "be at home and play outside after school" rather than go to after-school programs. She took an anxiety disorders helpline job because she could work from home or while traveling with her children's sports teams. She hesitated about joining a consulting firm because she wanted to control her schedule and clientele. Leonard pursued post-doctorate positions that allowed him to research within his mindfulness interests. After her sabbatical from "burnout" at an accounting firm, Helen shifted to self-employment so she could control her clients and schedule.

Improve Power Fit (n=3). There were three instances of improving fit with desired power. When faced with devastating competition, Wanda preserved her business when she "fought back and we created this incredible niche industry" using new sales channels. When the purchasers of her business did not ask for help, she worked for a friend's nonprofit that allowed her to co-create opportunities for strategic development, social media, and web design to transition their business model. When Victor was rejected by a theatrical production graduate

school, he used his funding to create an independent study that allowed him to intern with an experienced producer and create his own portfolio of work.

Improve Scope Fit (n=3). There were three instances of improving fit with desired scope. Helen left translation by repurposing her bilingualism into a role as a secretary for a management consulting firm, thinking it "would be like getting an MBA without having to go to school." When she and her colleagues were dissatisfied, she decided "we can't just complain... we got to do something about it" and coordinated a meeting with management, which resulted in working with consultants to solve the issue. Hoping to move from headhunting into human resources consulting, she moved from a recruiter to an accounting firm's executive recruiting arm.

Improve Social Trust (n=2). There were two instances of improving fit with desired social trust. After failing his first interview with an entertainment company, Victor persisted with pitches and developing contacts until he won their acceptance, and then he "overdelivered" on each project to earn "bigger and better projects." In a central city, he networked with agents and industry people, hoping to find work where "I like the people I'm working with" and where he didn't have to "protect myself the whole time."

Submitting Change (n=27). Participants had a submitting change approach when they perceived no choice, avoided failure, accepted a lesser alternative, or trusted the process.

Perceived No Choice (n=9). There were nine instances of perceiving no choice. When Peter's business was dying, he tried to "drag it as long as I could." As a result, his divorce was "long, long coming. I just had to do it. I was just too miserable" after the change in their relationship. He took a sales job because it was "the only kind of transferrable knowledge I was able to take with me." He left a purchasing job after suffering from a supplier failure and micromanagement because his boss said "we should end this now. And I'm like, I agree with you... I was miserable." He took another sales job because "there's nothing else I know how to do... there's no way for me to get a job doing something else," and he stayed because "I don't have a knife under my throat but what else am I going to do?" For Wanda, despite having products, customers, and sales she was forced to sell her business when costly investments were not repaid by the government, her distributor sued the company, and her partner's husband refused to support the debt of the company. Victor ended a relationship with his girlfriend because "it could not withstand the pressure" of years of her dependence during a long training and citizenship process. Susan started her career with a call centre job at a brewery because customer services was the only place for people with "useless" degrees like political science.

Avoided Failure (n=9). There were nine instances of avoiding failure. Peter quit his many parallel businesses "quickly when I needed to" when people let him down. He left his first sales job because "I didn't want to be fired." He rejected working in a friend's gym or pursuing his wellness interests because "Am I going to be able to make a living out of that? It's going to become something I'm going to hate." He avoided working with his brother, fearing they would hate each other, and he avoided approaching his contacts for opportunities because "I am like a wounded animal and also doubting myself, if I can even do that distance." When Wanda's son became an addict, she lost confidence and started deferring to consultants and her business partner. Victor abandoned the first acceptance to theatrical production school and followed his mother overseas because "financially I wouldn't have been able to take care of myself." Leonard abandoned the career path of his "Shiny Master... shining on top of nothing," and searched for more practical training with easier entries into paying work. Helen abandoned her consulting

ambitions twice, when a boyfriend and first husband cheated on her, and in each case returned to headhunting.

Accepted a Lesser Alternative (n=7). There were seven instances of accepting a lesser alternative. Victor enrolled in a communications course which was "kind of similar" to the theatrical production school he wanted, then worked at a communications company to earn a living. When asked to make a production about a personal adventure of a client, he reluctantly agreed to avoid "cutting ties with the company" and losing a "lucrative and creative" relationship. Unemployed, he agreed to work without contractual protection on a celebrity-focused theatrical production, which resulted in not getting paid. Unable to secure work in her new field, Susan accepted a job coaching role whose unsuccessful clients made her miserable. When Helen lost a promotion at a career centre, she stayed as assistant director despite ongoing conflicts, and then self-demoted into a career counsellor to avoid conflict.

Trusted the Process (n=2). There were two instances of "trusting the process." When Peter decided to do an MBA, "I didn't give it too much thought... I'm going to trust life and trust the process, as they say." Leonard entered science rather than social science because of the two universities he applied to, only the science one accepted him.

Summary of Concepts from Career Transitions

The following Tables 5.20 through 5.24 summarize the concepts emerging from career transition cases for individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences.

Table P.20

Summary of Individual Concepts from Career Transition

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Power	authority to make decisions about pursuing or ending a venture in which the participant might play a role	high	control a venture invest in learning engage a service join professional association	low	employment gig-based work
Freedom	the ability to structure and modify work according to values and preferences	high	align work with values control place, schedule, workload control tasks	low	comply with tasks compromise values
Scope	degree of focus in career choices	wide	expand a role manage a business explore career options create preferred role confront expanded responsibility	narrow	accept non-preferred role enrol in training accept preferred role
Identity	subjective sense of membership in a group	belonging	external validation personal habits desire to become past roles relationships	excluding	perceived lack of fit internal contradiction external invalidation traumatic loss
Arousal	subjective emotional state in relation to a life or work experience	encouraging	enjoy a role attracted to a role encouraged by potential of role initially relieved by role	undermining	dislike experience anxious about failure lost or devalued

Table P.21*Summary of Social Concepts from Career Transition*

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Referral Style	approach used to develop contacts for work or support	active survey	targeted networking general networking	passive familiarity	colleagues and clients friends and acquaintances family and lovers classmates and educators service providers avoiding familiar contacts
Priority Alignment	how similar interests and values are among members of a relationship regardless of roles	high	shared interests valued experience or ability supported general success facilitated cooperation supported specific goal.	low	diverging interests, priorities undermining interactions undermined a goal disregard of experience, value
Member Agency	distribution of power and resources among members of a relationship to advance in their desired directions	balanced	sought rebalance of power power shared to them power shared from them	unbalanced	had or created dependence relinquished power wanted more power
Trust	the basis on which participants expected the surrender of power, control and resources	proved	suspend based on performance proved from work proved from interaction	unproved	gave without proof expected or received without proof

Table P.22*Summary of Environmental Concepts from Career Transition*

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Market opportunity	the demand in a community for products and services that supported a kind of role	supportive	ongoing needs expansion addressing challenges	undermining	failed to connect changed expectations
Resource availability	ability to access assets and services to pursue a role	high	access training resources network connections helpful suppliers financial support	low	financial gap supplier gap
Local Qualification	location-specific consequence of a participant's ability or status	helping	language ability enabling status, background	hindering	disabling status, background language deficit
Feedback tempo	timing for participants to experience validating results from the environment	short	manageable incoming work validation in the moment	long	validation too infrequent required persisting, adapting seemed unachievable
Presentation	how well the appearance of an organization or resource reflected actual qualities	consistent	Fulfilment of expectations safety or dependability	inconsistent	undermined expectations disrupted safety, dependability
Stretch	degree to which travel is required to engage with an opportunity or resource	high	changed country or continent changed region changed city	low	same city same organization same neighbourhood own home

Table P.23*Summary of Chance Concepts from Career Transition*

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Engagement with chance	how participants monitored events within their boundaries and took action	high	explored options pursued training, support indicated interest in role built own venture accepted offer based on past demonstrated competence prioritized family support	low	lacked awareness, contingency avoided engagement
Alignment of engagement with results	how well a level of engagement with chance supported a participant's goals	high	acceptance aligns needs acceptance not align needs achieved fit in a role bridged to new role "stars were aligned"	low	betrayal of expectations unsatisfying role business failure lack of fit to get role crisis of confidence lack of supportive resources

Table P.24
Summary of Decision-Making Concepts from Career Transition

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Personal value	participant's interpretation of the implications of obstacles when pursuing a role	developed	built on past embraced learning while doing adapted to achieve success sought insight from mentor pursued learning to change managed negative arousal	innate	invalidated by circumstances validated by circumstances pursued validation avoided invalidation
Change approach	participant's motivation for changing a role	purposeful	improve identity fit improve arousal fit improve freedom fit improve power fit improve scope fit improve social trust	submitting	perceived no choice avoided failure accepted lesser alternative "trusted the process"

Appendix Q: Concepts Emerging from Interaction Cases

This appendix reports concepts emerging from the three interaction cases.

Concepts Emerging From Interaction Cases

Each case in Chapter Four included a narrative of the interactions of participants during the group interview of the Completer. To explain the nature of those interactions, a constant-comparison analysis was performed on each statement in those cases to determine emerging concepts. This section reports the emerging interaction concepts, their quantitative strengths, and illustrative quotes. These concepts were used to form activity systems to explain the interactions of the participants.

What Was the Nature of Interactions Among the Participants?

Participant interactions related to collecting data, managing the interview relationships, making and judging meaning, and applying what was learned. The following key concepts emerged from the statements in the interaction cases: probing, relating, tensioning, utilizing, judging, and applying.

Probing. Probing emerged as a participant's request for information. Open probes were questions or prompts seeking an unlimited response. Closed probes were questions that could be answered with yes, no, or a limited number of options. The strength of coding is shown in Table Q.1

Table Q.1
Strength of Coding for Probing

Open		Closed		Total Probing	
Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
3	18 (51%)	3	17 (49%)	3	35 (100%)

Open. Open probing occurred when participants sought unlimited responses about transition issues, job tasks, lifestyle changes, common experiences, and general background.

Transition Issues (n=9). There were nine instances of open probing about transition issues. Peter appreciated Wanda's transition story but asked, "How to put it on a resume?" and when she described her process, he followed up with "So it was a new resume about?" Peter recounted his many tasks as an entrepreneur and asked, "What do you transfer from that?" Victor asked about Susan's first big break in her career: "How did that opportunity come about?" and then "What was the moment that you actually felt, okay this really does fit?" He noted Susan's reference to anxiety and asked, "I'm wondering how big a hurdle that was... how you overcame that... what got you through that?" He reflected on Susan's story and said, "I'd be super curious to hear about... what you see networking to be and what you think you've learned about networking in terms of what your skills are and how they bloomed?" Leonard asked Helen about her transition from private industry to university: "I am curious how universities came into play." He also asked, "Tell me something about your most interesting, spectacular perhaps, failures," and followed-up with "Tell me about the roses, or the gifts, from this major challenge."

Job Tasks (n=5). There were five instances of open probing about job tasks. Victor asked Susan, "What are you consulting... what are your tasks?" then asked for "a specific example... which would give me a really good sense of... change management." When Susan described her role, he asked, "How do you then compile that information so that both sides feel like they've been actively heard?" and "How do you compile it all into the metrics so that management understands?" He later asked, "What would you say are the three main ingredients for you to be good at your job?" then inquired generally about her undergraduate study and when she did her Master's. Leonard asked Helen about her semi-retirement services counselling high school students applying for university: "You say you help them with the application. What aspects do you particularly enjoy?"

Lifestyle Changes (n=2). There were two instances of open probing about lifestyle changes. Leonard asked Helen about her commitment to yoga practice: "How the change came about, this last year and a half?" He also asked her about her shift away from workaholism: "If there has been indeed, how that came about and how are you feeling about that?"

Common Experiences (n=1). There was one instance of open probing to establish common experiences. Peter recapped his own business failure then asked:

So, at what point did you did you feel like that? Also, when did you feel that first of all? And at what point did you start losing that trust in you and saying, okay, I need to do this, I'm going to leave all that stuff to other people, and I'm going to concentrate on this now? At what point did that happen?

General background (n=1). There was one instance of open probing to learn general background. When Peter provided a cursory introduction, Wanda said "I would love to know something about him because I know he'll know everything about me."

Closed. Closed probing occurred when participants sought confirmation or details about job tasks, common experiences, transition issues, and lifestyle changes.

Job Tasks (n=7). There were seven instances of closed probing about job tasks. Peter probed for details about Wanda's Master's and her post-entrepreneurial work, asking for the title of her thesis, the meaning of an acronym, whether she did web creation work, and confirmed she was not a programmer. When Susan described a sample role in change management, Victor followed up by asking about details such as the size of the organization and how many needed to be trained. When Susan described her reports, Victor asked how many people she would interview and how long the interviews were. He shifted back to her education, asking about her second year Master's "Was it more project based?" and whether her thesis was about change management. Then he inquired, "Are there any negativities to you in the job you're in now?" and "Does it ever feel like... it's almost a token position or it's paying lip service to something that management doesn't really want?" He checked for a definition of consulting: "does that just basically mean there's a gig?" When Susan described her use of information interviewing, he asked whether it was during her Master's study.

Common Experiences (n=5). There were five instances of closed probing about common experiences. Wanda asked Peter about his MBA, "Did you feel it would give you the credentials you needed to go out and sell yourself as a consultant?" She described her own willingness as an entrepreneur to talk to people seeking advice and said to Peter, "You probably responded to them, too." When explaining her challenges communicating in French, Susan asked Victor about

his own language-related challenges. Helen paused to ask Leonard, "You smiled when I said I'm a cyclist. Do you like to bicycle?" At the end, she shared her experiences touring Leonard's country and asked, "What part of [country] are you?"

Transition Issues (n=4). There were four instances of closed probing about transition issues. When Wanda named an employer that her professor wanted her to approach, Peter said, "You don't fit in that box, right?" Victor asked Susan if she was able to work during her Master's, and asked follow-ups about the timing of her jobs. He also followed up about Susan's imposter syndrome at her new workplace, asking "Did you have allies there?" When prompted to ask questions, Victor said, "Just the name of that career coach."

Lifestyle Changes (n=1). There was one instance of closed probing about lifestyle changes. Leonard asked Helen about her shift away from workaholism, "Is that true that there has been a shift, the way I am feeling it, or maybe its reality is very different?"

Relating. Relating emerged as participants comparing themselves to each other. Relating was resonating when participants highlighted similarities, and distinguishing when they highlighted differences. The strength of coding is shown in Table Q.2.

Table Q.2
Strength of Coding for Relating

Resonating		Distinguishing		Total Relating	
Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
3	19 (83%)	1	4 (17%)	3	23 (100%)

Resonating. Participants were resonating when they shared an experience, feelings, tasks, hobbies, or context.

Shared Experience (n=6). There were six instances of sharing an experience. After Peter introduced himself by sharing the loss of his business, Wanda said, "Many things you said resonated with me." When Wanda asked if her story was helpful, Peter said, "We have a lot of similarities." After describing her goal of using a Master's degree to earn credentials, Wanda asked, "Did you feel it would give you the credentials that you needed... as a consultant?" and Peter responded, "Not only as a consultant, but even to get a job." Wanda noted that her goal of earning a Master's was not to help others but to help her resolve "how do I use all those years of experience?" and Peter responded, "Yeah, yeah." When Peter described how as an entrepreneur he "wore all the hats," Wanda described how as an entrepreneur she "was a good system person because I would go into each system" and Peter responded, "Yeah exactly, or master puppeteer." Wanda addressed lining up information interviews by referring to when she had been approached as a business person, "if somebody contacted me and said... 'I would love to meet with you'... I responded... You probably responded to them, too," and Peter said, "Yeah, yeah."

Shared Feeling (n=5). There were five instances of sharing a feeling. After Wanda described a project that excited her after her career change, Peter responded "It sounds like an interesting project and it shows that it comes from the heart." As Wanda described the rise and fall of her business and mentioned its growth and said, "I hoped," he echoed, "You hoped," and when she described an interdependent business partnership, Peter responded, "You balance."

Peter focused on Wanda's business downfall saying, "you loved what you did, right? ... I can totally understand that feeling, I was there too... because it happened to me." Wanda described the impact of losing her business as "a terrible loss of purpose," and Peter responded, "It's your baby, right?" and she responded, "Yeah, it was me, I was it." Peter tried to explain the difference between selling as an entrepreneur versus as a salesman by relating to Wanda: "when it was your company, when you were going out and selling, I'm sure it was from the heart."

Shared Tasks (n=4). There were four instances of sharing tasks. Victor explained his many probes about Susan's interview process by saying, "it's actually similar to some of the jobs I've done... interviewing...thematically grouping it, presenting it back to people." Victor related her form of work to his own by confirming "consulting" for her meant a "gig" or a temporary engagement. Victor and Susan resonated over the difficulty of writing in another language, and a software tool they both used. At the end Victor noted how he responded to Susan, "the more you spoke, the more I was like, well, I understand that we have this in common... we do these things that are similar."

Sharing Hobbies (n=3). There were three instances of sharing hobbies. Leonard, a yoga practitioner, sought details from Helen on how she had become more disciplined in practice. Helen noticed that Leonard had smiled when she mentioned bicycle tours and asked, "Do you like to bicycle?" and he agreed, "I do, but not nearly close to the level of cycling you described." Helen noted her own travels in Europe, where Leonard was from, and how much she'd enjoyed them.

Shared Context (n=1). There was one instance of sharing a context. Leonard, who was transitioning from university work to private coaching asked, "I am curious how universities came into play... you were somewhere between the business or the entrepreneurial context and then academia comes into play."

Distinguishing. Participants were distinguishing when, despite shared experiences, they rationalized making different decisions.

Rationalizing Differences in Decisions (n=4). There were four instances of rationalizing differences in decisions. Wanda noted that her business and Peter's were different, but both depended on people, which is why she chose an organizational development Master's rather than the MBA he chose. Peter noted that "I didn't give it too much thought" when he applied to an MBA and suggested that Wanda had been "lucky... to make that difference" between Master's degrees. He explained his belief that his entrepreneurial experience was only valuable for starting another business, and that Wanda was "lucky" to find her "next chapter" but he had no clue how to do it. Despite their shared experiences, Peter insisted that sales was "the only kind of transferable knowledge I was able to take with me" such that his resume focused on sales and blocked other opportunities.

Tensioning. Tensioning emerged as a participant's engagement with emotional responses during the interview. Tensioning was settling when it related to reducing tension, and unsettling when it related to increasing tension. The strength of coding is shown in Table Q.3.

Table Q.3
Strength of Coding for Tensioning

Settling	Unsettling	Total Tensioning
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Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
2	15 (56%)	3	12 (44%)	3	27 (100%)

Settling. Tensioning was settling when participants were laughing, empathizing, confirming value, or re-balancing.

Laughing (n=7). There were seven instances of laughing. When I offered that Wanda's bad experiences with experts might explain her aversion to being an expert, she stopped me and acknowledged a new insight and shared a laugh with Peter. When Peter revealed his MBA thesis as "Why do entrepreneurs go back and get an MBA" Wanda laughed and said, "that's great." When I offered that Wanda must've been angry with the experts who failed her, she responded, "I never think of being angry with them... and I didn't patch the whole thing, like experts, until here... which is really funny", and Peter laughed. When I reminded Peter of his complaint during the Seeker interview of being a caged animal, Peter laughed. At the end of the interview Wanda confessed "That was like [laughs] wow. Thank you for listening so carefully." After I checked on Helen when she had shared her worst moments, she said, "You traumatized me with your question [Leonard]... just kidding" and all three participants laughed. Leonard reflected to Helen, "I got a feeling that for long stretches of your professional life, you were very, very busy" and Helen laughed and nodded.

Empathizing (n=4). There were four instances of empathizing. When Peter revisited details of his business downfall, Wanda empathized, "Got it. It sounds terrifying," which led to Peter wanting to talk more with her outside the interview. Peter empathized with Wanda several times: when she described the long time to create a new resume he said, "Of course" and when she described it as an exuberant experience, he said "I'm sure it was," and when she named a consulting firm her professor wanted her to join, Peter said "You don't fit in that box, right?" to which she initially agreed. When Peter described his current misery, Wanda empathized, "It's hard to sell something that you don't feel passionate about." She further empathized, "That's interesting how entrepreneurs get pegged as salespeople."

Confirming Value (n=2). There were two instances of confirming the value of the interaction. When Wanda asked if her story was helpful, Peter responded "I think it's incredible... we have a lot of similarities... it's super interesting... I admire what you did." When Helen asked if her story was useful, Leonard responded, "Oh, absolutely. Absolutely."

Restoring (n=2). There were two instances of restoring. When Wanda objected to Peter's perfunctory introduction because he would know so much about her, he shared many more details, which resulted in Wanda saying, "Thank you... you made a good match... Many things [Peter] said resonated with me." After Helen shared her worst failure, Leonard asked about "the roses or the gifts from this major challenge" which led Helen to describe how she covered her feelings, remained positive, and received compliments about professionalism.

Unsettling. Tensioning was unsettling when participants were checking value, demurring from participation, addressing imbalanced disclosure, or recoiling.

Checking Value (n=4). There were four instances of checking value. Wanda paused her story to ask, "I hope I'm not saying too much, is this okay?" She later paused again to note, "I hope it's helpful for people," and "Does it help you, [Peter] to hear about other people's

catastrophes?" Helen asked Leonard, "You're getting something helpful, useful out of this?" After she shared her worst memories, I asked her if the meeting was positive or interesting for her.

Demurring (n=3). There were three instances of demurring when prompted by me to ask questions. When asked to respond to Wanda's unfolding story, Peter demurred, "Wow, there's just so much." When asked to respond to Wanda, Peter again demurred, "So many things again... I can ask a lot of questions and say a lot of things but no, it's okay. We're good." but he subsequently dug into their mutual failures in business. I encouraged Leonard to ask questions and he said, "I could continue listening to [Helen] without any question for a very long time, it's fascinating" but he subsequently asked about her failures.

Imbalanced Disclosure (n=3). There were three instances of sensing imbalance in disclosure. When Peter introduced himself only by name without his background, Wanda responded, "It feels a little strange to me to not know anything about him... he'll know everything about me." Victor acknowledged Susan's positive experiences in her new career and then asked, "Are there any negativities?" and followed-up with "This would be a little inflammatory... does it ever feel like... a token position... that management doesn't really want?" Leonard said, "I'm hearing a lot of success in your story," then asked Helen, "Tell me something about your most interesting, spectacular perhaps, failures" which led to a lengthy description about losing a promotion.

Recoiling (n=2). There were two instances of recoiling. When Peter said he thought the only way to use his experience was to start another company, Wanda responded with a shocked exhalation and shaking her head. When Victor summed up Susan's career as a salesperson, she responded, "I think it's incredibly funny that you refer to me as someone who works in sales... I hate sales" and "I guess for me that's a taboo word."

Utilizing. Utilizing emerged as a participant's attempt to make meaning by offering a statement about what they had heard. Utilizing was reflecting when participants referred to what they had heard. Utilizing was building when participants offered something new based on what they had heard. The strength of coding is shown in Table Q.4.

Table Q.4
Strength of Coding for Utilizing

	Reflecting		Building		Total Utilizing
Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
3	9 (18%)	3	42 (82%)	3	51 (100%)

Reflecting. Utilizing was reflecting when participants referred to something they had heard to set up a follow-up question, or provided a summary of what they had heard.

Referring (n=7). There were seven instances of briefly referring to what was heard before asking a follow-up question. Peter summarized Wanda's downfall, "You had the business, and you were so happy, right? And you loved it, you loved what you did, right? ... At what point did you start losing that trust in you and saying, okay, I need to do this, I'm going to leave all that stuff to other people..." Victor said to Susan, "you're interviewing both sides" then asked for

more detail. He referred to Susan's Master's, "You said the second year, you guys were focusing more so it was less intensive, but was it more project based?" He summarized what he'd learned about Susan's new work, "you've talked about how all of the experiences you've had with interviewing people has a real impact on why you're good at your job, but I'm assuming there's more..." He referred to her career start, "you stated that you've had... issues with anxiety... what got you through that?" Leonard referred to Helen's retirement work with students, "You say you help them with the application. What aspects do you particularly enjoy?" He noted Helen's transition, saying "I am curious how universities came into play. It sounds like in the earlier parts of your career, you were somewhere between the business or the entrepreneurial context and then academia comes into play at some point, and it stays into play for a long time."

Summarizing (n=2). There were two instances of summarizing what was heard. Peter summarized what he learned about information interviews before noting all the barriers to doing it: "It's just basically having coffee with someone and exploring and having a discussion based on active hearing and all that stuff." When Leonard did not share his career path during his introduction, I summarized what we had discussed during the Seeker interview.

Building. Utilizing was building when participants labelled something they heard, or synthesized observations from what they heard, or when I proposed observations or contrasts.

Labelling (n=18). There were eighteen instances of labelling something that was heard. When Wanda described her enjoyment of her thesis work, Peter said, "It shows that it comes from the heart." When she described the helpful differences between herself and her business partner, Peter said, "You balance." When she contrasted her broad approach with her partner's nitty-gritty focus, Peter said, "There's a bird's eye view." When she described entrepreneurial life as never lacking purpose, Peter said "It's like it's your baby, right? It's like a child." When she described a kind of role for helping someone solve business problems, Peter said, "As a mentor." Peter described Wanda as "lucky" to find a Master's program other than an MBA. He again described her as "lucky" to find a way to connect her past and future careers. When Wanda described how she made a new resume, Peter said, "You did a Kaizen." When Wanda described an employer her professor wanted her to approach, Peter said, "You don't fit in that box, right?" When Peter tried to explain his dissatisfaction with selling for someone else, he described Wanda's efforts selling for her own business as, "I'm sure it was from the heart." Wanda suggested to Peter, "You weren't maybe a salesman. You were what you were doing... That's interesting how entrepreneurs get pegged as salespeople." When Wanda described herself as a systems person because had tweaked many aspects of her business, Peter responded, "Or master puppeteer." Victor asked Susan whether her job ever felt like it was "a token position or it's paying lip service to something that management doesn't really want?" He asked, "Consulting... does that just basically mean there's a gig?" Susan referred to our group interview as, "basically networking... bringing two people together," and she said to Victor, "if I meet someone who says I need a theatrical producer, I'll say... let me hook you up." Victor referred to Susan's experience with a career coach as "a real eye-opening moment for you," and labelled her entire career as being "a salesperson." Helen compared her attendance at a businesswomen's association to our interview saying, "they were kind of doing what you and I are doing here, [Leonard]. They're exchanging life stories." Leonard noted that in Helen's career path, "I got a feeling that for long stretches of your professional life, you were very, very busy."

Synthesized observations (n=14). There were fourteen instances of synthesizing observations from what was heard. Peter interrupted after Wanda described the growth of her

business and the end of her ability to homeschool by saying, "You didn't expect it to grow to where it went that quick." After Peter described his reasons for an MBA Wanda said, "did you feel it would give you the credentials... to go out and sell yourself as a consultant?" Peter reflected, "it's interesting... how she utilized all her experiences... to something she's doing today, which I had never really thought about before. How can I take my 15 years of being an entrepreneur? I always thought okay, I need to start another company... But no... I need to find a job that fulfills me..." Victor reflected on Susan's job tasks, "it's actually similar to some of the jobs I've done... interviewing... thematically grouping it, presenting it back to people in an argument." He synthesized her satisfaction with her new career although she hadn't mentioned it, asking "What was the moment that you actually felt, okay this really does fit?" He attempted further syntheses of her work as "Essentially you're talking to all the decision-makers" and "You're part of the dialogue as the implementation takes place." Susan proposed, "One of the great things about our roles [Victor] is that we can show the empathy... because we're neutral." Victor offered a synthesis of Susan's transition:

when you unpack it, it's actually, well I was working with my friend. And she needed something. And her and I learned together. And I learned from her. And somebody I knew was a career coach... it was all about your human relationships... It's all about networking.

Victor reflected on her help from a job coach saying, "I find that massive... you'd been doing all these other things that weren't what you're doing now, and yet you're using all of the skills." Victor acknowledged Susan's point about skillful job coaching by saying, "it's like knowing a good financial advisor. So, you can have a good one. You can have a really bad one. And they can take you in different directions." He reflected on Susan's hairdresser connecting Susan with a new client as "an example of people's empathy." He explained Susan's success in chatting with successful practitioners from LinkedIn as "people who are at that level are willing to engage... because they want to see what that person can bring or not bring to the institution." At the end, Victor summarized Susan's career path from beer sales to call centre consulting to change management as

you created those opportunities for yourself... you're giving conferences... you're always kind of selling... you're kind of selling back to management and the employees... but... the sales job... is more and more aligned with who you are personally... your own values and what you want.

Leonard noted a shift in Helen's workload "You used the word workaholic. I'm curious, how does that play out today? When I hear you describe where you are today, I get a very, very different vibe about how you manage your energy and how much work you get."

Researcher Proposals (n=10). There were ten instances of my proposing observations and contrasts for comment. I proposed that Wanda rejected expertise because of her negative experiences with experts. I contrasted Peter and Wanda's use of a Master's degree, as Peter "looking for something that was missing" and Wanda reflecting on her past and seeking a credential that would use what she had. I proposed that Wanda's past career challenges became resources to help clients while using her training from her Master's program. I proposed that Wanda's vulnerability to expertise in classrooms contrasted with the anger she must feel for experts failing her in business. I contrasted Wanda's efforts to build on her life experiences with Peter's attempt to package himself narrowly as a salesman. I compared Victor's persistence to

achieve various career goals with Susan's persistence in securing her Master's. I compared Susan and Victor's similar values employed in different industries. I contrasted career coaching and mentoring and invited their comment, then contrasted the exploratory nature of free informational interviews with the advisory nature of paid career coaching. With Leonard and Helen, I proposed that they both met with key transition experiences through loved ones and that the loss of that loved one had undermined Helen's transition into consulting.

Judging. Judging was the response of one participant to utilizing statements made by another. Judging was affirming when a participant agreed with utilizing statements or experienced insight. Judging was revising when a participant corrected or refined what they heard. The strength of coding is shown in Table Q.5

Table Q.5
Strength of Coding for Judging

Affirming		Revising		Total Judging	
Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
3	18 (56%)	2	14 (44%)	3	32 (100%)

Affirming. Judging was affirming when participants indicated agreement or insight with what they had heard.

Agreement (n=13). There were thirteen instances of agreeing with a summary or proposal. When Peter proposed that Wanda and her business partner had balanced, she said, "Right, yeah." When Peter proposed that in Wanda's business partnership she had "a bird's eye view," she said, "Yeah." When Peter described Wanda's business as her child, she said, "Yeah, it was me. I was it." When Wanda suggested that Peter was not a salesman, he said "Exactly. I wasn't, exactly." When I proposed that Peter was restrictively packaging himself as a salesperson, Peter said, "1000 percent." When Victor compared consulting to a "gig" Susan confirmed that she was "an external pair of hands." When Victor called Susan's career coaching meeting "eye-opening" she responded, "Yeah, oh, definitely." When Victor proposed that a career coach had helped Susan use all of her previous skills in a new way, she agreed. When I proposed that information interviews were free and offered a different value than coaching, Susan agreed, and described her own interviews. When I summarized Leonard's career to help introduce him to Helen, Leonard agreed it was fair. When I proposed that Leonard and Helen had relied on relationships to trigger career explorations, Helen nodded throughout. When Leonard proposed that Helen was very busy in much of her career, she laughed and nodded. When he proposed that Helen had shifted away from workaholism, she agreed and explained how.

Insight (n=5). There were five instances of expressing an insight. When I proposed that Wanda avoided being an expert because experts had failed her, she said, "That's an interesting point. I only thought... 'I don't know anything' but you're correct." When I proposed that Wanda's choice of Master's reflected her ability to help others navigate through experiences similar to hers, she said, "I'm not used to thinking about it in terms of... how I can help others avoid what happened to me... but it's true... thank-you for helping me to think about it like that." When I proposed that Wanda's difficulty with expertise might arise from experts destroying her business, she said, "I didn't patch the whole thing, like experts, until here, I guess... I wouldn't have

thought about how the experts failed me... sounds dumb but I didn't." Peter said "it's interesting... how [Wanda] utilized all her experiences... to something she's doing today, which I had never really thought about before... I need to find a job that fulfills me." When Susan described the potential of career coaching Victor said, "I find that massive... you'd been doing all these other things that weren't what you're doing now, and yet you're using all of the skills."

Revising. Judging was revising when participants refined or corrected another's utilizing statement.

Refined (n=7). There were seven instances of refining a proposal. When Peter proposed that Wanda's enjoyable Master's project "comes from the heart" she refined, "it really satisfies my brain, too." When he proposed that her business had grown unexpectedly, she refined, "I hoped." When Wanda suggested that Peter pursued an MBA to be a consultant, Peter refined, "Not only as a consultant but even to get a job... you're right that it would give me more credentials... at the same time, I needed some tools in my toolbox." When I proposed that Wanda's challenging experiences were helpful resources to serve clients, she refined, "It's not just a compassion that I would bring to people but also that deep understanding of how these things can happen." When I proposed that Wanda must be angry with the experts who had failed her, she refined, "I don't think I'm angry enough." When Peter suggested that Wanda didn't fit with a specific consulting firm, she refined, "Maybe when I finished school.... I think I can work anywhere." When Victor summarized change management as interviewing, theming and presenting, Susan refined, "and trying to keep your own emotions out of it... that's the big part of the training."

Corrected (n=7). There were seven instances of correcting a proposal. When Peter asked when Wanda had decided to "leave all that stuff to other people," she corrected, "I didn't really leave it to other people... I would argue... but I acquiesced." When Peter labelled Wanda's desired helper as a mentor, she corrected, "Not really a mentor... somebody who helps you do it... like a good coach." When I proposed that Wanda had entered her Master's so she could provide the services she had needed as a businessperson, she corrected, "I never thought of it like that. I thought, how do I use all these years of experience?" When Peter proposed that information interviews required people who shared his desired career path, Wanda corrected, "I don't agree... I also want to know about everybody else... there are things that I never even thought of that people are doing." When Victor proposed that change management was talking to decision-makers during an implementation, Susan corrected that she talked to all stakeholders, and it was before an implementation. When Victor proposed that change management could be a "token position or it's paying lip service," Susan corrected, "No... I cost too much." When Victor proposed that Susan was a salesperson she corrected, "I hate sales" and "for me that's a taboo word."

Applying. Applying emerged as participants addressing actions that can be taken to resolve career challenges. Applying was advancing when participants explored how career challenges were navigated. Applying was impeding when they raised barriers to exploration. The strength of coding is shown in Table Q.6

Table Q.6
Strength of Coding for Applying

Advancing	Impeding	Total Applying
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Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances	Cases	Instances
3	20 (69%)	3	9 (31%)	3	29 (100%)

Advancing. Participants were advancing when they bridged transition gaps in a narrative, addressed objections, or sought additional contact.

Bridged Transition Gaps (n=10). There were ten instances of seeking to bridge transition gaps in a career narrative. Victor explained that when he was confused by Susan's story he chose to "listen. I'll try to pick it up. And the more you spoke..." answering his probes, "I understand that we have this in common... we do these things that are similar." Victor asked Susan "were you able to work while you were doing your Master's?" and Susan explained how she balanced work, childcare and studying. When Susan mentioned her first engagement in her new career Victor asked, "How did that opportunity come about?" and she described how it came from someone she met doing a class project. Victor asked Susan about working in her new career, "What was the moment that you actually felt, okay this really does fit?" and Susan described what she was doing and her enjoyment. Victor noted that the gap between graduation and her first major client was "a huge jump. You stated that you've had... issues with anxiety," and he asked, "what got you through that?" and after Susan explained her techniques, Victor asked, "Did you have allies" at her new job, and Susan described helpful guidance from her boss. Victor reflected that the steps of Susan's transition were "all about your human relationships" and asked, "What you see networking to be and what you think you've learned about networking?" and Susan described how people can bring each other together in "a win-win situation" rather than "always asking for a favour." Leonard asked how Helen moved from business into the university world, which prompted Helen to recap her career path. Leonard noted, "I'm hearing a lot of success... and that's really encouraging" and asked, "tell me something about your most interesting, spectacular perhaps, failures," which prompted Helen to share her biggest career crisis. Leonard inquired about Helen's shift from being a "workaholic" to "a very, very different vibe about how you manage your energy and how much work you get" and asked "how that came about, and how are you feeling about that?" which prompted Helen to reflect on her family work ethic, then explain the differing workloads of her self-employment and university job.

Addressed Objections (n=7). There were seven instances of addressing objections to career actions. When Peter wondered how to address a transition on his resume, Wanda explained her process: "I took some stacks of sticky pads, and I cleared a whole wall of my house and I put down every single bloody thing I'd ever done" in order to "capture some of what I've done in my new resume." When Peter claimed that after running a business where he "wore all the hats" he could only be a salesman, Wanda explained that she presented herself as someone who looked at the big picture and asked, "How can I improve the system or the outcome or the process?" When Peter doubted being able to find people for information interviews, I noted that Wanda was an example of the many challenges Peter himself had faced. Wanda also noted that information interviews were opportunities to "present yourself a little bit differently" each time to test a changing identity, and to learn about "work... that you never heard of" that "opens up possibilities and... connections for work... building a more robust network." She reassured that, "people love to do it... that's what shocks me." When Peter protested that he would have to find

similar people to himself, Wanda said, "I don't agree... I also want to know about everybody else, too, because there are things that I never even thought of, that people are doing." During Susan's interview, when I noted that information interviews were a valuable free alternative to using a career coach, she explained how she had located and received helpful chats and networking connections from practitioners on LinkedIn.

Sought Additional Contact (n=4). There were four instances of seeking additional contact. After Wanda empathized with the downfall of Peter's business, he said, "I'd love to talk to you more outside of this," and Wanda responded, "Sure, sure. Yeah, it would be very interesting to talk." At the end of the interview Wanda said, "Please don't hesitate to be in touch with me," and Peter said, "I will for sure." Victor sought the name of Susan's career coach whose help he found to be "massive in terms of, you'd been doing all these other things... and yet you're using all of the skills." At the end of the interview, Helen asked where Leonard lived and said, "That's wonderful... I might have some contacts for you there."

Impeding. Participants were impeding when they raised objections to career actions, or withheld information about their own career challenges.

Raised Objections (n=6). There were six instances of raising objections to career actions. Peter noted "It's interesting... how [Wanda] utilized all her experiences... which I had never really thought about before" but then he stated "That's what I learned... I need to find a job that fulfills me, but how do I do that? Zero clue... I'm still miserable. Maybe you were lucky... So yeah, very interesting." After Wanda explained the process of reworking her resume to support her career transition, Peter insisted, "my resume now screams sales because that's the only kind of transferable knowledge I was able to take with me... Anyhow, yeah, that's good. It's interesting." When Wanda empathized about the difficulty of transferring sales skills to products he didn't care about, Peter said "What do you do when you don't have a choice? When you have to have a job and you have to work... I'm doing sales but it's not me." When Wanda empathized that entrepreneurs can get reduced into salespeople, Peter insisted "What else can you transfer?" and when she explained that she presented herself as a systems person, Peter protested that when it came to applying for jobs, "you don't have that one skill that you've been doing for 10 years. You're not a specialist so therefore you don't fit." With respect to interviewing more people about transitions, Peter protested, "We need to find the people, and the time, and they have to be willing to share," and when I noted that Wanda was an example who had helped him, Peter protested, "But she is not somebody I'm trying to get a job from." After Wanda explained the benefits of information interviews, Peter protested that, "you have to find people that you have things in common with... that look like you want, that have kind of your path."

Withheld Information (n=3). There were three instances of Seekers withholding information about their own career challenges and goals. Peter's first introduction provided his name and that he wanted to know "what I want to do with the rest of my life," without disclosing his career path or challenges. Victor's introduction reviewed his major accomplishments as a theatrical producer without sharing his career dilemma or any interest in transition. Leonard's introduction briefly noted his transition from science to coaching without addressing his reasons for change or any goals or struggles.

Summary of Concepts From Interactions

A summary of the concepts emerging from interaction cases appears in Table Q.7

Table Q.7*Summary of Concepts from Interactions*

Concept	Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Probing	requesting information	open (unlimited response)	transition issues job tasks lifestyle changes common experience general background	closed (limited response)	job tasks common experience transition issues lifestyle changes
Relating	comparing selves to each other	resonating (highlighted similarities)	shared experience shared feeling shared tasks shared hobbies shared context	distinguishing	rationalizing differences
Tensioning	engaging with emotional responses	settling (reducing tension)	laughing empathizing confirming value restoring	unsettling (increasing tension)	checking value demurring imbalanced disclosure recoiling
Utilizing	making meaning by offering statements	building (offer something new based on what heard)	referring summarizing	reflecting (refer to what heard)	labelling syntheses researcher proposal
Judging	responding to utilizing statements	affirming (agreement or insight)	agreement insight	refining (correcting or refining)	refined corrected
Applying	addressing actions to resolve challenges	advancing (explored how challenges navigated)	bridged gaps addressed objections sought contact	impeding (created barriers to exploration)	raised objections withheld info

Appendix R: Individual Career Activity Systems

This appendix reports the activity theory analysis of each participant's career path.

Individual Career Activity Systems

First, I present the activity systems of each of the three Seekers, then I present them for each of the three Completers. The analysis relies on the concepts that emerged from the career cases. I fitted those concepts to the activity system structure as shown in Table R.1.

Table R.1
Career Transition Concepts Fitted to the Activity System Structure

AT Element	AT Definition	Concept Criteria	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Extreme 2
Outcome	Desired result	subjectively-defined career goal	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Object	Problem space of motivating concern and raw materials	subjectively-defined approach to achieve the Outcome	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Subject	Driver of the activity	subjective interpretations of career experiences	Identity	a person's subjective sense of membership in a group	belonging	excluding
			Arousal	a person's subjective emotional state in relation to a life or work experience	encouraging	undermining
Instruments	Tools used by the Subject, comprising unconscious operations (habits to overcome resistance) and conscious actions (goals and strategy)	habits and actions used to navigate career decisions	Scope	a participant's degree of focus in their career choices	wide	narrow
			Referral style	approach participants used to develop contacts for work or support	active survey	passive familiarity
			Trust	the basis on which participants expected the surrender of power, control and resources	proved	unproved
			Engagement with Chance	how participants monitored events within their boundaries and took action.	high	low
			Personal Value	a participant's interpretation of the implications of obstacles when pursuing a role	developed	innate
			Change Approach	a participant's motivation for changing a role	purposeful	submitting
Rules	Constraints on the activity	limitations placed on career decisions	Power	the authority to make decisions about pursuing or ending a venture in which the participant might play a role	high	low
			Freedom	the ability, in relation to an established venture, to structure and modify work according to values and preferences	high	low
Community	Context of the activity	results of environmental engagement	Market opportunity	the demand in a community for products and services that supported a kind of role	supportive	undermining
			Resource availability	the participant's ability to access assets and services to pursue a role	high	low
			Feedback tempo	the timing for participants to experience validating results from the environment	short	long
			Presentation	how well the appearance of an organization or resource reflected its actual qualities	consistent	inconsistent

AT Element	AT Definition	Concept Criteria	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Extreme 2
			Stretch	the degree to which a participant needed to travel to engage with an opportunity or resource	high	low
			Local qualification	a location-specific consequence of a participant's level of ability	helping	hindering
			Chance alignment	how well the outcome of monitoring and addressing chance events supported a participant's goals	high	low
Division of Labour	Participants in the activity	results of social engagement	Priority alignment	how similar interests and values are among members of a relationship regardless of their roles	high	low
			Member agency	the distribution of power and resources among members of a relationship to allow them to advance in their desired directions	balanced	unbalanced

Activity Theory Analysis of Seekers

This section presents an activity theory analysis of the Seekers by presenting explanations of the career paths of Peter, Victor and Leonard.

How Does Activity Theory Explain Peter's Career Pathway? Peter's career path began with starting his own multimedia business. When his business failed, he pursued an MBA and took various jobs in purchasing and sales that left him unhappy. This section uses activity systems to explain how Peter navigated his challenges, with his first system shown in Table R.2.

First Career Activity. Peter began his career by pursuing the Outcome of being a boss. His Object comprised his approach: starting a business in the growing multimedia sector, and borrowing money, leasing an office, and purchasing equipment despite lacking any track record. As the Subject, his identity was belonging because "I always knew that I wanted to start a business and be a boss" where "I build it... I'm part of something." His arousal was encouraging because "I knew deep down inside it was going to work" and he experienced "how you feel when you're in love."

Peter used a variety of Instruments to pursue his desired Outcome. His scope was wide because he embraced multiple tasks in parallel businesses, noting "I'm going to get the clients... be part of the project... deliver... collect the money." With respect to engaging people into his Division of Labour to provide funding and co-workers, he relied on a passively-familiar referral style, and unproved trust. For instance, he sourced an investment from his parents and a loan from a bank despite having no proof of his ability to succeed, and in turn he trusted those with whom he started his businesses. Peter's engagement with chance in his Community was initially high because he took action to begin his business, and he chose an industry and location when "the good stars were aligned" for success. His confidence in success reflected a belief in his innate personal value rather than needing development over time. His change approach was purposeful because being an entrepreneur was "all I've known all my life."

As the boss, Peter set the Rules, enjoying the high power of starting a business, choosing its direction, and starting parallel businesses. He also had high freedom in deciding how to conduct his role such as avoiding "all the preparation, all the process" that "I hated to do and never did."

Peter's Community offered supportive market opportunity for the multimedia industry, high resource availability to provide funding, office space and equipment, and a short feedback

tempo that rewarded him with regular sales. He conducted his business with low stretch in his own community. Initially, his alignment with chance was high and his business provided income that supported a one-income household with regular vacations and multiple homes.

Peter's Division of Labour comprised his parents, work team, and first wife. Peter's priorities aligned with his parents (who supported his entrepreneurial efforts with a loan), and his work team (who shared his love of the business). His priority of taking risks to run his own business appeared to align with his first wife (who provided homemaking and childcare) when his business was financially successful. His member agency appeared to be unbalanced: his family loaned him money despite their lack of familiarity with his industry; he worked with others but was "the boss" managing a multitude of roles; and he was married but the sole income-earner with his wife dedicated to homemaking and childcare.

Table R.2
First Career Activity of Peter

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
Outcome		Be a boss
Object		start a business in multimedia by borrowing money, signing an office lease and buying equipment
Subject	Identity	Belonging
	Arousal	Encouraging
Instruments	Scope	Wide
	Referral style	Passively familiar
	Trust	Unproved
	Engagement with Chance	High
	Personal Value	Innate
	Change Approach	Purposeful
	Rules	Power
Freedom		High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive
	Resource availability	High
	Feedback tempo	Short
	Presentation	N/A
	Stretch	Low
	Local qualification	N/A
	Chance alignment	High
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High
	Member agency	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising from the First Career Activity. Peter started many businesses and initially experienced years of success. However, the failures of his businesses revealed contradictions within his career activity, as defined in Table R.3.

Table R.3
Kinds of Contradictions Related to Activity Systems

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Quaternary
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Stresses between use-value (functionality) and exchange-value (worth in trade)	Stresses between elements of a system (e.g. stresses between Rules and Instruments)	Stresses between one form of the activity and an expanded form with a broader Object and Outcome	Stresses between different activity systems (e.g. stresses between career navigation and employer recruiting)
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Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Consistent with the Outcome of his initial activity system, Peter started multiple parallel businesses to be "a boss" rather than engaging with the problems emerging with his original business. A primary contradiction arose between the use-value Peter experienced from applying his entrepreneurial skills to fulfill his identity, arousal and freedom, versus the low exchange-value he experienced from his failing businesses.

Instruments. Peter experienced contradictions between his Instruments and his Community. The decrease in market opportunities, resource availability and feedback tempo for Peter's businesses resulted in low alignment of Peter's efforts with chance. As a result, a contradiction arose with his low engagement with monitoring and adapting to his industry wherein he sank into financial ruin by "dragg[ing] it as long as I could."

Peter experienced contradictions between his Instruments and his Division of Labour. First, Peter jumped "all in" into parallel businesses then abandoned them when betrayed by the "wrong people." Their low priority alignment contradicted his passively-familiar referral style to find career contacts, and his dependence on unproved trust. Second, Peter's declining priority alignment with his wife contradicted his habit of low engagement with monitoring her unfulfilled needs for career and freedom.

Peter also experienced contradictions between his Instruments and the broader Community. The declining alignment of his business with success contradicted his low engagement with monitoring changes in his industry.

Second Career Activity. Burdened with a "ton of debt" Peter could no longer pursue an Outcome of being a boss by starting a business, which undermined the Outcome and Object of his current career activity and triggered the emergence of a second career activity.

Peter's Outcome expanded to finding a "decent job with a decent salary" while avoiding misery. To achieve his Outcome, Peter's Object expanded to marketing an isolated skill to multiple employers. Table R.4 compares the first and second career activities.

Changes in Subject. After losing his business, Peter's identity shifted to exclusion. When he couldn't secure a senior role. he started "banging my head against the wall... to reinvent myself." He refocused on sales because "I can make people believe I can sell" but confessed that "I'm doing sales but it's not me" and worried that without entrepreneurial activity "I'm not going to feel like myself anymore." At a renewable energy firm he "didn't feel like I belonged" and at an engineering firm his co-worker said, "I don't understand what you're doing here... you could be doing so much better."

Peter's arousal shifted to undermining. His sales job was "all the stuff I hated to do," and his purchasing job made him "miserable" and "drove me crazy." During a year of unemployment, "I was fed up." He avoided working with a friend in the wellness industry he loved because "it's going to become something I hate." He was also convinced that other employment would make him "unhappy." In his current role, he was excited about becoming a leader but, "deep down inside me I don't want to take it on... I don't know if I can do it." Although his girlfriend encouraged stable employment, he admitted "sometimes I don't like it."

Although his family encouraged working with his brother, he said "we will end up hating each other." Despite having many contacts, he admitted "I'm scared to ask now."

Changes in Instruments. Peter's scope narrowed. Although he enrolled in an MBA to "sharpen my tools or get some new tools" he narrowed himself to employment roles in sales, purchasing, and "client success," saying, "there's nothing else I know how to do." When an employer asked him to take on leadership, Peter was reluctant because he feared failure.

Peter's engagement with chance remained high for starting new roles albeit within a narrower scope, but low for monitoring and exploring. Actions included enrolling in an MBA, asking a classmate for a job, taking a purchasing job from an acquaintance, and applying for sales roles on LinkedIn. He avoided wider scope opportunities, such as helping a friend run a gym, working with his brother, or expanding his leadership at his current job. Although he took actions, he had low engagement with exploration and monitoring. He enrolled in an MBA but "didn't give it too much thought." When his marriage failed, he learned that his homemaker wife had envied his career and freedom. In his purchasing job, he relied on one recommendation for a supplier, and argued that their failure was not foreseeable. He was surprised when his latest employer asked him about not embracing leadership: "where was I not clear about that? You were hired for that sort of thing."

Peter's change approach shifted to submitting. He enrolled in the MBA looking for "hope" and his thesis searched for reasons that entrepreneurs get MBAs. He submitted to sales jobs as being "the only kind of transferrable knowledge" he had from running a business. He divorced his wife after long-term misery. He quit jobs to avoid being fired, and remained unhappy in his current job because he expected failure if he worked with a friend or his brother, or used his contacts.

Peter's referral style remained passively familiar. He relied on classmates, acquaintances and family for various jobs. Although he had many connections "I didn't ask for any favour... doubting myself."

Peter's trust remained unproved for employment. Despite his lack of background, he expected to perform his purchasing role without micromanagement. He trusted a classmate for a supplier recommendation from China, and insisted there was no way to foresee their failure. When contemplating taking on leadership at work, he said "I don't want to have to fight for it. I want to be supported. I want to have a collaboration." In contrast, Peter's trust required proof for entrepreneurial roles: he refused to work with his "unstable" brother, and avoided using contacts because he was "scared to ask" and "doubting myself."

Peter's interpretation of personal value remained innate. Although he pursued an MBA to "get some new tools" and at his first sales job "learned more there than at the MBA," his story focused on proving his innate qualities. For instance, after his business failure, he "wasn't worth a lot" because he wasn't hired into a senior role. He treated his first sales job as a test, noting "if I'm able to do this, I'll be able to do anything." He insisted, "I can make people believe I can sell" and "there's no way for me to get a job doing something else." For his most recent employment, he said they "took me in" rather than referring to the skills he had to help them. With respect to expanding his leadership, he believed that his girlfriend would want him to "prove to everybody that I can do it" and that "I need to show them that I can do it" but "I don't want to do it" because "I don't know if I can."

Changes in Rules. Peter's power shifted to low because his jobs relied on someone else to create, maintain or terminate his position. His freedom shifted to low because he had to learn "all the stuff I hated to do... the preparation, all the process," endure micromanagement, or navigate a strong corporate culture while feeling, "I'm not an animal you can put in the cage... I need to be free."

Changes in Community. Market opportunity was supportive because it created sales and purchasing opportunities. For instance, a renewable energy company was expanding into North America, a construction company was building new retirement homes, and an engineering firm was expanding into a nearby city.

Resource availability enabled Peter to enrol in an executive MBA without much thought, and find a supplier through a classmate. In contrast, resources were not available to support further entrepreneurial efforts.

Feedback tempo lengthened. At the renewable energy company he didn't make a sale over three years using their long, complex process and noted "I like to sell something every month at least." He also noted, "I didn't see how I was going to move up" in the organization. At his recent position, he didn't want to have to navigate a strong company culture or fight for trust to become a leader.

Presentation became inconsistent. One boss told him to "take the decisions" but then micromanaged him, and provided an office that lacked heat in the winter. A supplier took him on factory tours, but when it delivered, the "whole container was wrong." At his latest role, he was surprised to learn he was expected to become a leader while navigating corporate hierarchy and fighting for trust.

Stretch shifted to high as Peter changed continent, country and city. Although the MBA was local, the renewable energy job required training in Europe and travel in North America. The purchasing job required travel to China, and his latest job required commuting between cities.

Chance alignment was primarily high. Although Peter was unable to secure a senior role after the loss of his business, he was able to secure an MBA and roles in sales and purchasing.

Changes in Division of Labour. Priority alignment shifted to low. In his personal relationships, his ex-wife confessed to being unhappy as a homemaker, and his girlfriend preferred him to have stable employment rather than take risks. In his work roles, he faced a lack of alignment when micromanaged, shivering in an unheated office, following detailed procedures, or contemplating working with a brother who lacked his work ethic. Although a friend offered a desirable role working at a gym, Peter shied away because he feared failure.

Interactions Between Peter's Second Activity and Neighbouring Systems. When Peter shifted from entrepreneur to job-seeker, he interacted with a graduate school activity for his MBA, and a recruiting activity to find work.

The graduate school activity pursued an Outcome of credentialing students with a Master of Business Administration. The Object incorporated business management knowledge within an academic structure. Educators used Instruments including classroom learning and a thesis to help a community of students demonstrate their learning, subject to institutional Rules. The Division of Labour included classmates who had jobs and contacts at potential employers and suppliers. Although the graduate school activity focused on earning a management credential, Peter

engaged with the activity "looking for hope, answers, skills, something" and "didn't give it too much thought... I'm going to trust life and trust the process." He didn't explore the reasons for doing an MBA until he wrote his thesis, when he conducted interviews in the field.

The recruiting activity pursued an Outcome of engaging qualified and motivated personnel to perform needed tasks in an organization. The Object was to attract then filter candidates. Employers used the Instruments of job titles and descriptions to define roles; communication channels such as employees and LinkedIn to advertise roles; and resumes, interviews and references to filter applicants. The Division of Labour included managers, co-workers, and job boards such as LinkedIn. Although the recruiting activity focused on engaging qualified and motivated personnel for specific sales or purchasing tasks, Peter engaged with the activity hoping to earn a large salary while avoiding the misery of not meeting his entrepreneurial needs.

Table R.4
Comparing the First and Second Career Activities of Peter

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity	Second Activity
Outcome		Be a boss	Find a decent job with decent salary without misery
Object		Start a business in multimedia by borrowing money, signing an office lease and buying equipment	Market an isolated skill (sales, purchasing) developed as entrepreneur
Subject	Identity	Belonging	Excluding
	Arousal	Encouraging	Undermining
Instruments	Scope	Wide	Narrow
	Referral style	Passively familiar	Passively familiar
	Trust	Unproved	Unproved for jobs Proved for entrepreneur
	Engagement with Chance	High for starting activities Low for monitoring	High for starting activities Low for monitoring
	Personal Value	Innate	Innate
	Change Approach	Purposeful	Submitting
Rules	Power	High	Low
	Freedom	High	Low
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive	Supportive
	Resource availability	High	High for learning Low for entrepreneur
	Feedback tempo	Short	Long
	Presentation	N/A	Inconsistent
	Stretch	Low	High
	Local qualification	N/A	N/A
	Chance alignment	High	Low for senior roles High for task roles
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High	Low
	Member agency	Unbalanced	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising From the Second Career Activity. The second career activity represented the program Peter employed to find a "decent job with a decent salary" without misery. However, Peter's continued misery at the time of his interview revealed contradictions within that activity.

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. When Peter redefined his desired Outcome from being "a boss" to having a "decent job with a decent salary" without misery, a primary contradiction emerged in his Outcome. Although Peter experienced a high exchange-value by selling subsets of skills in sales or purchasing for a "decent salary," he experienced a low use-value for his broader entrepreneurial skills from being "a boss." His excluding identity in sales roles and his belief that his only pathway to satisfaction was to fulfill his identity as a "boss" revealed a secondary contradiction between those Subject needs and the priorities of employers in the activity's Division of Labour who expected him to fulfill the role of employee.

Instruments. Contradictions arose between Peter's Instruments for career navigation and his Subject needs and preferred Rules. He interpreted his business and job-hunting failures as leaving him with no transferrable skills other than sales. Although he self-identified as a "boss," he narrowed his scope to sales and purchasing tasks without committing to long-term development in those professions or investigating other variations that might meet his needs. By narrowing his scope to "sales" roles, Peter limited his options to working for employers who were experiencing supportive market opportunity for their own businesses. His innate personal value led him to seek positions in sales or purchasing and then prove himself in tasks he wasn't committed to, rather than embracing the development of ongoing mastery. His submitting change approach meant that he took unwanted work to feel accepted, and then quit to feel relief.

Contradictions also arose between Peter's Instruments and Community. The inconsistent presentation he experienced from an unheated workplace, a failing supplier, a corporate hierarchy that expected him to fight, and the low feedback tempo he experienced in sales jobs, contradicted his habit of low engagement with exploring and monitoring options before making decisions.

Contradictions arose between Peter's Instruments and Division of Labour. Peter's low priority alignment and unbalanced member agency with colleagues who micromanaged him, embraced strict process, or lacked his work ethic, contradicted his habits of a passively-familiar referral style, low engagement with monitoring chance, and expecting unproved trust. Peter's passively-familiar referral style depended on classmates, friends and LinkedIn postings for opportunities rather than actively surveying new contacts based on his needs. His low engagement with monitoring meant that he did not explore the circumstances of work before accepting it. His dependence on unproved trust, as if he were still a "boss" rather than an employee subject to someone else's Rules, meant that he expected support, collaboration and decision-making power without fighting for it, or demonstrating growing competence over time despite entering unfamiliar industries such as purchasing from overseas, or selling renewable energy or engineering services. When he needed referrals, he trusted a limited sample of unproved people, such as a classmate and their recommended supplier, who let him down.

Neighbouring Activity Systems. Peter experienced quaternary contradictions between his career activity and neighbouring activities for graduate school and recruiting.

First, a contradiction emerged with the graduate school activity. The activity's Outcome was credentialing students to bridge them towards a business management career, but Peter used

the MBA to solicit sales jobs and explore why entrepreneurs took the degree. The contradiction between its Outcome and Peter's use meant that the MBA provided him with a credential and contacts, but failed to serve his purposes of discovering a job that met his implicit needs and avoided misery.

Second, a contradiction emerged with the recruiting activity. The activity's Outcome was the identification of a candidate who had the necessary expertise to perform specialized tasks for an employer. Peter used the recruiting activity to explore career options by seeing who would accept him. As a result, the activity either selected Peter into a pre-defined job that failed to meet his implicit needs and left him miserable, or excluded him based on his resumé or interview without addressing his broader skills from having been "a boss."

Failure of the Second Career Activity. Peter's misery in sales and purchasing roles contradicted the desired Outcome of his career activity. As a result, his second career activity failed to achieve its purpose. At the time of his interview, Peter needed to reconsider his Outcome and address the contradictions in his career activity.

How Does Activity Theory Explain Victor's Career Pathway? Victor's career path began with abandoning his theatrical production dream in order to study communications overseas and work at a communications company. Unsatisfied, he transitioned into theatrical production work but was unhappy with the security of his career in terms of ongoing work and having to protect himself from colleagues. This section uses activity systems to explain how Victor navigated his career challenges, with his first system shown in Table R.5.

First Career Activity. Victor began his career by pursuing the Outcome of an economically feasible path similar to theatrical production. The Object comprised Victor's approach to achieving the Outcome: following his mother overseas to study communications and find associated work and friends. As the Subject, his identity had a strong sense of belonging in theatrical production, but his arousal was undermining. He initially avoided his North American theatrical production school interview, afraid he wouldn't be accepted, and then abandoned his acceptance into the program, fearing he couldn't support himself. Instead, he created a "whole new identity" overseas that led him into a communications career. However, facing undermining arousal about a pending promotion led him to abandon his overseas life and reapply to theatrical production school in North America.

Victor used a variety of Instruments to pursue his Outcome. His scope was narrow, focused on being a theatrical producer and then on a communications job. For his Division of Labour Victor relied on passive familiarity by following his mother overseas, and progressing into the management track within a job he'd taken to pay for college. He relied on proved trust, expecting to be rejected by theatrical production school due to his lack of experience. Within his Community, his engagement with chance was high for tasks and low for exploring options. For instance, he applied to theatrical production school, moved overseas, enrolled in a communications course and applied to a communications job. However, he did not describe any explorations to find resources to remain in North America. His personal value depended on circumstances. For theatrical production his value was innate because he avoided his interview, expected to be rejected, and assumed he wouldn't be able to attend and support himself. For communications his value was developed because he embraced training, took an entry-level job, and worked his way towards management. Finally, his change approach was submitting because

he gave in to moving overseas, enrolling in communications, and working at a communications company instead of pursuing his dream of theatrical production.

For Rules, his power and freedom were low because he was an entry-level communications employee working his way towards management.

Within his Community market opportunity was supportive because his skills were needed by the communications company. Resource availability was high for education because he could access a theatrical production school in North America and a communications school overseas, however resource availability to support himself in North America was perceived to be low. Stretch was low because he pursued schools where he lived, either in North America or after moving overseas. Alignment of chance was high because he was accepted for theatrical production school, the communications program, and the communications job.

Victor's Division of Labour were his parents and his manager at the communications company. Priority alignment was low. His parents' marriage breakdown and his mother's departure undermined his theatrical production dream. His communications manager groomed him for promotion, but Victor wasn't interested. Member agency was unbalanced because his dependence on his mother led to abandoning his theatrical production dream.

Interactions Between Victor's Activity and Neighbouring Systems. Victor's career activity interacted with a school admissions activity on two occasions: a theatrical production school in North America, and a communications school overseas. The school admissions activity pursued an Outcome of admitting applicants likely to succeed in the program by gathering and evaluating information about them. For the theatrical production school, Instruments included an interview. Victor subjected himself to an interview to test his identity of being a theatrical producer, but after the program accepted him, his perceived lack of resources to stay in North America led him to abandon the program. In contrast, once overseas with his mother, he was accepted into a communications program, and he pursued a degree and later supported himself with work at a communications company.

Table R.5

First Career Activity of Victor

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
Outcome		economically feasible career similar to theatrical production
Object		follow mother's move overseas, study communications, and find work and friends
Subject	Identity	Belonging
	Arousal	Undermining
Instruments	Scope	Narrow
	Referral style	Passively familiar
	Trust	Proved
	Engagement with Chance	High for tasks Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Innate for theatrical production Developed for communications
	Change Approach	Submitting

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
Rules	Power	Low
	Freedom	Low
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive
	Resource availability	High for training, moving Low for remaining
	Feedback tempo	N/A
	Presentation	N/A
	Stretch	Low
	Local qualification	N/A
	Chance alignment	High
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	Low
	Member agency	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising from the First Career Activity. Victor experienced stable employment in communications with expectations for promotion. However, his dissatisfaction with a career that he did not want revealed contradictions within his career activity, as defined in Table R.6.

Table R.6
Kinds of Contradictions Related to Activity Systems

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Quaternary
Stresses between use-value (functionality) and exchange-value (worth in trade)	Stresses between elements of a system (e.g. stresses between Rules and Instruments)	Stresses between one form of the activity and an expanded form with a broader Object and Outcome	Stresses between different activity systems (e.g. stresses between career navigation and employer recruiting)

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Consistent with the Outcome of his initial activity system, Victor sought training and work in a theatrical production-adjacent industry in a locale where family resources could support him. However, a primary contradiction arose between the high exchange-value Victor experienced from trading his communications skills to a communications employer for money, versus the low use-value he experienced by not using those skills to satisfy his artistic ambition. Additionally, a secondary contradiction arose with his Division of Labour: his manager was grooming Victor for a position he did not want because it conflicted with his identity as a theatrical producer.

Instruments. Contradictions arose between Victor's Instruments and his Subject needs. His undermining arousal and excluding identity in a non-theatrical production role revealed conflicts with the following choices: low engagement with chance in terms of exploring options to pursue theatrical production and stay in North America; a narrow scope that focused on training and employment in communications; a personal value that was innate for theatrical production (avoiding due to a fear of rejection and failure) but developed for communications (building skills through training and work over time while supporting himself overseas); and a

submitting change approach where he followed his mother overseas and accepting a communications career with low power and freedom, rather than risking failure in North America.

Second, contradictions arose between Victor's Instruments and Division of Labour. Victor's unbalanced member agency with his mother (on whom he depended for support) and low priority alignment with his mother (who led him overseas and away from theatrical production school) and his employer (who groomed him for unwanted promotion) revealed conflicts with the following choices: a passive referral style wherein he relied on his mother and then a manager rather than actively surveying people who could support his theatrical production dream; proved trust wherein he followed his trusted mother overseas but avoided testing his unproved ability to support himself or succeed in theatrical production school.

Neighbouring Activity Systems. Victor experienced quaternary contradictions between his career activity and activities for school admissions in theatrical production and communications.

First, a contradiction arose with the theatrical production school admissions activity. The Outcome was to admit applicants likely to succeed in the program. However, Victor used the activity to validate his identity as a theatrical producer but abandoned his admission due to concerns about resources to support himself. The contradiction meant that Victor detoured through a communications degree and communications job overseas before returning to his desired career later.

Second, a contradiction emerged with the communications school admissions activity. The Outcome was to admit applicants likely to succeed in communications. However, Victor used the activity as a pathway to a career similar to theatrical production. The contradiction meant that Victor invested time and resources in a credential, work experience and a community that conflicted with his identity and undermined his arousal.

Second Career Activity. Victor rejected his successful communications career, which undermined the Outcome and Object of his current career activity and triggered the emergence of a second career activity.

Victor's Outcome expanded to becoming an artistic theatrical producer. To achieve his Outcome, Victor's Object expanded to returning home to rejoin his childhood community of friends and connect with artistic people through theatrical production. Table R.7 compares the first and second activities.

Changes in Subject. Victor's identity was belonging because he returned to his childhood community of friends and embraced theatrical production. His arousal shifted to encouraging as he succeeded in theatrical production school and found inspiration in artistic theatrical production projects.

Changes in Instruments. Victor's scope broadened as he embraced an entrepreneurial approach to pitching and securing funding for projects. His referral style became actively surveyed as he sought ways to connect with industry personnel to gain experience, supervise a grant, and connect him with a gatekeeper at a major employer. His trust was proved because he persisted with efforts to demonstrate his ability and convince a major employer to give him work. His engagement with chance was high for activities because he pursued opportunities such as relocating to North America, building a production around a performer he met on the street,

attending parties and connecting with practitioners to develop work experience. However his engagement was lower for monitoring and exploring options before committing to them. As a result, he grabbed opportunities as they came and then attempted to make them his own according to his values. Victor's personal value for theatrical production shifted to developed as he embraced training, advanced study, and persistent pitching of new ideas to secure work. His change approach shifted to purposeful as he left his communications career in favour of pursuing theatrical production, then supported that by developing contacts at parties and persisting with pitching projects to a local entertainment company.

Changes in Rules. Victor's power shifted to high because he pursued his desired training, and created his own project to showcase his abilities. His freedom shifted to high because he could shape his opportunities: he spent grant-funded time volunteering with an experienced theatrical producer; he chose an artistic interpretation for his own production and funded it with a loan from a wheeler-dealer; and he shaped his contracts for work to meet his artistic needs.

Changes in Community. Victor's market opportunity was initially supportive because he was able to sell projects and secure work from a major entertainment company for over a decade. His resource availability shifted to high because he was able to complete a theatrical production degree and advanced study, and fund portfolio projects in his home town. His feedback tempo was long: he persisted over six months to pitch a production to a school and a venue, and he persisted over 18 months to earn an opportunity with an entertainment company, "overdelivering" to earn more projects and become their "go to" theatrical producer. The presentation of his environment was consistent because his projects reflected his expectations for artistic theatrical production.

Changes in Division of Labour. Victor's priority alignment shifted to high as he worked with people who supported artistic theatrical production. His member agency was more balanced because he was able to reshape projects from an entertainment company and other sources according to his own vision, although he didn't necessarily have legal protections for compensation and credit.

Interactions Between Victor's Second Activity and Neighbouring Systems. When Victor committed to theatrical production, his career activity interacted with two neighbouring systems: theatrical production school and project sponsors.

The theatrical production school activity pursued an Outcome of credentialing students with a theatrical production degree recognized by industry. Educators used Instruments such as theatrical production projects to help students demonstrate their ability, and the Division of Labour included faculty who could serve as project supervisors. Victor successfully leveraged theatrical production school to earn an award, prepare a grant application, and secure a supervisor for a post-graduate theatrical production project.

The project sponsor activity pursued an Outcome of producing theatrical production projects that met sponsor criteria. The Object was identifying capable people and suitable projects. Sponsors used the Instruments of project pitches or grant applications to evaluate prospects. The Division of Labour comprised theatrical producers, a sponsor with supervisory oversight, and subjects to focus on for the theatrical productions. For example, Victor funded an independent study using a post-graduate grant, pitched an artistic production to an arts school and venue, and pitched to a major entertainment company to create a theatrical production of its

performers. He successfully leveraged project sponsorships to create a portfolio of work that supported a theatrical production career.

Table R.7
Comparing the First and Second Career Activities of Victor

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity	Second Activity
Outcome		Economically feasible career similar to theatrical production	Becoming artistic theatrical producer
Object		Follow mother's move overseas, study communications, and find work and friends	Returning to childhood community to connect with artistic theatrical producers
Subject	Identity	Belonging for theatrical production Excluding for communications	Belonging for theatrical production
	Arousal	Undermining	Encouraging
Instruments	Scope	Narrow	Broad
	Referral style	Passively familiar	Actively surveyed initially
	Trust	Proved	Unproved
	Engagement with Chance	High for tasks Low for exploring	High for tasks Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Innate for theatrical production Developed for communications	Developed
	Change Approach	Submitting	Purposeful
Rules	Power	Low	High
	Freedom	Low	High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive	Supportive initially
	Resource availability	High for training, moving Low for remaining	High
	Feedback tempo	N/A	Long
	Presentation	N/A	Consistent
	Stretch	Low	High to restart
	Local qualification	N/A	N/A
	Chance alignment	High	High
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	Low	High
	Member agency	Unbalanced	Balanced

Contradictions Arising From the Second Career Activity. Victor secured ongoing theatrical production projects that increased in complexity and helped him become the "go-to" theatrical producer for a major entertainment company. However, he experienced challenges finding other opportunities to fill the gaps in his gig-based career. As a result, contradictions arose within his second career activity.

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Victor's major client provided artistic freedom and compensation but a limited number of projects. As a result, a primary contradiction arose between the higher use-value Victor experienced from applying his skills to an artistic and

remunerative client, and the low exchange-value he experienced from not growing his base of work with other kinds of gigs.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between Victor's Subject and his Division of Labour. The central city industry represented a lucrative market, but Victor believed the people were superficial and did not share his priorities. As a result, a contradiction arose with his potential Division of Labour. Prioritizing his identity as a humanistic theatrical producer with artistic freedom excluded a broader source of people to work with.

Instruments. Secondary contradictions arose between Victor's Instruments and his Subject needs and Community. For instance, the undermining marketing opportunity Victor perceived in the eastern city, and the exclusion he felt as a cultural outsider there (despite speaking their "lingo" and winning awards in their community) revealed contradictions with the passive referrals and low stretch he relied on for local work.

Third Career Activity. Victor's desire to expand his sources of work contradicted the Outcome and Object of his current career activity and triggered the emergence of a third career activity.

Victor's Outcome expanded to filling in gaps in his artistic workload. To achieve his Outcome, his Object expanded to embracing a variety of personal projects and task-oriented gigs in multiple locales while attempting to maintain his artistic integrity. Table R.8 compares the second and third systems.

Changes in Subject. Victor developed some projects such as a character-driven production focused on competitors and a production about family migration, but also completed task-based roles such as a production about the personal adventure of a client, a small-scale series of theatrical plays about crimes, and interviewing subjects for a celebrity-focused production. He felt exclusion and undermining arousal as he confronted commercialism, human stories being twisted to meet venue preferences, and a theatrical production comprised of celebrity interviews without a deeper narrative about its subject.

Changes in Instruments. Victor's scope narrowed as he took more task-focused roles in directing and interviewing. His referral style was passively familiar as his projects were triggered by existing contacts. His trust shifted to unproved because he expected others to protect his legal interests and deal fairly, even within a cutthroat industry. His engagement with chance was high for activities such as pitching a competitor-focused production, producing a series of small-scale productions, and interviewing celebrities, but low for monitoring threats and exploring options, such as establishing contractual protections to receive credit and compensation. His personal value shifted to innate as he interpreted challenges such as disappointments with agents, networking, and task-oriented work in the central city, as meaning he didn't belong. His change approach shifted to submitting as he took roles as they came along, attempted to remake them according to his identity, and then found himself fighting for credit and compensation.

Changes in Rules. Victor's power and freedom shifted to low because tasks relied on others' existing projects, and although he attempted to remake tasks according to his identity, a colleague or sponsor could shunt him out of a project at any time.

Changes in Community. In the central city, Victor perceived an undermining market opportunity in due to "cutthroat competition," low chance alignment because networking and agents failed to provide work, and low resources due to the higher cost of living. He experienced

high stretch straddling the eastern and central cities to find opportunities. Additionally, he experienced inconsistent presentation when his immigrating girlfriend turned out to be unqualified for her new career, and his co-creator of a competitor-focused production, and a sponsor for a celebrity-focused production both betrayed him over credit and compensation.

Changes in Division of Labour. Victor's priority alignment shifted to low as he sought work in communities he felt were superficial, and worked with people who undermined his desire to tell true stories, or betrayed his expectations for fairness. His member agency was unbalanced because he could be shunted out of projects despite foundational work.

Interactions Between Victor's Third Activity and Neighbouring Systems. When Victor pursued more sources of work, his career activity interacted with two neighbouring systems: project sponsors and networking. Project sponsoring was described previously within Victor's second career activity. Victor successfully engaged with the project sponsor activity to secure gig-based work but was disappointed when he also expected the activity to protect his personal interests and respect his humanistic priorities.

Networking pursued an Outcome of creating work opportunities. The Object was facilitating interactions among industry personnel to elicit matches of needs and abilities using the Instruments of meetings and a Division of Labour that included sponsors, producers and agents. Victor engaged with the networking activity to increase opportunities but had trouble building relationships in the central city with people he felt were "superficial" and "grandstanding" in contrast with his own humanistic priorities.

Table R.8
Comparing the Second and Third Career Activities of Victor

AT Element	Concepts	Second Activity	Third Activity
Outcome		Becoming artistic theatrical producer	Filling gaps in artistic work
Object		Returning to childhood community to connect with artistic theatrical producers	embracing a variety of personal projects and task-oriented gigs in multiple locales while attempting to maintain his artistic integrity
Subject	Identity	Belonging for theatrical production	Belonging for theatrical production
	Arousal	Encouraging	Undermining
Instruments	Scope	Broad	Narrow
	Referral style	Actively surveyed initially	Passive familiarity
	Trust	Proved	Unproved
	Engagement with Chance	High for tasks Low for exploring	High for tasks Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Developed	Innate
	Change Approach	Purposeful	Submitting
Rules	Power	High	Low
	Freedom	High	Low
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive initially	Undermining
	Resource availability	High	Low
	Feedback tempo	Long	Long

AT Element	Concepts	Second Activity	Third Activity
	Presentation	Consistent	Inconsistent
	Stretch	High to restart	High at times
	Local qualification	N/A	N/A
	Chance alignment	High	High at home Low in [central city]
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High	Low
	Member agency	Balanced	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising From the Third Career Activity. As his relationship with a major client was ending, Victor sought additional task-based roles but the frustrations and betrayals he experienced revealed contradictions within his third career activity.

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Victor pursued tasks that did not necessarily support his values. As a result, a primary contradiction arose between the high exchange-value he experienced from pitching, producing or interviewing for money on someone else's project, versus the low use-value he experienced from not applying his skills to create humanistic stories.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between Victor's Subject and his Division of Labour. The low priority alignment and unbalanced member agency he had with project sponsors revealed contradictions with his identity as a humanistic theatrical producer, which led him to perceive the central city colleagues as comparatively superficial.

Instruments. Contradictions arose between Victor's Instruments and his Subject needs and preferred Rules. Although he shifted into task-completer roles, his identity led to struggles with doing roles that contradicted his values, such as fictionalizing true stories to suit a venue, or attempts to remake roles to fit his identity such as growing an interviewing task into reworking an entire theatrical production's narrative. As a result he experienced undermining arousal and excluding identity because he lacked the power and freedom to complete tasks according to his priorities. As such, contradictions were revealed with the following choices: his use of passive referrals for work; his narrow scope of pursuing task-oriented roles; his submitting change approach of accepting limited roles and then trying to change them; and his innate personal value wherein he interpreted setbacks as indicative of his lack of fit with a city, kinds of roles, or even his entire career within a "cutthroat industry."

Victor also experienced contradictions between his Instruments and Community. He found undermining "cutthroat" market opportunity, low chance alignment with desired work, and low resources in terms of costs of living in the central city. As such a contradiction arose with his habit of low engagement with chance in terms of exploring options within that locale and in other locales with greater stretch from home.

Third, Victor experienced contradictions between his Instruments and his Division of Labour. His low priority alignment in working relationships contradicted his passive referral style for work, and his change approach of submitting to opportunities rather than seeking people who shared his values. Additionally, the betrayals of trust he experienced, such as an immigrating girlfriend who became dependent when she was ineligible for her expected work and training opportunities, and colleagues and sponsors who let him down, contradicted his habit of relying on unproved trust that others would be fair or protect his interests, his low engagement in terms of exploring and monitoring opportunities for threats, and his unbalanced member

agency where he entered relationships without protections and was subject to being used and "shunted aside."

Community. A secondary contradiction arose between Victor's Community and his Subject identity. For instance, despite speaking the "lingo" and winning awards in their community Victor (as a cultural outsider) felt excluded from market opportunity in the eastern city, which revealed a contradiction between his identity and a local qualification of an eastern city cultural background. Similarly, Victor felt excluded from market opportunity in the "superficial" and "cut-throat" industry in the central city, which revealed a contradiction with his identity as a humanistic theatrical producer.

Neighbouring Activity Systems. Victor experienced quaternary contradictions between his career activity and activities for project sponsors and networking.

First, a contradiction emerged with the project sponsor activity whose Outcome was producing theatrical production projects that met sponsor criteria. However, Victor used the activity to secure projects that he tried to rework for his own humanistic criteria. His inability to satisfy his needs for identity, encouraging arousal and freedom revealed a contradiction between the activity and the way he was using it.

Second, a contradiction emerged with the networking activity whose Outcome was to create work opportunities by facilitating interactions within a given context. However, Victor used the activity to seek work that reflected his values in humanistic storytelling, and the context he was in felt comparatively superficial and glib. His undermining arousal and lack of market opportunity revealed the contradiction between the activity and the way he was using it.

Failure of the Third Career Activity. Victor's lack of artistically satisfying work related to theatrical production contradicted the Outcome of his career activity and undermined its purpose. At the time of his interview, Victor was seeking options for a new career where "I like the people I'm working with... instead of being in a situation where I have to protect myself the whole time, that I actually feel like it's something where we can share."

How Does Activity Theory Explain Leonard's Career Pathway? Leonard's career path began with science. When he experienced dissatisfaction, he pursued a Master's in organizational development, and then shifted into professional coaching. This section uses activity systems to explain how Leonard navigated his career challenges, with his first system shown in Table R.9.

First Career Activity. In his first activity, Leonard pursued the Outcome of inquiring into human nature with rigour and predictability. His Object comprised pursuing a credential in a structured discipline in order to perform inquiry on behalf of an organization. However, Leonard's identity was excluding in practice. In science research he felt there was no room for his need to investigate human nature in a more direct, embodied manner, and in organizational development, he felt excluded due to his lack of human resources or social justice background. He also experienced undermining arousal. In science he felt disconnected and useless, and in organizational development, incompetent in the use of the theories.

Leonard used a variety of Instruments to pursue his Outcome. His chosen scope was narrow because he focused on pursuing "hard-coded realities" within the strict procedures of science, and the framework of applied organizational development. He relied on a passively familiar referral style, and depended on proved trust. For instance, his most important influences

for choosing science were his psychiatrist mother and his medical researcher father, and his most important influence for organizational development was his girlfriend and her friends in the program. Within his Community, his engagement with chance was high for taking action because he applied to and completed multiple university programs and post-doctorates, but low for exploration of options before making commitments. His personal value was innate, firstly because he used his identity as a rigorous inquirer to make his choices; secondly, because he perceived his challenges in science, applying organizational development theory and securing a job in organizational development as meaning he did not belong. Finally, his change approach was primarily submitting: he entered science because that university program accepted him while a humanistic one rejected him; he left science due to burnout; and he left organizational development when he could not secure work after graduation.

With respect to Rules, his power was high for studying because he was able to enrol in courses and certifications related to music therapy, mindfulness, and organizational development. His power was low for employment because he depended on others to create work positions. His freedom was low because he submitted to the rigorous procedures of science research, and then the processes of organizational development.

In Leonard's Community, market opportunity was initially supportive because he secured two post-doctorates in science. However, shifting to organizational development resulted in undermining market opportunity because of his lack of experience. His resource availability was high because he had access to and funding for multiple workshops and degree programs. His feedback tempo was long: in science, findings might not be publishable or have any impact on others; and in organizational development, full-time work was elusive. Although Leonard enjoyed working with science colleagues in laboratories, and applying the personal development aspects of organizational development, presentation in each case was inconsistent: in science, colleagues professed objectivity while Leonard perceived them as guided by their emotional needs for tenure, funding and publication; in organizational development, Leonard graduated without understanding how to apply theories to actual work. His stretch was primarily low because his initial education was local to his original home, and his subsequent training in organizational development was local to his new home. His chance alignment was primarily high because he was accepted into multiple workshops, university programs and post-doctorates and only faced rejection when seeking employment in organizational development.

Leonard's Division of Labour included his parents, girlfriend, research peers, and classmates. He credited his parents as a major influence for choosing science, and his girlfriend and her classmates as a major influence for choosing organizational development. However, in practice he had low priority alignment with science coworkers, with whom he had "good energy" in the lab but considered their emotional repression toxic, and the nature of their discoveries unfulfilling. For organizational development, he lacked the human resources and social justice experiences that he believed employers would require.

Interactions Between the First Activity and Neighbouring Systems. Leonard's career activity interacted with three neighbouring systems: school admissions, recruiting, and hobby.

The school admissions activity pursued an Outcome of admitting candidates likely to succeed in their program. The Object incorporated applications, reviews, and communications of acceptance and rejection. Administrators used the Instrument of acceptance criteria, subject to institutional Rules and applied by a Division of Labour. Leonard engaged with the activity when

applying to undergraduate and graduate university programs, but used the activity to determine his initial career direction, deferring to the rejection by social sciences and acceptance by science.

The recruiting activity pursued an Outcome of engaging motivated and qualified personnel into an organization to perform tasks on an ongoing basis. The Object was advertising positions and processing applicants to identify people who fit the organization's needs. The organization used the Instruments of criteria to evaluate prospects. Leonard engaged with recruiting several times. For his post-doctorates, he was hired based on academic credentials and research interests, with the expectation of preparing him to become an independent scholar. However, Leonard used the activity to secure work where he could explore his interests from a cognitive perspective, and having experienced dissatisfaction, chose to abandon the career. For organizational development, he used his lack of success in the recruiting activity as a reason to address his sense of incompetence with theory by abandoning that career as well.

The hobby activity pursued an Outcome of exploring human nature from an embodied perspective. The Object comprised engaging in embodied experiences with practitioners, noticing sensations, and pursuing further learning and practice. Instruments comprised knowledge and practices related to mindfulness, stress reduction, music therapy, and yoga. The Division of Labour comprised fellow participants and a leader or mentor. Leonard used the activity to pursue embodied experiences based on what he heard from passively-referred, trusted people such as his mother or girlfriend. He experienced an alignment of priorities with practitioners and sought to learn more from them. In practice, he experienced a belonging identity, an encouraging arousal, and a short, direct feedback tempo for reward and impact.

Table R.9

First Career Activity of Leonard

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
Outcome		Inquiring into human nature with rigour and predictability
Object		pursuing a credential in a structured discipline in order to perform inquiry on behalf of an organization
Subject	Identity	Belonging in concept Excluding in practice
	Arousal	Encouraging in concept Undermining in practice
Instruments	Scope	Narrow
	Referral style	Passively familiar
	Trust	Proved
	Engagement with Chance	High for taking action Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Innate
	Change Approach	Submitting
Rules	Power	High for training Low for work
	Freedom	Low
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive for research Undermining for applied

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
	Resource availability	High
	Feedback tempo	Long
	Presentation	Inconsistent in practice
	Stretch	Low
	Local qualification	N/A
	Chance alignment	High for research Low for applied
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	Low
	Member agency	N/A

Contradictions Arising from the First Activity System. Leonard secured multiple degrees and post-doctorates while exploring interests in music and mindfulness. However, his experiences of burnout in science and unemployment in organizational development revealed contradictions within his career activity, as defined in Table R.10.

Table R.10
Kinds of Contradictions Related to Activity Systems

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Quaternary
Stresses between use-value (functionality) and exchange-value (worth in trade)	Stresses between elements of a system (e.g. stresses between Rules and Instruments)	Stresses between one form of the activity and an expanded form with a broader Object and Outcome	Stresses between different activity systems (e.g. stresses between career navigation and employer recruiting)

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Leonard sought training and work that would allow him to inquire into human nature using a rigorous discipline. However, his sense of exclusion in science and organizational development revealed primary contradictions in his career activity. For science, a primary contradiction arose between the high exchange-value he experienced in applying curiosity and rigour to research for money versus the low use-value he experienced from not applying those skills to forms of inquiry that energized or excited him. For organizational development, a primary contradiction arose between the low exchange-value he experienced from not developing competence in theory or securing employment, versus the high use-value he experienced from using the degree for personal development.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between Leonard's Subject and Rules and his Division of Labour. His low priority alignment with science colleagues and organizational development peers revealed a contradiction with his identity as a rigorous inquirer who desired more freedom in subjective and embodied forms of inquiry.

Instruments. Leonard experienced contradictions between his Instruments and his Subject needs and preferred Rules. For instance, his excluded identity, undermining arousal, and lack of power and freedom revealed contradictions with his habits for scope, personal value and change approach. By defining his personal value as an innate capacity for rigorous human inquiry, and

by defining his scope narrowly in terms of rigorous disciplines, he undermined his ability to pursue more flexible inquiry methods that would allow him to include his subjective experiences. By relying on a submitting change approach, he delegated career decisions to third parties: his entry into the study and practice of science rather than social sciences, and his apparent rejection from employment in organizational development.

Leonard experienced contradictions between his Instruments and his Community. For instance, he experienced low feedback tempo in the practice of conducting science research and finding employment in organizational development. He experienced inconsistent presentation from science colleagues who denied the role of their emotions, and from an organizational development program that failed to prepare him for applying theory to work. These issues revealed contradictions with his low engagement with chance in terms of exploring and monitoring these disciplines because he lacked insight prior to committing to study and work.

Leonard experienced contradictions between his Instruments and his Division of Labour. His low priority alignment with science colleagues and organizational development employers revealed a contradiction with his habit of passive referrals for career influences, such as parents or girlfriend, and his low engagement with chance in terms of exploring options before making a commitment.

Neighbouring Activity Systems. Leonard experienced quaternary contradictions between his career activity and activities for school admissions, recruiting and hobbies.

First, a contradiction emerged with the school admissions activity whose Outcome focused on admitting candidates likely to succeed in their program. However, Leonard used the activity to determine his career path. First, he entered science based on rejection from one social sciences program. Second, he entered organizational development based on impressions about the program that were undermined by reality. The contradictions meant that Leonard twice invested in careers that left him feeling hopeless or incompetent.

Second, a contradiction emerged with the recruiting activity whose Outcome focused on engaging motivated and qualified personnel to meet organizational needs. However, Leonard used the activity to evaluate his fit with the disciplines, first through practising science and experiencing dissatisfaction, and second through seeking employment in organizational development. The contradiction meant that Leonard negatively evaluated his fit in two careers based on short-term experiences following his investments in postgraduate education.

Third, a contradiction emerged with the hobby activity whose Outcome focused on engaging in human inquiry from an embodied perspective that produced energy and excitement. Leonard used the activity to explore sensations that were missing in science and organizational development. His experiences of priority alignment, belonging, encouraging arousal, and quick feedback tempo in his hobby revealed contradictions with his career activity, in which he had pursued a rigorous, cognitive-focused approach. In his hobby activity, his change approach was purposeful, and his engagement with chance higher for monitoring and exploration as he considered his sensations while trying new practices before pursuing further learning. His personal value was developmental as he embraced learning not only in terms of how to practice but also in how practice changed how he saw the world. By trying before committing, he ensured that his mentors secured his trust through practical demonstrations before he committed to them, and that the presentation of practice would be consistent with reality.

Second Career Activity. In science, Leonard had work but felt hopeless and unable to make genuine discoveries. In organizational development, he felt incompetent and excluded from employment. In contrast, his hobby activity provided energizing human inquiry with the potential for work, which undermined the Outcome and Object of his current career activity and triggered the emergence of a second career activity. Table R.11 compares the first and second career activities.

Leonard's Outcome expanded into direct, embodied applications of human inquiry that energized him. His Object expanded to pursuing applied training in coaching to support building his own business.

Changes in Subject. Leonard's identity shifted to belonging because he was continuing to pursue human inquiry but in a form that included his subjective experience, and in which people wanted to hire him. His arousal shifted to encouraging because coaching was an area in which he felt a great interest, energy and capacity.

Changes in Instruments. Leonard's scope widened because he converted his hobby activity into a business in which he would be responsible as an entrepreneur rather than an employee. His referral style became active because he sought advice from trusted sources to find a training program that met his desire for rigour. His personal value remained innate in terms of pursuing a third form of human inquiry in which he felt he had the skills to practice right away. However, he embraced development to become more employable in the local francophone market by training in French. His change approach became purposeful because he pursued systematic training to grow his hobby into a business in the local francophone market such that he could start earning money as soon as possible.

Changes in Rules. As an entrepreneur, his power shifted to high because he created his own work opportunities, and his freedom shifted to high because he was able to practise coaching in a way that met his needs for rigour, energy, and personal time for his firstborn child.

Changes in Community. Leonard's feedback tempo shortened because he not only had immediate work, but also experienced fulfillment and excitement from client interactions. Presentation shifted to consistent because he was extending his hobby into practice, and using training that he had actively surveyed based on his needs. He embraced a local qualification by taking his coaching training in French. His chance alignment was high because he secured work before he'd finished training.

Changes in Division of Labour. Leonard's division of labour included his girlfriend, organizational development professors, coaching trainers, and clients. His priority alignment shifted to high because his girlfriend supported his transition, his professors connected him with a compatible coaching program that met his need for rigour, and his clients enjoyed working with him.

Interactions Between Leonard's Second Activity and Neighbouring Systems. Leonard's career activity interacted with a neighbouring coach training system whose Outcome focused on certifying people for professional coaching. The Object comprised bridging knowledge and skill gaps through intensive training and supervised practice. Educators used the Instruments of learning objectives and curriculum in process, change management, personal style, and client assessment. Their Rules defined prerequisites, such as basic training or existing practice, and certification requirements. The Division of Labour incorporated trainers, supervising mentors,

and classmates. Leonard successfully engaged with the coaching activity to commence embodied human inquiry that energized him and provided income within the local francophone market.

At the time of the interview, Leonard considered himself to be a Seeker because his income as a coach remained small. After his interview with a Completer, he sought her advice about applying for further positions at an academic institution.

Table R.11
Comparing the First and Second Career Activities of Leonard

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity	Second Activity
Outcome		Inquiring into human nature with rigour and predictability	Engaging in direct, embodied and energizing applications of human inquiry
Object		pursuing a credential in a structured discipline in order to perform inquiry on behalf of an organization	Pursuing applied training in coaching to support building a business
Subject	Identity	Belonging in concept Excluding in practice	Belonging
	Arousal	Encouraging in concept Undermining in practice	Encouraging
Instruments	Scope	Narrow	Broad
	Referral style	Passively familiar	Actively surveyed
	Trust	Proved	Unproved
	Engagement with Chance	High for taking action Low for exploring	High
	Personal Value	Innate	Innate for concept Developed for practice
	Change Approach	Submitting	Purposeful
Rules	Power	High for training Low for work	High
	Freedom	Low	High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive for research Undermining for applied	Supportive
	Resource availability	High	High
	Feedback tempo	Long	Short
	Presentation	Inconsistent in practice	Consistent
	Stretch	Low	Low
	Local qualification	N/A	Helping
	Chance alignment	High for research Low for applied	High
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	Low	High
	Member agency	N/A	Balanced

Activity Theory Analysis of Completers

This section presents an activity theory analysis of the Completers by presenting an explanation of the career paths of Wanda, Susan and Helen.

How Does Activity Theory Explain Wanda's Career Pathway? Wanda's career path began with starting a juvenile clothing business. When her business failed, she pursued a Master's in organizational development and moved into consulting. This section uses activity systems to explain how Wanda navigated her career challenges, with her first system shown in Table R.12.

First Career Activity. Wanda pursued the Outcome of supplementing her husband's income while having the freedom to homeschool their children. The Object comprised a home-grown business that sourced, made and sold juvenile clothing. Although her training was in art education, she built a business with a belonging identity, feeling that she and the business were one: "it was me; I was it." Her arousal was encouraging, feeling that its growth was a "miracle and a joy" and "I truly loved it."

Wanda used a variety of Instruments to pursue her desired Outcome. Her scope was wide because she managed everything in the business, only later delegating operations. She relied on passive referrals because she started the business with friends. She relied on unproved trust because she started the business without training or experience, and relied on herself when experts believed she would fail. Her engagement with chance was high for responding to opportunities because she started the business, grew with the initial boom, and responded to competitors. However her engagement was low for monitoring for threats: she was unprepared for her son's drug addiction, her mother's terminal illness, and her longtime accountant's death. Her personal value was developed because she built her business without training and adapted to new distribution channels in the face of negative campaigns from competitors that almost wiped her out. Her change approach was purposeful. She created a business that allowed her to homeschool, she based her business on a reusable and less wasteful product that supported women workers, and she responded to negative advertising by seeking new distribution channels that valued her approach.

Her power was high because she founded her original business, and she chose to respond to challenges by adapting the business to divest her original partners, enlist a new partner, and pivot to new channels. Her freedom was high because she was able to run the business while homeschooling and integrate her children into helping with the business.

In her Community, market opportunity was supportive because she found a booming industry for juvenile clothing. Although negative advertising from competitors temporarily undermined the industry, she regained opportunity by changing distribution channels. Her resource availability was high because she was able to source bulk clothing and manufacturing capacity to support her business. The feedback tempo was short as she was able to grow her business and recover from negative advertising in a timely fashion. Presentation was consistent because she maintained insight into her entire business. Stretch was low because she began the business at home and grew it locally. Chance alignment for her business was primarily high because she was able to tap into a booming market both initially and again after adapting her distribution channels. As a result, her business "grew and grew" requiring more travel and facilities. In contrast, chance alignment was low in personal relationships due to her mother's terminal illness, her son's drug addiction, and her accountant's death.

Wanda's Division of Labour included family, friends, suppliers, distribution channels, and professional advisers such as accountants. Her priority alignment was primarily high. Her children participated in the business, and her friends helped grow the business until it faced

negative advertising and priority alignment lowered. Wanda divested those friends and restored alignment by enlisting a new partner focused on operations to handle new sales channels. She had a close relationship with her "great" accountant who was with her from the start. Unfortunately, her mother's terminal illness and son's addiction lowered her priority alignment as their needs distracted her focus on the business. Additionally, her accountant's death required finding new service providers. Her member agency was primarily unbalanced because she was in control: she homeschooled her children while building a home-based business to supplement her artist husband's irregular income; she divested her original partners to respond to competitors; and engaged a new partner focused on operations while Wanda did "everything else."

Interactions Between the First Activity and Neighbouring Systems. The success of Wanda's juvenile clothing business led to interactions with the neighbouring systems of disposable clothing production, and public school.

Disposable clothing production pursued the Outcome of maximizing the sale of disposable products. The Object included advertising, production and sales. Instruments included negative advertising such as sponsored studies that publicly undermined reusable clothing. Wanda's engaged with the disposable industry when her business threatened their sales, which triggered a negative advertising campaign. As a result, Wanda experienced decreased chance alignment with customers, decreased priority alignment with her founding partners, and her business suffered. To save her business, she needed to find new ways to distribute products, and new partners to support her.

The public school activity pursued the Outcome of graduating students who passed government-mandated standards. The Object was weekday classroom instruction of age-related peers within a public facility. Wanda engaged with the public school activity when her business grew enough that she could no longer perform homeschooling. She expected the school to provide a safe environment for her son. However, the school had an inconsistent presentation because it was not safe but was in fact a "drug school" where her son would become an addict and a criminal, leading to low chance alignment in Wanda's personal life.

Table R.12
First Career Activity of Wanda

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
Outcome		supplement husband's income with the freedom to homeschool children
Object		home-grown business sourcing and selling juvenile clothing
Subject	Identity	Belonging
	Arousal	Encouraging
Instruments	Scope	Wide
	Referral style	Passively familiar
	Trust	Unproved
	Engagement with Chance	High for work Low for son
	Personal Value	Developed for work Innate for personal

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
	Change Approach	Purposeful
Rules	Power	High
	Freedom	High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive
	Resource availability	High
	Feedback tempo	Short
	Presentation	Consistent for business Inconsistent for personal
	Stretch	Low
	Local qualification	N/A
	Chance alignment	High for business Low for personal
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High for business Low for personal
	Member agency	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising From the First Career Activity. Wanda was able to build a successful business and overcome a challenge from the disposables industry. However, the unexpected growth of her business, the loss of a trusted advisor, and health crises emerging in her family revealed contradictions within her career activity, as defined in Table R.13.

Table R.13
Kinds of Contradictions Related to Activity Systems

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Quaternary
Stresses between use-value (functionality) and exchange-value (worth in trade)	Stresses between elements of a system (e.g. stresses between Rules and Instruments)	Stresses between one form of the activity and an expanded form with a broader Object and Outcome	Stresses between different activity systems (e.g. stresses between career navigation and employer recruiting)

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Wanda was able to build a business that supplemented her husband's income and initially allowed her to homeschool her children. However, her sense of failure when her son became a drug addict revealed a primary contradiction between the high exchange value she experienced from devoting her skills to her expanding business versus the low use value of those skills when she shifted from homeschooling to placing her son in a public school.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between her Subject needs and Division of Labour. The low priority alignment she experienced with her wayward son revealed a contradiction with her identity as a successful, family-oriented businesswoman.

Instruments. Contradictions arose between Wanda's Instruments and her Subject needs and preferred Rules. For instance, when her son became an addict, her undermining arousal and sense of exclusion from the identity of a competent, family-oriented businesswoman revealed

contradictions with her innate personal value outside work: her son's downfall undermined her identity and confidence rather than triggering the kind of adaptation she had shown in the face of business competition.

Contradictions arose between Wanda's Instruments and Community. The inconsistent presentation of the public school in which she had enrolled her son revealed contradictions with her low engagement with chance for exploring and monitoring for threats.

Contradictions arose between Wanda's Instruments and Division of Labour. Her low priority alignment with her wayward son and the public school activity revealed contradictions with her passive referral style and unproved trust in accepting a school near her office and assuming it would be safe. Her unbalanced member agency in homeschooling, running the business, and becoming the primary caretaker for her ill mother revealed contradictions with her broad scope, which created large demands on her time and attention.

Neighbouring Activity Systems. Wanda experienced quaternary contradictions between her career activity and activities for disposable clothing and public schools.

First, a contradiction emerged with the disposable clothing activity, whose Outcome focused on maximizing the sale of disposable clothing. However, Wanda's reusable clothing business engaged the activity by threatening their sales. The contradiction resulted in the competitors engaging in negative "hard hitting ads and crazy research studies [that] really kind of decimated the industry" of Wanda's reusable products. As a result, Wanda's business lost chance alignment with market opportunity and lost priority alignment with her existing partners in her Division of Labour. However, she responded by actively surveying new partners to support a new direction, and employing high engagement with chance to explore new options for distribution channels which reflected a developed personal value and purposeful change approach.

Second, a contradiction emerged with the public school activity, whose Outcome focused on classroom instruction according to government standards, and failed to ensure a drug-free campus. However, Wanda had used the activity to transition her son from homeschooling into public education, and had assumed a safe, supervised environment. The contradiction led to her son developing an addiction and Wanda questioning her identity and innate personal value, and giving up power in her member agency when it came to running her business.

Second Career Activity. Wanda built a business and adapted to competitive pressures in order to survive and grow, but her son's addiction undermined the identity and confidence that had supported her first career activity. As a result, a second career activity emerged. Table R.14 compares the first and second career activities.

Wanda's Outcome expanded into growing her realigned business while caretaking family challenges with her mother and son. Her Object expanded to delegating more business monitoring and decision-making to her partner and service providers while she engaged more with family crises.

Changes in Subject. Wanda's identity shifted towards excluding and her arousal shifted towards undermining as she perceived her son's addiction as a personal failure, and felt in-over-her-head regarding the financial advice from her service providers. When that advice led to the collapse of her business, she felt a loss of purpose. Not only did she need to divest herself of the

persona of being a boss, but also handle the frustration of the new owners declining to ask her for help, and her own sense of feeling unqualified to offer expertise to others.

Changes in Instruments. Wanda's scope narrowed because although she still argued with her partner and service providers, she started "acquiescing" when she disagreed or lacked understanding. Her referral style remained passive because she depended on the people already known to her. Although her trust in herself relied on proof and had been undermined due to her perceived failure, her trust in the people she was acquiescing to was unproved with respect to the kinds of investment decisions they were making. Personally, her engagement with chance increased because she addressed her mother's illness and son's addiction. In contrast, in business she did not closely monitor and manage key issues: the accuracy of her new accountants in tracking losses; the prudence of her advisors' advice about investments; the sensitivity to debt of her partner's spouse; and the sensitivity to cashflow of a major distributor of her products. Her personal value in business shifted to innate as she interpreted her perceived failure as a mother as an overall lack of judgment that extended to business as well. As a result, her change approach shifted to submitting when she started "acquiescing" to her partners and advisors, ultimately giving in to the sale of her business when it was unable to support its debt.

Changes in Rules. Wanda's power and freedom remained high given her position as the business owner until the business was overcome with debt and she was forced to sell its assets.

Changes in Community. Market opportunity remained supportive. Even when her business failed, Wanda still had customers. However, her resource availability was low for a number of reasons. First, she travelled frequently to care for her mother in the United States, which not only shifted her stretch to high but also used additional time and resources. Second, she depended on accountants and business advisers who provided reports and advice that were not reliable, which not only shifted presentation to inconsistent but also meant her business was in financial trouble. Her accountants miscalculated catastrophic losses, expected government funding was never paid, a distributor launched a lawsuit based on a distribution error, and her partner's husband wanted out of the businesses. These many problems shifted chance alignment shifted to low, resulting in the collapse of her business due to its debt load.

Changes in Division of Labour. Priority alignment was high in terms of Wanda's staff, products and customers but had shifted to low in terms of investments and debts: her advisers had encouraged costly investments that Wanda had not fully understood; her partner's husband no longer supported the business; and a key distributor preferred a lawsuit rather than waiting for a refund after a shipping error. Member agency had shifted to unbalanced because she had given up power in decision-making to others, and the resulting debt load of her business meant she was powerless to rescue it.

Interactions Between Wanda's Second Activity and Neighbouring Systems. Wanda's second career activity engaged with a professional services activity, and a distribution activity.

The professional services activity pursued an Outcome of selling services in financial reporting and business advice. The Object comprised monitoring and reporting revenues and expenses of clients, and interpreting the financial impacts of government policy to inform decision-making. Wanda relied on her first "great" accountant until his untimely death. She engaged new accountants who missed years of catastrophic losses. Additionally she depended on advisers who encouraged large investments that were never repaid by expected government funding. As a result, her business grew an unsustainable debt load.

The distribution activity pursued an Outcome of connecting manufacturers' products to community resellers. The Object comprised sourcing and purchasing products related to the juvenile market then selling them to resellers. Wanda had previously rescued her business from competition by engaging new distributors. However, a large mix-up in an order required a refund that she could not make quickly, and which her distributor required to meet its own obligations to a bank. As a result, the distributor launched a lawsuit that ended Wanda's business.

Table R.14

Comparing the First and Second Career Activities of Wanda

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity	Second Activity
Outcome		supplement husband's income with the freedom to homeschool children	Growing realigned business while caretaking family
Object		home-grown business sourcing and selling juvenile clothing	delegating business monitoring and decisions while addressing family crises
Subject	Identity	Belonging	Excluding
	Arousal	Encouraging	Undermining (in over head)
Instruments	Scope	Wide	Narrower
	Referral style	Passively familiar	Passively familiar
	Trust	Unproved	Proved for self Unproved for others
	Engagement with Chance	High for work Low for son	High for actions Low for monitoring
	Personal Value	Developed for work Innate for personal	Innate
	Change Approach	Purposeful	Submitting
	Rules	Power	High
Freedom		High	High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive	Supportive
	Resource availability	High	Low in reality
	Feedback tempo	Short	N/A
	Presentation	Consistent for business Inconsistent for personal	Inconsistent
	Stretch	Low	High for mother's care
	Local qualification	N/A	N/A
	Chance alignment	High for business Low for personal	Low
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High for business Low for personal	Low
	Member agency	Unbalanced	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising From the Second Career Activity. Wanda continued to grow her realigned business while caretaking her family. However, financial catastrophe arising from her reliance on delegation revealed contradictions within her second career activity.

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Wanda sought to rebalance work and life by relying more on other people to supplement her judgment. However, her excluding identity after

losing confidence and acquiescing to others, and her undermining arousal from feeling in-over-her-head when addressing their proposals, revealed a primary contradiction between the high use value of applying her skills to help her son and terminally-ill mother versus the low exchange value of deferring to others to manage her business.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between Wanda's Subject and Rules and her Division of Labour. Her low priority alignment and unbalanced member agency with her advisors revealed a contradiction with her identity and arousal. Her damaged identity and sense of overwhelm held her back from ensuring she fully understood proposals and mitigated their risks before acquiescing to them.

Instruments. Wanda experienced contradictions between her Instruments and her Subject needs and preferred Rules. For instance, her excluded identity and undermining arousal revealed contradictions with her habits for personal value, scope and change approach. After her son's addiction, Wanda's innate personal value had led her to question her own judgment, narrow her scope of business monitoring and decision-making, and shift to a submitting change approach of giving in to others.

Wanda experienced contradictions between her Instruments and her Community. For instance, the low chance alignment she experienced from accounting errors, bad investment advice, and a devastating lawsuit revealed inconsistent presentation in her advisors' competence, resource availability, and her distributors' tolerance for errors. These problems revealed contradictions with her lowered engagement with chance for exploring options and monitoring for threats.

Wanda experienced contradictions between her Instruments and her Division of Labour. Her unbalanced member agency with advisers and business partner, and her low priority alignment with her advisers, partner's husband and a key distributor, revealed contradictions with her habits of relying on passive referrals and unproved trust. She relied on the judgment of her advisers and business partner even when not fully understanding their proposals and lacking proof of their competence in that realm.

Neighbouring Activity Systems. Wanda experienced quaternary contradictions between her career activity and activities for professional services and distribution.

First, a contradiction emerged with the professional services activity. The Outcome was selling services in financial reporting and business advice to grow their own businesses. However, Wanda relied on the activity to replace her shaken judgment for her own business. The contradiction in outcomes led to paying for professional services that crippled her business with unsustainable debt and undermined her entire career activity.

Second, a contradiction emerged with the distributor activity. The Outcome was reselling Wanda's products to community resellers. However, Wanda relied on the distributor to become a lender to her business when she shipped the wrong products to the distributor and was unable to quickly accept the returns and provide refund. The contradiction in outcomes led to the distributor filing a devastating lawsuit that ended her business.

Third Career Activity. When her business assets were sold to cover its debts, Wanda suffered a “catastrophic loss” that undermined the Outcome and Object of her current career activity and triggered the emergence of a third career activity.

Wanda's Outcome expanded into facilitating organizational insight and improvement for others. Her Object expanded into repackaging herself with post-graduate training to supplement her diverse practical experiences with theory, mentorship and credentials. Table R.15 compares the second and third career activities.

Changes in Subject. The new owners of Wanda's business rejected her help, which initially left her feeling "crazy" but a friend invited her to help address challenges at an anti-bullying nonprofit organization. Wanda realized that she wanted to become someone who could help clients solve their own problems. As a result, her identity shifted to belonging and her arousal shifted to encouraging as she trained for that role through an organizational development degree.

Changes in Instruments. Wanda's scope widened as she embraced consulting on complex issues in which she facilitated clients through problem-solving. Her referral style remained passive as she received work from a friend and a classmate. Her trust remained unproved for others and proved for herself. For instance, she felt vulnerable to the unproved expertise of hierarchical instructors in her classrooms, but for herself she sought credentialing to enable consulting, and offered her services in the manner of a facilitating coach rather than an expert. Her engagement with chance shifted to high as she embraced work from her friend's nonprofit, explored educational options, enrolled in organizational development, and embraced a research project referred by a classmate. Her personal value shifted to developed and her change approach shifted to purposeful as she sought education to repackage herself as a business coach, embraced a research project as an opportunity to learn from expertise while contributing herself, and chose a Master's project to apply her learning to real-world problem-solving.

Changes in Rules. Wanda's power was high personally because she enrolled in an educational program, but was low for work because she depended on contracts from a friend or a university. Her freedom shifted to high because she focused on projects that supported her style of coaching and facilitation.

Changes in Community. Wanda's market opportunity remained supportive because she found work with a friend's nonprofit, a professor's coaching research, and a youth protection agency with a staff retention problem. Resource availability shifted to high as she was able to enrol in a local Master's. Feedback tempo was short as she enjoyed watching the impact of her work as she performed it. Presentation was inconsistent in the classroom but consistent in practice. Classrooms were hierarchical despite being marketed as collaborative and transformative, but Wanda's work provided the kind of facilitative experiences she desired. Stretch shifted to low because her Master's, research job and thesis were all completed locally. Local qualification was helping because her status as a graduate student made her eligible for the research job. Chance alignment shifted to high because she was accepted into the Master's, hired for the research assistantship, and accepted for the complex, problem-solving retention project for her thesis.

Changes in Division of Labour. Wanda's priority alignment shifted to high because her friend's anti-bullying non-profit, a professor's coaching research and her thesis work all resonated with her priorities of facilitating others to improve their organizations. Her member agency shifted to balanced because she embraced collegial research with a professor and facilitative problem-solving on her projects.

Interactions Between Wanda's Third Activity and Neighbouring Systems. Wanda's career activity interacted with three neighbouring systems: nonprofit, graduate school, and academic research.

The nonprofit client activity pursued an Outcome of reducing bullying, child abuse and violence. The Object included producing and using classroom and community resources to reduce bullying and violence. Their resource availability depended on funding from governments and labour unions. Wanda engaged with the activity first, as a source of work and encouragement after the loss of her business, and subsequently as an opportunity to experience "a very interesting synergy" with her studies.

The graduate school activity pursued an Outcome of credentialing students in organizational development. The Object included professor-driven classroom instruction in theory, group projects with classmates, and a thesis project where theory could be applied to practice. The Division of Labour included professors who conducted research, and classmates in group projects. Wanda successfully engaged with the activity to "repackage" herself and feel belonging with a community of problem-solving facilitators credentialed in organizational development. She used group projects to develop relationships with classmates, resulting in a referral for a research assistantship. She used her thesis to explore the hands-on application of theory to problem-solving, experiencing encouraging arousal from a short feedback tempo of success.

The academic research activity pursued an Outcome of generating new knowledge and research skills within the discipline of coaching. The Object included a professor securing funding and engaging students to apply research methods to answer disciplinary questions. The research activity increased market opportunity, allowing Wanda to "make some money while I finished my degree, and it's all about coaching. So, I love it." Additionally, she worked with a trusted classmate, and felt encouraging arousal from a belonging identity, and from a balanced member agency because "I like the feeling of being able to contribute to something that we're all growing together."

Table R.15
Comparing the Second and Third Career Activities of Wanda

AT Element	Concepts	Second Activity	Third Activity
Outcome		Growing realigned business while caretaking family	Facilitating organizational insight and improvement for others
Object		Delegating business monitoring and decisions while addressing family crises	Repackaging herself with post-graduate training to supplement her diverse practical experiences with theory, mentorship and credentials
Subject	Identity	Excluding	Belonging
	Arousal	Undermining (in over head)	Encouraging
Instruments	Scope	Narrower	Wider
	Referral style	Passively familiar	Passively familiar
	Trust	Proved for self Unproved for others	Proved for self Unproved for others

AT Element	Concepts	Second Activity	Third Activity
	Engagement with Chance	High for actions Low for monitoring	High
	Personal Value	Innate	Developed
	Change Approach	Submitting	Purposeful
Rules	Power	High	High for development Low for work
	Freedom	High	High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive	Supportive
	Resource availability	Low in reality	High
	Feedback tempo	N/A	Short
	Presentation	Inconsistent	Inconsistent in class Consistent in practice
	Stretch	High for mother's care	Low
	Local qualification	N/A	Helping
	Chance alignment	Low	High
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	Low	High
	Member agency	Unbalanced	Balanced

At the time of the interview, Wanda's third activity was providing a satisfying experience of career transition in which she experienced a short feedback tempo and encouraging arousal because "in the work that I've done... it was incredible, the changes that can happen."

How Does Activity Theory Explain Susan's Career Pathway? Susan's career path began with setting aside her political science degree to sell beer through a call centre. She moved onto consulting on call centre quality improvement, and then running an anxiety disorders hotline. After divorcing her breadwinner husband, she sought more remunerative work by pursuing a Master's in organizational development and related consulting gigs. This section uses activity systems to explain how Susan navigated her career challenges, with her first system shown in Table R.16.

First Career Activity. In her first career activity, Susan pursued the Outcome of engaging in stimulating work to supplement homemaking and childcare. Her Object comprised seeking jobs that leveraged her people skills without requiring disciplinary credentials. She experienced encouraging arousal from her interactions with people, which provided stimulation beyond studying, homemaking and childcare. However, her identity was excluding. For instance, during her undergraduate study, she failed to engage with political science and was instead a "party animal." After graduation, she abandoned the discipline and joined a call centre, joking it was the job for people with her kind of degree. When she explored options for change, she excluded an MBA because it didn't reflect who she was, and she initially excluded organizational development because she didn't understand the title.

Susan used a variety of Instruments to pursue her desired Outcome. Her scope was narrow because she focused on employment roles in telesales and telehelp, and referrals for call centre consulting. She relied on a passively familiar referral style, and depended on proved trust. For instance, her unstable income in consulting relied on word-of-mouth referrals based on her past performance, and her anxiety disorders role, and her coffee chat with a career coach arose through trusted, mutual friends. Within her Community, Susan's engagement with chance was high for taking action because she took roles as they arose. However her engagement was low

for exploring multiple options before making a commitment. Her personal value was innate because she focused on leveraging her people skills in uncredentialed jobs, and initially rejected a Master's program until a career coach convinced her that the program was "her," meaning that it fit her identity. Finally, her change approach was primarily purposeful. Although she submitted to her first job in telesales because she felt her degree was useless, she pursued consulting to augment her mental stimulation as a homemaker, she shifted to telehelp for a more stable income, and she met with a career coach to find ways to increase that income.

With respect to Rules Susan's power was low because she depended on employment roles and consulting gigs created by others. However, her freedom was high because she maintained her ability to schedule work and perform remotely to accommodate caring for and traveling with her children.

In Susan's Community market opportunity was supportive because her services were required from call centres needing salespeople, quality control consulting, and telehelp, albeit at low wages. Her resource availability was initially high. For instance, she was able to complete an undergraduate degree and depend on her husband's income while balancing childcare with word-of-mouth consulting. Divorce reduced her resources, but she was still able to access a career coach for a coffee chat. Presentation in her community was inconsistent for her political science degree, which she considered useless. Her stretch was low because she sourced her degree, jobs and career coach locally. Her chance alignment was high because she was able to secure work, albeit with low or unstable incomes.

Susan's Division of Labour comprised her breadwinner husband, her friends who connected her with opportunities, and the coach. After her political science degree, Susan found priority alignment in people-oriented work such as consulting on improving call centres, and providing telehelp for anxiety disorders. She also aligned with a career coach who recommended that she complete his Master's program. Her member agency was unbalanced, initially depending on her workaholic husband's financial support, and then after her divorce, needing to become financially independent to support herself and her children.

Table R.16

First Career Activity of Susan

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
Outcome		engaging in stimulating work to supplement homemaking and childcare
Object		seeking jobs that leveraged people skills without requiring disciplinary credentials
Subject	Identity	Excluding
	Arousal	Encouraging
Instruments	Scope	Narrow
	Referral style	Passively familiar
	Trust	Proved
	Engagement with Chance	High for taking action Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Innate

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
	Change Approach	Purposeful
Rules	Power	Low
	Freedom	High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive but limited
	Resource availability	High until divorce
	Feedback tempo	N/A
	Presentation	Inconsistent
	Stretch	Low
	Local qualification	N/A
	Chance alignment	High
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High
	Member agency	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising from the First Career Activity. Susan secured work that built on her people skills while providing stimulation and income. However, her divorce and subsequent loss of her husband's resources revealed contradictions within her career activity, as defined in Table R.17.

Table R.17
Kinds of Contradictions Related to Activity Systems

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Quaternary
Stresses between use-value (functionality) and exchange-value (worth in trade)	Stresses between elements of a system (e.g. stresses between Rules and Instruments)	Stresses between one form of the activity and an expanded form with a broader Object and Outcome	Stresses between different activity systems (e.g. stresses between career navigation and employer recruiting)

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Susan sought work that leveraged her people skills without requiring credentials, and gave her the freedom to perform childcare. However, her loss of resources after a divorce revealed a primary contradiction between the high use-value she experienced in using her skills for childcare versus the low exchange-value she received from her lack of steady work or the pay grade of a credentialed professional.

Similarly, secondary contradictions arose between her Division of Labour and Community versus her preferred Rules. Her unbalanced member agency being dependent on her husband's resources, and then struggling to support herself and children, revealed a contradiction with her preferred freedom to only take work that allowed her to perform childcare.

Instruments. Susan experienced contradictions between her Instruments and her Subject needs. Her experiences of excluding identity during her political science degree, when considering an MBA, and when resisting a recommendation to study organizational development

revealed contradictions with her low engagement with chance in terms of actively exploring options based on her needs.

Susan also experienced contradictions between her Instruments and Community. Her experiences of low resources after her divorce and limited market opportunity for her skillset, revealed contradictions with her narrow scope (which focused on uncredentialed, telephone-based work), her passive referral style (which relied on word-of-mouth referrals), and her innate personal value (which focused on her proven people skills and resisted options she did not understand).

Second Career Activity. Susan sourced gigs in telephone-oriented people work, but her divorce reduced her resource availability and changed her role from a homemaker pursuing stimulation to a breadwinner who needed to support her household with a larger and more stable income. Her financial needs and her meeting with a career coach who opened a new option that fit her identity undermined the Outcome and Object of her current career activity and triggered the emergence of a second career activity. Table R.18 compares the first and second career activities.

Susan's Outcome expanded to becoming a credentialed professional in organizational development. Her Object expanded to pursuing disciplinary training and work that leveraged her skills in interviewing, presenting and recommending.

Changes in Subject. Susan's identity shifted to belonging because a career coach had convinced her that organizational development was "her." As a result, she applied to a Master's program multiple times despite rejections. As part of the program, she explored her identity to find biases and wrote a thesis on the problem of empathizing with employees against management. In practice, she suffered imposter syndrome (feeling she would be exposed as a fraud) but focused on her identity as a natural helper who could make people comfortable, and used her past identities as an employee, manager and boss to improve relatability with her workshop audiences. Her arousal expanded to accept undermining sensations but manage them to access the encouraging people-oriented work she enjoyed. For instance, she suffered severe anxiety during her Master's and initial gigs but managed her emotions using EFT tapping, tears, wine and asking her mentor for advice. She also used her undermining arousal from job coaching and a change management gig referred from her hairdresser to recognize the kinds of interactions she needed to be happy. As a result, she experienced encouraging arousal from listening, empowering, and sharing during interviews and workshops.

Changes in Instruments. Susan's scope remained narrow because she focused on gigs where she was interviewing and presenting data for others, or facilitating with pre-existing workshop materials. Her referral style expanded to include active surveying for training and tips. For instance after multiple rejections of her Master's application, Susan sought meetings with faculty members for help. After graduation, she sought meetings with practitioners through LinkedIn to collect tips and contacts. However, her sources of work still depended on passive familiarity, such as becoming a job coach within a service she had used, taking a referral from her hairdresser, and breaking into organizational development based on a contact from a class project. Her trust remained proved. In response to rejections of her Master's application she met with faculty to increase trust in her potential to succeed. Her organizational development gigs arose from trusted relationships with a contact she impressed during a class project, a hairdresser who babysat her children, a job coaching organization in which she had participated, and an

employee assistance organization for whom she had successfully related with audiences. Her engagement with chance remained high for activities, such as using a class project to prove herself, and taking gigs in job coaching, workshop facilitations, and organizational development, but her engagement with exploration of options remained low as she focused on what worked. Her personal value shifted to developed. For instance, she adapted in the face of multiple rejections of her Master's application; she used her thesis to identify her own biases to serve future work; she learned EFT tapping to manage anxiety; she sought advice from practitioners on LinkedIn and from her boss and mentor during gigs; and she adjusted her facilitation during workshops to better relate to her audiences. Susan's change approach remained purposeful as she pursued training and work that leveraged her fulfillment in interviewing, listening and presenting, and avoided roles that lacked such interactions.

Changes in Rules. During transitions, Susan had high power when she began exploring options with a job coach, applied to graduate education, enrolled in a coaching and networking group, and initiated chats with practitioners on LinkedIn. However, she had low power in work because she depended on offers of gigs. She maintained high freedom by avoiding gigs that lacked human interaction, modifying prefabricated workshops to improve relatability with audiences, and hesitating to apply for full-time work at a consultancy to preserve her ability to choose clients and manage workloads.

Changes in Community. Susan's market opportunity remained supportive because she was able to secure a course project developing materials for a school board, and gigs in coaching, facilitating workshops and change management. Her gigs in change management arose from multiple transport organizations undergoing change in her city. Her resources remained high because she was able to source a local Master's program and pay with her savings, find helpful practitioners on LinkedIn, and enrol in a job coaching and networking service. She coped with a long feedback tempo to gain entry to her Master's program, but after graduation pursued a short tempo in practice. For instance, she left job coaching because clients failed to get work, but embraced interviewing employees for change management and sharing her own vulnerabilities facilitating workshops because of the energizing interactions. After her transition, Susan experienced inconsistent presentation. For instance, job coaching clients could not find work, which undermined her sense of helping; an organizational development referral lacked interactions with people; wellness workshops used slides that alienated audiences; and organizational development clients rejected advice they paid for. Susan benefited from low stretch because she was able to locally source a Master's program, and gigs in coaching and organizational development. Additionally, she benefited from the local qualification of accent-free bilingualism, which got her gigs working for organizations that communicated in English and French across national borders, or preferred to hire one person to facilitate workshops in both languages. Susan primarily experienced high chance alignment because she was able to secure acceptance to a Master's program, connected with a future employer through a class project, met with helpful practitioners through LinkedIn, and secured roles in job coaching, organizational development, and facilitating workshops.

Changes in Division of Labour. Susan's Division of Labour incorporated faculty in organizational development who helped her application, a hairdresser who provided referrals, and a consultant she impressed on a class project who became an employer and mentor. Her priority alignment was primarily high because she used her purposeful change approach to seek ways to fulfill her identity as a natural helper, and provide encouraging arousal. For instance,

when graduate studies rejected her, she enlisted the help of faculty who shared her values. When job coaching or a referral gig lacked a sense of empowering or interacting, she abandoned the roles. When wellness workshops failed to resonate with audiences, she incorporated her own life experiences to connect with people. Although change management clients rejected some advice, Susan still felt able to empower employees by listening to them and communicating their needs. After several successful gigs, her source of change management work invited her to apply for a full-time position.

Interactions Between Susan's First Activity and Neighbouring Systems. Susan's second career activity interacted with the neighbouring activities of school admissions, and graduate school.

The school admissions activity pursued an Outcome of filtering applicants to ensure candidates were likely to complete a program. The Object incorporated a review of past academic performance to predict future success, using the Instruments of undergraduate grades. The Division of Labour also incorporated educators within a discipline. Susan engaged with the admissions activity to access a graduate program proposed by a career coach to improve her income, but was rejected multiple times.

The graduate school activity pursued an Outcome was credentialing students in organizational development. The Object incorporated organizational development theory and practices, and local community challenges. Educators used Instruments such as service learning, personal reflection, and an academic thesis to address practical, personal and theoretical aspects, subject to institutional Rules. The Division of Labour incorporated educators as well as community members needing help, mentor practitioners, and classmates. Susan successfully engaged with the activity to join a community with which she felt belonging: credentialed professionals in organizational development. She used the course project to meet and impress a future employer, and she used the personal reflection and her thesis to explore bias and employee-manager empathy, which supported her future work in interviewing and presenting employee issues to management.

Table R.18
Comparing the First and Second Career Activities of Susan

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity	Second Activity
Outcome		engaging in stimulating work to supplement homemaking and childcare	becoming a credentialed professional in organizational development
Object		seeking jobs that leveraged people skills without requiring disciplinary credentials	pursuing disciplinary training and work that leveraged her skills in interviewing, presenting and recommending
Subject	Identity	Excluding	Belonging
	Arousal	Encouraging	Undermining apprehension Encouraging practice
Instruments	Scope	Narrow	Narrow
	Referral style	Passively familiar	Active survey for training Passive referral for gigs
	Trust	Proved	Proved

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity	Second Activity
	Engagement with Chance	High for taking action Low for exploring	High for taking action Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Innate	Developed
	Change Approach	Purposeful	Purposeful
Rules	Power	Low	High for transition Low for gigs
	Freedom	High	High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive but limited	Supportive
	Resource availability	High until divorce	High
	Feedback tempo	N/A	Long for training Short for practice
	Presentation	Inconsistent	Inconsistent Consistent for narrow scope
	Stretch	Low	Low
	Local qualification	N/A	Helping
	Chance alignment	High	High
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High	High
	Member agency	Unbalanced	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising From the Second Career Activity. Susan secured multiple gigs in workshop facilitation and change management. However, her challenges in securing desired amounts of work revealed contradictions within her second career activity at the time of her interview. The contradictions provide options for exploring further change.

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Susan sought work consistent with her identity as a "natural helper" credentialed in organizational development. She secured ongoing gigs but other than her mentor, her personal network was not helpful for finding desired work. Although she was invited to apply for a full-time position, she feared losing her freedom to schedule her workload, perform work according to her priorities for interaction, and avoid clients in "immoral" industries. As a result, a primary contradiction was revealed between the high use-value Susan experienced from controlling the scale, style and clients for her work, versus the low exchange-value she experienced from not committing her time and skills more broadly.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between Susan's Subject and Rules and her Division of Labour. The low priority alignment she experienced with job coaching and a referral from her hairdresser revealed a contradiction with her identity as a "natural helper." The way she defined "helping" appeared to require direct listening and recommending but not problem-solving.

Instruments. Secondary contradictions arose between Susan's Instruments and her Division of Labour and Community. The low priority alignment and inconsistent presentation she experienced job coaching failing clients, working without interactions with stakeholders, facilitating workshops with alienating materials, and avoiding a full-time position to prevent potential work from "immoral" clients, revealed a contradiction with her passively-familiar referrals, her narrowly-defined scope of task-oriented roles performed for others, and her low engagement with chance for exploring opportunities and options prior to taking or avoiding them.

Community. Several secondary contradictions arose between Susan's Community and other elements of her activity. The undermining arousal Susan experienced as a job coach revealed a contradiction with characteristics of her community experienced by immigrants: undermining market opportunity, low resource availability for retraining, long feedback tempo for securing work, and local qualifications for language and re-credentialing. As long as her clients failed in the environment, Susan could not feel like a helper.

Neighbouring Activity Systems. Susan experienced a quaternary contradiction between her career activity and school admissions whose Outcome focused on filtering applicants to ensure candidates were likely to complete a program based on undergraduate grades. However, Susan had poor undergraduate grades in an unrelated topic of political science. The contradiction meant that Susan was denied access to a new credential (which alumni believed fit her identity) because she had low achievement in an unrelated credential that she considered to be useless. Susan's transition depended on her purposeful change approach of enlisting faculty to help her overcome that barrier.

How Does Activity Theory Explain Helen's Career Pathway? Helen's career path began with translation and secretarial work. When she experienced boredom and dissatisfaction, she pursued a Master's in organizational development, then shifted into headhunting. When she experienced burnout, she transitioned into career counselling until semi-retirement. This section uses activity systems to explain how Helen navigated her career challenges, with her first system shown in Table R.19.

First Career Activity. Helen pursued the Outcome of qualifying for a profession, which would include translation, secretarial work, and consulting. Her Object comprised obtaining credentialed training, such as a linguistics degree, typing course, or Master's in organizational development, and then taking structured, task-based work such as translating technical documents, creating formatted reports, or applying headhunting criteria to filter candidates for a role.

As the Subject, her identity was excluding and her arousal primarily undermining. She confessed that she didn't take herself seriously as a professional woman. Although she described herself as someone who liked to listen to and help others, she pursued structured, task-based work such as translating technical documents where she was "stuck in a book," creating reports as a bilingual secretary (a boring job she felt was beneath her), and working for headhunters to filter candidates for a job when she would prefer a "social worker" role of helping candidates instead. Headhunting at a large firm led to burnout and a desire to escape. However, she had felt encouraging arousal listening to life stories at a businesswomen's association and from candidates she interviewed while headhunting.

Helen used a variety of Instruments to pursue her desired Outcome. Her scope was primarily narrow because she focused on tasks such as translating documents, creating reports, and applying headhunting criteria. However, she widened her scope when she listened to secretarial colleagues, presented their complaints to management, then helped address their problems with a consultant. She used passive referrals for contacts such as her colleagues who complained, a consultant assigned to help her who recommended a women's business association, the women there who shared stories, a consultant boyfriend who championed her career advancement, and an internship employer who offered full-time work. Helen did actively survey contacts to move into an accounting firm that also did consulting, but she remained a

headhunter. Helen relied on proved trust, such as a female consultant who recommended a businesswomen's association, a consultant boyfriend who championed her Master's enrolment, an internship employer who hired her full-time as a headhunter, and colleagues who offered an interviewing contract to fund her sabbatical. However, relying on proved trust meant she backed away from her ambition of becoming a consultant each time a romantic partner betrayed her and undermined her sense of judgment. Helen's engagement with chance was high for training and tasks such as taking a linguistics degree and translation gigs; going to typing school and taking secretarial work; engaging with coworkers' complaints and the chance to address them; going to a business women's association; pursuing a Master's; and taking an internship and full-time work in headhunting. However, Helen had low engagement for exploring and monitoring for threats. For instance, she committed to translation, secretarial work and graduate study without first exploring the nature of practice; and she entered multiple relationships that undermined her identity and confidence.

Although Helen embraced development in terms of secretarial training and learning social skills at a social group, her personal value was innate for her ambition to be a consultant. She twice abandoned her plans when an intimate partner's betrayal undermined her confidence. Her change approach was primarily submitting because she took unwanted gigs in technical translation, and settled for diversions though boring secretarial work and headhunting rather than pursuing a role related to her needs, which may or may not have overlapped with her ambition to become a consultant.

With respect to Rules her power was primarily low because she depended on translation gigs, and routine employment as a secretary and headhunter. Her freedom was similarly low, with translation, secretarial work and headhunting requiring confining structures, formatting and criteria.

In Helen's Community, market opportunity was supportive because she was able to secure work as a translator, bilingual secretary and headhunter. Her resource availability was high because she sourced training in linguistics, typing, and organizational development, and received a consultants' help her with secretarial complaints, and a referral to a businesswomen's association. Presentation was primarily inconsistent because her training in linguistics and in her Master's lacked practical, confidence-building experiences, and her translation, secretarial and headhunting work were more confining than expected. Her stretch was primarily low after her undergraduate degree because she locally sourced her training and work. She created a helping local qualification by selling herself as a bilingual secretary. Her alignment of chance was high because she secured work in roles she pursued, turned a complaint to management into a project with consultants, found helpful role models at a businesswomen's association, and leveraged her consultant relationships to enrol in a Master's program.

Helen's Division of Labour included secretaries, consultants, businesswomen association members, headhunters, and her intimate partners. For work tasks, priority alignment was low. She found secretarial work tedious, and the screening aspect of headhunting contrary to her "social worker" inclinations. For romantic partners, her alignment was low because they betrayed her on both occasions when she was preparing to enter consulting. In contrast, priority alignment was high for colleagues. For instance, consultants worked with her to improve communication with secretaries, referred her to a businesswomen's association to build her confidence, and helped her apply for a Master's. Her internship headhunter rehired her after her first romantic breakup, and headhunting colleagues supported her after she left her husband.

Helen's member agency was primarily unbalanced. For instance, as a secretary she had little appreciation or responsibility, being low in the "pecking order" at a consultancy, and as a girlfriend and wife, her dependence on intimate partners twice derailed her intentions to enter consulting.

Interactions Between Helen's Activity and Neighbouring Systems. Helen's career activity interacted with several neighbouring systems: a university activity and a trade school activity.

The university activity pursued an Outcome of credentialing students with a degree recognized by industry. The Division of Labour included professors and classmates who would be part of future alumni events. Helen engaged with the university activity twice: first to earn a degree in linguistics to become a translator, and second to earn a Master's to prepare her for consulting. In each case, she lacked a key element upon graduation: translation experience for linguistics, and confidence from her Master's to put ideas into action.

The trade school activity pursued an Outcome of quickly training students in a practical skill needed by industry. The Object incorporated hands-on practice and demonstration of capability. Helen engaged with trade school to learn typing, which helped her transition into a job she felt was beneath her: bilingual secretarial work at a major consulting firm.

Table R.19

First Career Activity of Helen

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
Outcome		qualifying for a profession
Object		obtaining credentialed training then taking structured, task-based work
Subject	Identity	Excluding
	Arousal	Undermining
Instruments	Scope	Narrow
	Referral style	Active for ill-suited work Passively for needs
	Trust	Proved
	Engagement with Chance	High for taking action Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Innate
	Change Approach	Submitting
	Rules	Power
Freedom		Low
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive
	Resource availability	High
	Feedback tempo	Long
	Presentation	Inconsistent
	Stretch	Low

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity
	Local qualification	Helping
	Chance alignment	High
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	Low for work and romantic partners High for personal support
	Member agency	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising from the First Career Activity. Helen completed multiple rounds of training for and then obtaining detail-oriented work. However her challenges while performing translation, secretarial, and headhunting roles revealed contradictions within her career activity, as defined in Table R.20.

Table R.20
Kinds of Contradictions Related to Activity Systems

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Quaternary
Stresses between use-value (functionality) and exchange-value (worth in trade)	Stresses between elements of a system (e.g. stresses between Rules and Instruments)	Stresses between one form of the activity and an expanded form with a broader Object and Outcome	Stresses between different activity systems (e.g. stresses between career navigation and employer recruiting)

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Helen successfully obtained credentials and found work as a translator, secretary and headhunter. However, in translation she felt trapped in a dictionary, in secretarial work she felt bored and disrespected, and in headhunting she felt conflicted by a desire to help candidates rather than screen them out. As such, a primary contradiction was revealed between the high exchange-value Helen experienced from using communication skills to translate technical documents, create structured reports, or filter job candidates, versus the high use-value she could experience from using those skills to listen to and help others succeed.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between her Subject and Rules and her Division of Labour. The low priority alignment she experienced from the detailed and constrained production work as a translator, secretary and headhunter, revealed a contradiction with her identity as a helping "social worker" type who liked to get the life story out of people she met.

Instruments. Helen experienced contradictions between her Instruments and her Subject needs and preferred Rules. For instance, her excluding identity, undermining arousal, and lack of power and freedom revealed contradictions with her scope, referral style, personal value and change approach. By defining her scope narrowly, she pursued task-oriented roles that lacked power or freedom (even after earning a Master's degree intended for consulting). Relying on that scope, she successfully employed an actively-surveyed referral style to obtain unsatisfying roles at prestigious consulting firms. Her innate personal value meant that her lack of confidence led her to avoid pursuing her ambitions. For instance, she abandoned plans to be a consultant on both occasions an intimate partner cheated on her. Instead, she had a submitting change approach where she took on tasks for others that prioritized detail and structure rather than listening and helping.

Second, Helen experienced contradictions between Instruments and Community. For instance, long feedback tempos and inconsistent presentations revealed contradictions with her low engagement with chance in terms of exploring options before committing to them. As a result, she committed to choices that lacked what she needed: secretarial work and headhunting without freedom, advancement and security; university degrees that lacked hands-on experience or confidence-building; and positions at consulting firms in which she suffered from workaholism while never moving into consulting.

Third, Helen experienced contradictions between her Instruments and Division of Labour. For instance, her low priority alignment and unbalanced member agency revealed contradictions with her engagement with chance, her trust and referral style. For ill-fitting roles as a secretary and headhunter, Helen had high engagement with chance: she took training and task-oriented jobs, and actively surveyed contacts to enter prestigious firms. In contrast, her subject needs depended on passive referrals that she earned by proving herself, such as a referral to a businesswomen's association from a consultant colleague. In both cases, she used low engagement for exploring options or monitoring for threats. Her unreliable romantic partners betrayed her when she wanted to transition into consulting, and the jobs she worked hard to get into left her burned out and unsatisfied.

Neighbouring Activity Systems. Helen experienced quaternary contradictions between her career activity and the university activity whose Outcome was credentialing students with a degree recognized by industry, whether in linguistics or organizational development. However, Helen engaged with the activities to prepare for roles as a translator or consultant without knowing how to enter and perform those roles. As a result, Helen earned credentials for several careers that she quickly abandoned in favour of unsatisfying task-oriented work for others.

Second Career Activity. Helen repeatedly sourced training and work but found herself stuck in a dictionary, or bored and feeling she was better than secretarial work, or facing burnout headhunting and feeling she was never as good as her last assignment. Her detail-oriented work did not match her identity as a "social worker" wanting to listen to life stories of strangers and help them. Despite training to become a consultant, she abandoned her plans on both occasions that romantic relationships fell apart. Her dissatisfaction, burnout and lost marriage undermined the Outcome and Object of her current career activity and triggered the emergence of a second career activity.

Helen's Outcome expanded into growing opportunities to connect young people with their desired work. Her Object expanded into channeling headhunting experiences into helping students get work for summer, internships and after graduation. Table R.21 compares the first and second career activities.

Changes in Subject. Helen's identity shifted to belonging as she moved away from performing structured tasks for others and towards helping young people connect with their desired work. Although her initial lack of income led to anxiety, her arousal shifted to encouraging when she secured a full-time role at a career centre. She described herself as a "Pollyanna" of positivity.

Changes in Instruments. Helen's scope widened as she planned a sabbatical to explore her needs, developed a job-hunting position with a professor, moved into a career centre and grew her responsibilities into management of multiple departments. Her referral style was passive, and her trust proved as she relied on a favourite professor at an alumni event, and progressed in a

career centre through a combination of her boss's grooming and proved performance until she applied for the top job.

Her engagement with chance was high and her personal value developed: she explored her needs during a sabbatical funded by her employers; attended an alumni event and co-created a desirable job with a professor; then grew her income and responsibilities by monitoring job ads and applying to career centres. Her change approach was purposeful because she defined her needs, used part-time work to pursue ways to satisfy those needs, and coped with anxiety and low income while seeking a more sustainable solution.

Changes in Rules. Helen increased her power by creating desired experiences such as a year-long exploratory sabbatical, and a part-time job-coordinator position to transition her career. Her freedom also increased because she used her sabbatical to explore herself, and used part-time headhunting contracts to manage her undesired workload and scheduling while shifting into more desired work. In career centres, she became subject to university rules, but enjoyed creativity in developing programs for students, and sharing in decision-making with a consensus-based boss. Her freedom continued until a new boss began to dismantle her work and take over decision-making.

Changes in Community. Helen's market opportunity remained supportive. Although she experienced stress from part-time positions, she found a growing amount of work at university career centres as they responded to the demand for cooperative education. Her resource availability remained high as she accessed an alumni event where a favourite professor helped her co-create a job to transition her career. Her feedback tempo shifted from long to short: although her income was initially unstable, her move to career centres resulted in regular increases in responsibilities until she was acting director. Presentation shifted to consistent as her move into an academic context initially fulfilled her expectations for respect and work-life balance.

Her stretch remained low as she sourced opportunities locally. Her experiences as a headhunter became a helping local qualification for assisting students with securing work. Finally, her chance alignment remained high. Although she had trouble sourcing enough part-time work to support her transition, once she sought full-time positions at career centres, she secured a stable career.

Changes in Division of Labour. Helen's priority alignment improved, and member agency became more balanced: she co-created a job-hunting position with a favourite professor, and worked for a consensus-based boss at a career centre who groomed her for promotion into his position.

Interactions Between Helen's Second Activity and Neighbouring Systems. When Helen became acting director of her career centre and sought a permanent promotion, her second activity interacted with a neighbouring recruiting activity that pursued an Outcome of engaging qualified personnel who demonstrated a desired philosophy. The Object comprised interviewing applicants to determine their fit with a desired philosophical direction. Instruments included a business-style philosophy and interview questions asking for examples of problem-solving. The Division of Labour included a new administrator seeking to change the centre's philosophy. Helen engaged with the recruiting activity with the expectation of confirming her wisdom and personal value with a permanent promotion. However, during her interview she responded with her natural "Pollyanna" positivity rather than the requested problem-solving approach. When the

recruiting activity resulted in a new boss with a top-down decision-making process and a disregard for Helen's input, Helen lost her identity as a valued leader at the career centre.

Table R.21

Comparing the First and Second Career Activities of Helen

AT Element	Concepts	First Activity	Second Activity
Outcome		qualifying for a profession	growing opportunities to connect young people with their desired work
Object		obtaining credentialed training then taking structured, task-based work	channeling headhunting experiences into helping students get work for summer, internships and after graduation
Subject	Identity	Excluding	Excluding for income Belonging for work
	Arousal	Undermining	Encouraging
Instruments	Scope	Narrow	Wider
	Referral style	Active for ill-suited work Passively for needs	Passively familiar
	Trust	Proved	Proved
	Engagement with Chance	High for taking action Low for exploring	High
	Personal Value	Innate	Developed
	Change Approach	Submitting	Purposeful
Rules	Power	Low	High
	Freedom	Low	High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive	Supportive
	Resource availability	High	High
	Feedback tempo	Long	Short
	Presentation	Inconsistent	Consistent
	Stretch	Low	Low
	Local qualification	Helping	Helping
Division of Labour	Chance alignment	High	High
	Priority alignment	Low for work and romantic partners High for personal support	High
	Member agency	Unbalanced	Balanced

Contradictions Arising from the Second Career Activity. Helen successfully transitioned her career from headhunting into full-time career counselling. However, her challenges in advancing her career and handling new administrators revealed contradictions within her second career activity.

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Helen found stable work and seniority at career centres by growing opportunities to connect young people with desired work. She was able to exchange her skills for compensation in a way that also supported her identity and arousal. However, the loss of an expected promotion and the subsequent installation of a new boss with opposing priorities meant she had to confront whether to stay in a radically changed environment or quit.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between her Subject and Rules and her Division of Labour. Helen's low priority alignment and unbalanced member agency with her new boss revealed contradictions with her identity. Helen was no longer treated in accordance with her identity as a wise and experienced administrator who deserved power over decision-making and a promotion.

Instruments. Helen experienced contradictions between her Instruments and Division of Labour. For instance, her low priority alignment and unbalanced member agency with her new hard-nosed boss revealed contradictions with her engagement with chance, her habit for trust, and her referral style. By depending on passive referrals from her boss and having low engagement with exploring options and monitoring for threats, she was unprepared for a change in administration with new expectations. As a result, she did not demonstrate what they wanted during her interview and instead expected unproved trust based on how she had performed with her old boss. As a result, Helen did not qualify for the promotion and lacked options for placements elsewhere that might have valued her background and approach.

Neighbouring Activity Systems. Helen experienced a quaternary contradiction between her career activity and the recruiting activity whose Outcome was engaging qualified personnel with a shared philosophy to perform tasks on an ongoing basis. However, Helen used the activity as an assessment of her value and wisdom within her career. As a result, a rejection by the recruiting activity undermined Helen's innate persona value, rather than simply indicating her lack of fit with the new regime.

Third Career Activity. Helen's loss of an expected promotion and conflicts with a new boss who excluded her from decisions undermined the Outcome and Object of her current career activity and triggered the emergence of a third career activity.

Helen's Outcome expanded into preserving her seniority within an environment that connected young people with their desired work. Her Object expanded into attempting to learn from a new boss's differences while expecting to re-apply for the promotion after the boss moved on. Table R.22 compares the second and third career activities.

Changes in Subject. Helen's identity shifted to excluding because she was shaken by the loss of her expected promotion and her new boss dismantling her accomplishments. As a result, her arousal shifted to undermining and she sought mental health counselling.

Changes in Instruments. Helen's scope narrowed as she refocused on adapting to her new boss in the face of ongoing conflicts. Her engagement with chance remained low for exploring because she thought it was too late to move to another workplace. Her personal value shifted to innate, experiencing her failed interview as undermining her experience, wisdom and value as an administrator. Her change approach shifted to submitting as she sought a way to maintain her position for another attempt at promotion in the future.

Changes in Rules. Helen's power and freedom shifted to low under her new, controlling boss who removed her decision-making power.

Changes in Community. Market opportunity remained supportive because demand remained for career centre services. Helen's stretch remained low because she returned to her previous assistant director position, however her feedback tempo shifted to long and her chance alignment to low due to her loss of the expected promotion, and a redefinition of the job that made it impossible to apply again. Presentation shifted to inconsistent as the new boss

abandoned consensus decision-making and imposed a top-down, business-results philosophy. However,

Changes in Division of Labour. Helen's priority alignment shifted to low, and her member agency became unbalanced because she had ongoing conflicts with her new boss who imposed a top-down decision-making style.

Table R.22

Comparing the Second and Third Career Activities of Helen

AT Element	Concepts	Second Activity	Third Activity
Outcome		growing opportunities to connect young people with their desired work	preserving her seniority within an environment that connected young people with their desired work
Object		channeling headhunting experiences into helping students get work for summer, internships and after graduation	attempting to learn from new boss's differences while preparing to re-apply for the promotion after the boss moved on.
Subject	Identity	Excluding for income Belonging for work	Excluding
	Arousal	Encouraging	Undermining
Instruments	Scope	Wider	Narrow
	Referral style	Passively familiar	Passively familiar
	Trust	Proved	Proved
	Engagement with Chance	High for tasks Low for exploring	High for tasks Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Developed	Innate
	Change Approach	Purposeful	Submitting
Rules	Power	High	Low
	Freedom	High	Low
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive	Supportive
	Resource availability	High	N/A
	Feedback tempo	Short	Long
	Presentation	Consistent	Inconsistent
	Stretch	Low	Low
	Local qualification	Helping	N/A
	Chance alignment	High	Low
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	High	Low
	Member agency	Balanced	Unbalanced

Contradictions Arising from the Third Career Activity. Helen coped with the loss of her promotion by biding her time as assistant director and waiting for another chance, but her despair revealed contradictions within her third career activity.

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Helen preserved her seniority within the career centre, but her undermining arousal and sense of exclusion revealed a primary contradiction in her career activity: the high exchange value from maintaining her role as assistant director, versus the low use value of her skills in fighting with her boss over the dismantling of her work.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between Helen's Subject and Rules and her Division of Labour. Her continuing low priority alignment and unbalanced member agency revealed contradictions with her identity as a "Pollyanna" and "social worker" who liked to listen to and help others and participate in consensus decision-making. Those qualities were not valued in the new, top-down, results-focused environment.

Instruments. Helen experienced contradictions between her Instruments and her Subject needs and preferred Rules. Her experiences of exclusion, despair, mental health counselling and self-censoring revealed contradictions with her personal value and scope. Her innate personal value meant that her loss of promotion undermined her identity as a valuable administrator, and her narrow scope meant that she remained in her role and accepted a diminishing of her responsibilities.

Helen also experienced contradictions between her Instruments and Community. Her low chance alignment and long feedback tempo revealed contradictions with her engagement with chance in terms of exploring options. She remained at the career centre without seeking alternatives even as the job she wanted was redefined out of existence when her new boss left.

Helen experienced contradictions between her Instruments and Division of Labour. Her low priority alignment and unbalanced member agency revealed contradictions with her habits for relying on proved trust and passive referrals. Helen had lost the consensus-based boss on whom she had depended but had not actively surveyed a new mentor or people who shared her values elsewhere. As a result, she remained in the career centre lacking an ally or options for changing to a more supportive workplace, and feeling it was too late for her to move.

Fourth Career Activity. Helen was able to preserve her assistant director position, but her ongoing unhappiness and lack of freedom undermined the Outcome and Object of her current career activity and triggered the emergence of a fourth career activity.

Helen's Outcome expanded into creating interactions to support growth in others within a positive atmosphere. Her Object expanded into developing and offering workshops and counselling to help students advance in study and practice, whether at a university or a yoga studio. Table R.23 compares the third and fourth career activities.

Changes in Subject. Helen regained a belonging identity by demoting herself to career counsellor. She abandoned her administrative role and self-censored her associated experiences, focusing instead on creating interactions that helped students. Although she felt hypocritical and self-conscious about self-censoring, she regained an encouraging arousal from helping students and being praised for her creativity and positivity.

Changes in Instruments. Helen's scope narrowed further. She abandoned administration in favour of career counselling workshops, then easing into a semi-retirement of advising students entering universities, and teaching yoga classes. She continued to rely on passive referrals and proved trust, self-demoting to counselling work she had already mastered within an organization in which she had already succeeded. In semi-retirement she relied on a Facebook friend for a referral, and a yoga instructor for her entry into teaching. Helen's engagement with chance remained high for taking job tasks but low for exploring options to pursue her ambitions: she abandoned administrative roles, and struggled to grow her advising business with ad hoc referrals. Her personal value remained innate and her change approach submitting as she retreated to familiar tasks of career counselling first at the career centre, and then in semi-

retirement, offering services to students applying to universities while admitting that she had little business and was considering fully retiring.

Changes in Rules. Helen's power primarily remained low as she performed task-based roles for others such as career counselling and yoga instruction. Although she had power creating her own business, she relied on ad hoc referrals, and it did not provide a lot of work. Her freedom increased with the ability to be creative in developing workshops, and in semi-retirement to schedule and perform work in her preferred ways.

Changes in Community. Market opportunity remained supportive because demand existed for counselling services. Her resource availability remained high because she was able to use Facebook to discover a source of referrals and get a recommendation of her ability, and she was able to use a local yoga studio for training. She did not mention resource constraints for her home-based business.

For task-oriented work, chance alignment was high, and her feedback tempo shortened as she experienced satisfaction from creating counselling workshops at the career centre, or growing her yoga practice with teaching. Presentation was consistent and stretch was low because she self-demoted into the same career centre, and taught yoga in the studio she had trained in. However, for her advising business chance alignment was low and feedback tempo was long because she had few clients, and she was considering giving up.

Changes in Division of Labour. Helen's priority alignment increased, and her member agency regained balance when she self-demoted and semi-retired with yoga instruction. Although self-censoring felt hypocritical at times, she enjoyed developing workshops where her ideas, creativity and positivity were praised and respected. Similarly, she enjoyed teaching yoga for a studio she "loved."

Table R.23
Comparing the Third and Fourth Career Activities of Helen

AT Element	Concepts	Third Activity	Fourth Activity
Outcome		preserving her seniority within an environment that connected young people with their desired work	creating interactions to support growth in others within a positive atmosphere
Object		attempting to learn from new boss's differences while preparing to re-apply for the promotion after the boss moved on.	workshops and counselling to help students advance in study and work, and yoga practitioners to advance in their discipline
Subject	Identity	Excluding	Belonging
	Arousal	Undermining	Encouraging in tasks Undermining in self-censor
Instruments	Scope	Narrow	Narrow
	Referral style	Passively familiar	Passively familiar
	Trust	Proved	Proved
	Engagement with Chance	High for tasks Low for exploring	High for tasks Low for exploring
	Personal Value	Innate	Innate
	Change Approach	Submitting	Submitting

AT Element	Concepts	Third Activity	Fourth Activity
Rules	Power	Low	Low for tasks High for business
	Freedom	Low	High
Community	Market opportunity	Supportive	Supportive
	Resource availability	N/A	High
	Feedback tempo	Long	Short for tasks Long for business
	Presentation	Inconsistent	Consistent
	Stretch	Low	Low
	Local qualification	N/A	N/A
	Chance alignment	Low	High for tasks Low for business
Division of Labour	Priority alignment	Low	High
	Member agency	Unbalanced	Balanced

Contradictions Arising From the Fourth Career Activity. Helen worked her way "down the corporate ladder" to cope with a "toxic" boss, then eased into semi-retirement. However, the challenges she experienced revealed contradictions within her career activity.

Object and Outcome, Subject and Rules. Helen shifted towards task-oriented roles to escape administrative stresses and enjoy creative freedom and praise. However, the undermining arousal she experienced as a career counsellor from self-censoring her administrative experiences, and from contemplating the end of her home-based business, revealed a primary contradiction between the high use-value she experienced applying her skills within safe interactions, versus the low exchange-value she experienced from abandoning her seniority and limiting her business to dabbling in advising students.

Additionally, secondary contradictions arose between her Subject and Rules and her Division of Labour. The low priority alignment she experienced when she self-censored her administrative experiences revealed contradictions with her identity as a helpful "Pollyanna" of positivity who did not act above her station. Her identity reinforced self-subordination as a helper within a Division of Labour, rather than supporting her as a director or entrepreneur.

Instruments. Secondary contradictions arose between Helen's Instruments and her Subject needs and preferred Rules. Her undermining arousal from self-censoring and feeling hypocritical as a self-demoted career counsellor, and from her disappointment in her flagging home business revealed contradictions with her scope, engagement with chance, personal value and change approach. Her narrowed scope focused on task-oriented roles rather than administration or business-building. Her innate personal value and her submitting change approach meant she retreated to familiar, proved tasks rather than committing to her ambitions to be a consultant, director, or entrepreneur.

Second, Helen experienced contradictions between her Instruments and Community. Although there was market opportunity for helping university applicants, her low chance alignment and long feedback tempo for building her business revealed contradictions with her engagement with chance and referral style. Her low engagement with exploring options and her dependence on passive referrals undermined her ability to locate and exploit opportunities.

Third, Helen experienced contradictions between her Instruments and Division of Labour. The low priority alignment she experienced from self-censoring at the career centre revealed contradictions with her habits for trust and referrals. Relying on passive referrals for a demoted position in the same workplace meant she sacrificed her ambitions and her experiences in order to preserve existing relationships.

Appendix S: Pair Interactions Activity Systems

This appendix reports the activity theory analysis of each pair's interactions.

Interaction Activity Systems

To provide a sociocultural explanation of the interactions of participants in exploring career transitions, I present the group interviews in the form of activity systems along with successes and contradictions emerging from those systems.

How Does Activity Theory Explain the Interactions of Peter, Wanda and the Facilitator? I created an instance of the interaction activity when I matched Peter and Wanda. I pursued the Outcome of uncovering the systemic influences affecting Wanda's transition from a manufacturing entrepreneur to a process consultant in order to provide insight into how such influences could be navigated by Peter. The Object was facilitating a dialogue among Wanda, Peter and me guided by the Systems Theory Framework. We used the Instruments and Rules described in Table 5.21. The Community from which I was able to draw participants was limited to an employment service and the alumni of people-helping graduate programs. From these sources, I matched Peter and Wanda primarily based on their losses of a home-grown business. To support a dialogue about career transition, I established a virtual community comprising a three-way live videoconference, a window that displayed my live note-taking in a table of systemic influences, and a set of rules that repeatedly encouraged participation. The virtual community afforded the participants the ability to observe, listen and engage from multiple cities. For instance, Wanda observed my note-taking in the shared document. She could be observed expressing shock at a comment from Peter, and his distress could be observed when he struggled with how to apply Wanda's experiences to himself. At times, the participants shared laughs about insights. As Wanda's story unfolded with my assistance, she and Peter engaged each other with questions, empathy and attempts to compare and contrast their experiences.

The Division of Labour comprised me as facilitator, Wanda as the Completer, and Peter as the Seeker participating in a dialogue. I began the elicitation of Wanda's career story by asking about her latest role, how she entered it, and what influenced her decision. Additionally, I prompted Peter for questions on eight occasions, and offered utilizing statements to Wanda and Peter on five occasions to invite judgment. During the dialogue, Wanda and Peter used the Instruments summarized in Table S.1. Of the $n=91$ specific interactions, the most frequent type was judging ($n=19$, 20.9%). For Wanda, the top three interactions were judging utilizing statements from Peter and me ($n=15$, 38.4%), tensioning ($n=8$, 20.6%) by making settling and unsettling statements, and applying ($n=7$, 17.9%) where she offered solutions in response to Peter's perceived barriers. For Peter, the top three interactions were utilizing ($n=14$, 26.9%) in which he offered labels or reflections of Wanda's story, relating ($n=11$, 21.2%) in which he compared himself to Wanda, and tensioning ($n=9$, 17.3%) in which he made settling or unsettling statements.

Table S.1

Instrument Use in the Interaction Activity of Wanda and Peter

Instrument	Definition	Extreme	Division of Labour	Subtotals	Total	Proportio n
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			Completer		Seeker				
probing	requesting information	open (unlimited response)	1	20%	4	80%	5	9	9.9%
		closed (limited response)	2	50%	2	50%	4		
relating	comparing selves to each other	resonating (highlighted similarities)	3	27%	8	73%	11	15	16.5%
		distinguishing	1	25%	3	75%	4		
tensioning	engaging with emotional responses	settling (reducing tension)	4	36%	7	64%	11	17	18.7%
		unsettling (increasing tension)	4	67%	2	33%	6		
utilizing	making meaning by offering statements	building (offer something new based on what heard)	2	14%	12	86%	14	16	17.6%
		reflecting (refer to what heard)			2	100%	2		
judging	responding to utilizing statements	affirming (agreement or insight)	6	67%	3	33%	9	19	20.9%
		refining (correcting or refining)	9	90%	1	10%	10		
applying	addressing actions to resolve challenges	advancing (explored how challenges navigated)	7	88%	1	13%	8	15	16.5%
		impeding (created barriers to exploration)			7	100%	7		
TOTALS			39	43%	52	57%		91	100.0%

Phases of Interactions. Analysis of the interactions in the meeting revealed phases, which were characterized by the kinds of interactions in which participants engaged. The phases were introduction, story-elicitation, processing, and closing as described below.

Introduction Phase. The introduction phase began when I introduced the participants and explained how the meeting would work, and continued during Interaction 1. There were five participant interactions representing 5% of the total, and Wanda initiated 80% of them. In this phase, Wanda negotiated vulnerability. When Peter's self-disclosure was impeding because it was so perfunctory, Wanda made an unsettling statement about feeling uncomfortable. In response, Peter made advancing statements that disclosed more about his challenges. Wanda responded with a settling statement indicating that she resonated with him. In her post-meeting survey she wrote that negotiating vulnerability with Peter helped her feel safe in disclosing her personal information to him.

Story-elicitation Phase. The story-elicitation phase began when I started probing Wanda about her career roles and choices and continued from Interactions 2 to 14. There were 45 participant interactions representing 49% of the total, and Wanda initiated 47% of them. The phase incorporated several kinds of interactions: exploring by relating, checking value,

demurring then interrupting, and processing syntheses. First, Wanda and Peter explored her story by relating their similar experiences. For instance Wanda engaged Peter about her purposeful choice of graduate school program. Peter engaged Wanda about their different approaches to graduate school, their shared experiences as entrepreneurs, and the losses they had experienced from business failure. Wanda responded with agreements, refinements, settling empathic statements, and agreement to connect again after the meeting. Second, Wanda checked for the value of disclosing her "sad" story on two occasions by expressing unsettling statements and receiving reassurances from Peter. Third, when prompted by me for questions, Peter demurred on two occasions when he was unsettled by the amount of the unfolding story but then subsequently interrupted the story with a question or utilizing statement. Fourth, I offered utilizing syntheses that triggered processing. For instance, I proposed that Wanda avoided being an expert because experts had failed her in business; I distinguished the reasons Peter and Wanda had gone to graduate school; I proposed that Wanda was able to use her past challenges to inform her new career; I proposed that Wanda's vulnerability to experts was curious given how they had failed her in business, and I distinguished Wanda's transition approach of marketing her diverse skillset versus Peter's approach of narrowing to one skill of sales. Wanda and Peter reacted to syntheses with settling laughs, refinements, and expressions of insight.

Processing Phase. The processing phase began when I prompted the participants to reflect on the meeting and continued from Interaction 15 to 18. There were 39 participant interactions representing 43% of the total, and Wanda initiated 33% of them. Peter used utilizing statements to summarize Wanda's strategy. He contrasted her approach with his previous belief that happiness depended on starting yet another business, which elicited an unsettling expression of shock from Wanda. Peter then expressed insight that he needed to follow Wanda's achievement of finding a fulfilling job. He followed his insight with an unsettling statement about feeling miserable because he didn't know how to achieve Wanda's success, and he distinguished himself from Wanda by labelling her as "lucky." Peter then expressed impeding statements about acting on his insights, and Wanda responded with settling statements that expressed empathy and advancing statements focused on problem-solving. For instance, Peter expressed doubts about how to change his resume, how to address his many sales-focused jobs, how to transfer skills other than sales from his entrepreneurial background, how to market those skills despite a lack of specialized experience in them, and how to find people for further interviews, particularly people similar to him. Wanda responded with empathy when she made settling statements about the difficulty of selling for other people, and entrepreneurs being labelled as salespeople. Wanda responded with problem-solving when she made advancing statements that explained how she created a transition resume, how she repackaged herself as a "systems" person enriched by the diversity of her experiences, how she conducted information interviews, and how she enjoyed interviewing dissimilar people exposed her to new options.

Closing Phase. The closing phase began when I thanked the participants for their time and included Interactions 19 and 20. There were 2 participant interactions representing 2% of the total, and Wanda initiated 100% of them. Wanda expressed gratitude for feeling listened-to and had a settling laugh. She made an advancing statement by inviting Peter to contact her for further discussion, and he agreed.

Successes and Contradictions Arising From the Interaction Activity. The activity successfully used dialogue to elicit the story of Wanda's career transitions and the systemic influences that affected them. For me, the activity provided data from which to develop case

studies and vocabulary to explain transition and dialogues about transition. For Peter, he met Wanda who had similarly lost her own business and repackaged her experiences for a new career. His interactions during the meeting showed that he realized Wanda had transitioned into a new career that used all of her existing skills, and that his goal could be to find something that similarly fulfilled him. Based on his survey results, he experienced several insights: that he blamed himself for things beyond his control; that others had similar experiences to his and he could learn from them; and that he seemed to want to fit where he didn't belong. Based on his FCAs he shifted his thinking away from requiring commitment from an employer and towards finding others who aligned with his values outside of sales work. For Wanda, she volunteered to be helpful, but her survey results also revealed unexpected benefits: interesting new ways of looking at her past and future that helped her package herself more confidently, and inspiration to seek out more interesting people to meet. Additionally, her interactions during the meeting showed that she appreciated feeling "listened to." Based on her FCAs, her identity and confidence strengthened, she shifted from building her reputation to seeking new work and collaborations, and she no longer mentioned retirement. In contrast with these successes various challenges revealed contradictions within the interaction activity.

Object and Outcome. The purpose of the activity was to use a dialogue to elicit the systemic influences affecting career transition. Peter resonated with Wanda, used dialogue instruments over 50 times, and experienced insights. However, his interactions during the meeting showed that he struggled with how to use those insights to help himself. He remained "miserable" and repeatedly labelled Wanda as "lucky" and raised impeding objections to applying her approaches to himself even when she offered advancing explanations to address his problems. Additionally, his FCA became shorter, less detailed and never addressed chance or environmental factors but remained vaguely aspirational about hoping to find something fulfilling. Peter's challenges revealed a secondary contradiction between the Outcome and Object of the activity and Peter's needs as part of the Division of Labour. Wanda's successful transition from a similar catastrophe highlighted her purposeful change approach that contrasted with Peter's history of entering an MBA without much thought, and submitting to a series of jobs he didn't want. The exploration enabled insights in both participants, but their emotional experiences diverged. Wanda experienced an unexpected confirmation of her pathway that increased her confidence. Peter experienced pain from realizing what might've been had he been more "lucky." The activity enabled Peter to challenge Wanda during the processing phase and receive her answers. However, the activity did not explicitly address the processing of emotions that arose from confronting patterns and alternatives.

Rules. The impeding Peter did by withholding personal information, and the resulting unsettling comment by Wanda about the lack of balance, revealed a contradiction between Rules and the Division of Labour. The activity lacked requirements for balanced disclosure during the introduction and contravened an implicit rule from Wanda that the vulnerability of participants should be balanced so she could feel safe.

Instruments. In each case, I probed for the events of the Completer's career transition and the use of instruments related here refers to the interactions of participants beyond that activity. The most frequent kinds of interactions were judging (21%) where Wanda primarily agreed, refined or corrected proposals from me and Peter; tensioning (19%) where the participants laughed, empathized, held back from questions and checked value; utilizing (18%) where Peter primarily offered labels for Wanda to judge; and relating (16%) where Peter focused on shared

experiences and feelings. Peter focused on meaning-making and emotions based on how he related to the Wanda's story. His focus revealed a contradiction with the Object of the activity. The activity was meant as an exploration of Wanda's successful transition, but Peter used it as a way to relate to her and process his emotions and regrets.

Division of Labour. Participants engaged in roles beyond exploration. For instance, Peter shared his own catastrophic experiences, and Wanda responded by empathizing with his struggles. Peter raised challenges to implementing Wanda's approaches, and Wanda responded by offering advancing statements to address his challenges. The differences in roles brought by the Division of Labour revealed a contradiction with the Object of the activity in terms of its dependence on rational dialogue. The nature of the dialogue depended on the skillsets and emotional states of the participants. The activity greatly benefited from Wanda's ability to take on multiple roles, which may have depended on her training in an organizational development discipline. For Peter, the activity triggered helpful insights about what was possible but also showed him to be stuck in processing his traumatic experiences. Seekers struggling with emotions may require counselling either before seeking to resolve their career dilemma or as part of that process.

How Does Activity Theory Explain the Interactions of Victor, Susan and the Facilitator? I created a second instance of the interaction activity when I matched Victor and Susan. I pursued the Outcome of uncovering the systemic influences affecting Susan's transition from a beer telemarketer to a change management consultant in order to provide insight into how career influences could be navigated by Victor. The Object was facilitating a dialogue among Susan, Victor and me guided by the Systems Theory Framework. We used the Instruments and Rules described in Table 5.21. The Community from which I was able to draw participants was limited to an employment service and the alumni of people-helping graduate programs. From these sources, I matched Victor and Susan primarily based on their mutual interest in people and learning from them through interviewing. To support a dialogue about career transition, I established a virtual community comprising a three-way live videoconference, a window that displayed my live note-taking in a table of systemic influences, and a set of rules that repeatedly encouraged participation. The virtual community afforded the participants the ability to observe, listen and engage from multiple cities.

The Division of Labour comprised me as facilitator, Susan as the Completer and Victor as the Seeker participating in a dialogue. I began the elicitation of Susan's career story by asking about her latest role, how she entered it, and what influenced her decision. Additionally, I prompted Victor for questions on four occasions, and offered utilizing statements to Susan and Victor on four occasions to invite judgment. During the dialogue, Susan and Victor used the Instruments summarized in Table S.2. Of the $n=60$ specific interactions, the most frequent type of interaction was utilizing ($n=19$, 31.7%). For Susan, the top two interactions were judging the utilizing statements offered by others ($n=8$, 61.6%), and offering utilizing statements ($n=2$, 15.4%). For Victor, the top three interactions were utilizing ($n=17$, 36.2%) in which he offered labels or reflections of Susan's story, probing ($n=16$, 34%) in which he asked factual questions, and applying ($n=8$, 17%) in which he sought information on addressing career challenges.

Table S.2

Instrument Use in the Interaction Activity of Susan and Victor

<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Extreme</u>	<u>Division of Labour</u>	<u>Subtotals</u>	<u>Proportion</u>
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			Completer		Seeker		Total Concept		
probing	requesting information	open (unlimited response)			8	100%	8	18	29.5%
		closed (limited response)	1	10%	9	90%	10		
relating	comparing selves to each other	resonating (highlighted similarities)			4	100%	4	4	6.6%
		distinguishing					0		
tensioning	engaging with emotional responses	settling (reducing tension)					0	2	3.3%
		unsettling (increasing tension)	1	50%	1	50%	2		
utilizing	making meaning by offering statements	building (offer something new based on what heard)	2	13%	13	87%	15	19	31.1%
		reflecting (refer to what heard)			4	100%	4		
judging	responding to utilizing statements	affirming (agreement or insight)	4	80%	1	20%	5	9	14.8%
		refining (correcting or refining)	4	100%			4		
applying	addressing actions to resolve challenges	advancing (explored how challenges navigated)	1	13%	7	88%	8	9	14.8%
		impeding (created barriers to exploration)			1	100%	1		
TOTALS			13	21%	48	79%	61		100%

Phases of Interactions. Analysis of the interactions in the meeting revealed phases, which were characterized by the kinds of interactions in which participants engaged. The phases were introduction, story-elicitation, processing, and closing as described below.

Introduction Phase. The introduction phase began when I introduced the participants and explained how the meeting would work and included Interaction 1. There was 1 participant interaction representing 2% of the total, and Victor initiated 100% of them. In this phase, Victor introduced himself by focusing on his successful theatrical production credits. By not mentioning his career challenges or transition needs, he impeded the ability of Susan to relate to him and his challenges, or see ways to advance him, which may explain why she simply responded, "Okay" and repeatedly referred to him as a "theatrical producer" during the interview.

Story-elicitation Phase. The story-elicitation phase began when I started probing Susan about her career roles and comprised Interactions 2 to 13. There were 36 participant interactions representing 59% of the total, and Victor initiated 86% of them. Victor used probing for details to determine Susan's new role, what she did in the role, and details of her education, then offered utilizing statements to summarize her work, which she refined. Victor also used probing to seek advancing knowledge, such as how she secured her first job in her new career, when she first

knew her new career was a good fit, what skills were key to succeed in her new career, how she overcame her anxiety and whether she had allies, and what she had learned about networking. In their ninth interaction Victor rebalanced the interview by making utilizing statements about her positive experiences and then probing for "any negativities" in her new career, and offering unsettling statements about her work potentially being "token" and unwanted by management. Susan responded with refinements. During story elicitation, each participant prompted for relatability. For instance, after probing for details about change management, Victor said he had done similar work, but Susan did not follow-up. Susan probed for relatability over navigating French language requirements and she and Victor resonated over the challenge and their use of Antidote software to overcome it.

Processing Phase. The processing phase began when I prompted a comparison of how they both used empathy but in different industries. The phase comprised Interactions 14 to 19. There were 24 participant interactions representing 39% of the total, and Victor initiated 67% of them. My initial prompt about empathy resulted in Susan describing it as a gift she and Victor could give to people they listened to, but that did not result in further discussion. I then prompted Victor for questions, and he indicated that he had finished exploring and wanted to advance an insight. First, he expressed insight and sought advancement when he noted how Susan's chat with a career coach had helped her find a new career that used all her previous skills, and he asked for the coach's name. Second, I sought clarification of his insight when I offered utilizing statements that contrasted coaching, mentoring and information interviews. Susan agreed with the distinctions and provided advancing knowledge about how she had used information interviews to help her own transition, and Victor probed for details of when she did them. Third, I prompted for reflections about the meeting. Susan described the meeting as easy for her, and she valued my summarizing of what was said and my prompting of Victor for questions, and she described Victor's questions as good. Victor described himself as lost at first, but choosing to employ probing to learn as the meeting progressed, noting similarities he had with Susan. Fourth, Victor then described what he had learned by expressing utilizing statements such as calling Susan's referral from a hairdresser an example of empathy, proposing that people agreed to information interviews with her to see how they could advance their organizations using her, and summarizing Susan's entire career pathway as being about selling, even her work in change management. Susan responded with unsettled statements that his synthesis was "funny" and "taboo" to her.

Closing Phase. The closing phase occurred after the last interaction, and began when I thanked them for their time, said they could contact me about exchanging emails for further interaction if they wished, and the meeting ended. There were no participant interactions.

Successes and Contradictions Arising From the Interaction Activity. The activity successfully used dialogue to elicit the story of Susan's career transitions and the systemic influences that affected them. For Victor, he met Susan who had built on her telemarketing people skills to launch a new career. His interactions during the meeting showed that he realized that engaging in activities like consulting a career coach could provide options for using the same skills he had but in new ways. Based on his survey results, he experienced several insights: that he had ideas that had kept him stagnant; that people who seemed very different could use similar skills and thinking to his and work in jobs he could imagine doing; and that he could examine a broader landscape of options and education. Based on his FCAs he shifted from the emotions he wanted to feel towards skills and freedom, from needing empathy and harmony in a

stable environment towards feeling that he was advancing and making an impact, and he expanded his options to include corporate work and new training. For Susan, she volunteered to be helpful, and her survey response emphasized that she intended to keep doing what she already had been doing: building her network. However, her FCA revealed changes after the meeting: she shifted from focusing on a public service dream project to more details on building her organizational development career, including learning with others and joining a firm. In contrast with these successes, various challenges revealed contradictions within the interaction activity.

Rules. Two challenges revealed a contradiction between Rules and the Division of Labour. First, Victor impeded mutual understanding and relating by withholding personal information during the introduction: he never described any career challenge, only his successes. The activity lacked requirements for such balanced disclosure, which may explain why Susan kept referring to him as a theatrical producer. Second, Susan noted in her survey a desire to ask Victor questions about how he found work in his career, which reflected an inferred rule on her part against asking questions during the meeting. The activity lacked explicit structure to encourage Completers to engage in two-sided dialogue with Seekers.

Division of Labour. During the introduction, rather than disclosing his career dilemma, Victor presented himself as a highly successful theatrical producer. During processing, rather than relating what he had learned from the interview to his own situation, Victor chose to assign his own motivations to Susan's hairdresser for referring work, and to industry practitioners who agreed to speak with Susan to help her with her transition. Rather than capturing Susan's own emphasis on empowering people by listening, he reduced her entire career to being a salesperson and triggered a strong negative reaction. Victor's approach revealed a secondary contradiction between his habitual skillset as a theatrical producer who collected details and imposed narrative, and the Outcome and Object of the activity, which was exploration of another person's experiences to aid his own transition.

How Does Activity Theory Explain the Interactions of Leonard, Helen and the Facilitator? I created a third instance of the interaction activity when I matched Leonard and Helen. I pursued the Outcome of uncovering the systemic influences affecting Helen's transition from a translator to a headhunter and then a university career counsellor in order to provide insight into how such influences could be navigated by Leonard. The Object was facilitating a dialogue among Helen, Leonard and me guided by the Systems Theory Framework. We used the Instruments and Rules described in Table 5.21. The Community from which I was able to draw participants was limited to an employment service and the alumni of people-helping graduate programs. From these sources, I matched Leonard and Helen primarily based on their mutual interest in helping individuals with personal development. To support a dialogue about career transition, I established a virtual community comprising a three-way live videoconference, a window that displayed my live note-taking in a table of systemic influences, and a set of rules that repeatedly encouraged participation. The virtual community afforded the participants the ability to observe, listen and engage from their respective locales in North America and Europe. For instance, Helen could observe Leonard's smile when she mentioned bicycling and ask a follow-up question. Helen could express her processing of a difficult moment with a hyperbolic comment about trauma and a grin that led all three participants to share a settling laugh. Leonard joined from an overseas family visit, which meant the conversation straddled a six-hour time difference between North America and Europe in which he was participating in the late evening. As a result, he was hungry and fatigued and the meeting ended somewhat abruptly. Additionally,

his responses to electronic surveys referred to his Seeker meeting and no data was collected about his Seeker-Completer meeting.

The Division of Labour comprised me as facilitator, Helen as the Completer and Leonard as the Seeker participating in a dialogue. I began the elicitation of Helen's career story by asking about her latest role, how she entered it, and what influenced her decision. Additionally, I prompted Leonard for questions on six occasions, and offered utilizing statements to Helen and Leonard on two occasions to invite judgment. During the dialogue, Helen and Leonard used the Instruments summarized in Table S.3. Of the $n=34$ interactions, the most frequent type was probing ($n=9$, 26.5%). For Helen, the top two interactions were judging the utilizing statements offered by others ($n=3$, 25%), and tensioning ($n=3$, 25%) where she checked for value or laughed off tension. For Leonard, the top interaction was probing ($n=7$, 31.8%) in which he asked factual questions, followed by equal amounts of utilizing ($n=4$, 18.2%) in which he offered meaning, applying ($n=4$, 18.2%) in which he sought to advance his transition, and tensioning ($n=4$, 18.2%) in which he created or released tension with questions and laughing.

Table S.3

Instrument Use in the Interaction Activity of Helen and Leonard

Instrument	Definition	Extreme	Division of Labour				Subtotals	Total	Proportion
			Completer		Seeker				
probing	requesting information	open (unlimited response)			6	100%	6	9	25.7%
		closed (limited response)	2	67%	1	33%	3		
relating	comparing selves to each other	resonating (highlighted similarities)	2	50%	2	50%	4	4	11.4%
		distinguishing					0		
tensioning	engaging with emotional responses	settling (reducing tension)	2	40%	3	60%	5	8	22.9%
		unsettling (increasing tension)	1	33%	2	67%	3		
utilizing	making meaning by offering statements	building (offer something new based on what heard)	1	33%	2	67%	3	5	14.3%
		reflecting (refer to what heard)			2	100%	2		
judging	responding to utilizing statements	affirming (agreement or insight)	3	75%	1	25%	4	4	11.4%
		refining (correcting or refining)					0		
applying	addressing actions to resolve challenges	advancing (explored how challenges navigated)	1	25%	3	75%	4	5	14.3%
		impeding (created barriers to exploration)			1	100%	1		
TOTALS			12	34%	23	66%		35	100%

Phases of Interactions. Analysis of the interactions in the meeting revealed phases, which were characterized by the kinds of interactions in which participants engaged. The phases were introduction, story-elicitation, and closing as described below.

Introduction Phase. The introduction phase began when I introduced the participants and explained how the meeting would work, and comprised Interactions 1 and 2. There were 2 participant interactions representing 6% of the total, and Leonard initiated 100% of them. In this phase, Helen expressed that the interview concept was complex but easy to understand and reflected everyone's having a rich story. Leonard introduced himself by noting his age and his transition from science to coaching. By not mentioning the career challenges that led to transition or his current needs, he impeded the ability of Helen to relate to him and his challenges, or see ways to advance him. To address the gap, I secured Leonard's permission then provided a brief summary of his reasons for transition based on his Seeker interview.

Story-elicitation Phase. The story-elicitation phase began when I started probing Helen about her career roles and choices and comprised Interactions 3 through 9. There were 30 participant interactions representing 86% of the total, and Leonard initiated 70% of them. Leonard used probing for factual details of Helen's story that related to his own interests and experiences mentioned in his Seeker interview: how she shifted yoga into a regular practice; what she enjoyed most about helping students apply to universities; and how she shifted from the private sector to the academic sector. Leonard used probing to seek advancing knowledge about how Helen had shifted away from workaholism to a more balanced lifestyle. When Leonard demurred one of my prompts to ask questions, Helen checked for the value of disclosing her story by expressing an unsettling statement. She not only received Leonard's reassurance but also triggered the following shift in the interview: in their sixth interaction Leonard rebalanced the interview by seeking negativities, making utilizing statements about Helen's positive experiences and then making an unsettling probe for her "spectacular failures." Following Helen's sharing about a traumatic career self-demotion, Leonard rebalanced the negativities by making a settling probe for the "roses" or positives that came out of her traumatic experience. I followed up with an unsettling probe whether Helen was okay, and she triggered a settling laugh in everyone with a grin and a disarming comment. Finally, during story elicitation, Helen and I prompted for relatability. First, Helen made advancing statements about using a businesswomen's association to learn from others' life stories and invited Leonard to compare that to the current group interview. Second, she later observed his smile when she mentioned funding a sabbatical with bike touring and she probed about his bicycling interest. Third, I, with Leonard's permission, offered utilizing statements to compare how both Helen and Leonard had their careers shaped by romantic partners. However, none of the prompts resulted in further resonating or exploring among the participants.

Closing Phase. The closing phase began when I probed Leonard for questions and he responded that it was late for him, he felt complete and needed to eat. The phase comprised Interaction 10. There were 3 participant interactions representing 9% of the total, and Helen initiated 100% of them. Helen responded by seeking relatability based on her past travel in his location. Learning his home city was [an eastern city in Canada], she made advancing statements offering him contacts.

Successes and Contradictions Arising From the Interaction Activity. The activity successfully used dialogue to elicit the story of Helen's career transitions and the systemic influences that affected them. For Leonard, he met Helen who, like him, had made several

transitional steps and shifted from detailed-oriented, report-style work towards more direct people-helping work. They also shared the embrace of wellness approaches such as yoga. Leonard's interactions during the meeting showed his appreciation of the interactions such as noting, "I could continue listening to you without any question for a very long time, it's fascinating" and responding to Helen's query about whether it was helpful by saying, "Oh, absolutely. Absolutely." He also noted, "I'm hearing a lot of success in your story and that's really encouraging to hear." His questions focused on areas of interest from his Seeker interview such as embracing yoga, providing advising to people on their futures, shifting between private industry and academia, as well as broader issues such as catastrophes in her transition, benefits from the challenges, and addressing work-life balance. Unfortunately, Leonard's FCAs and survey appeared to refer back to his Seeker interview, so results were not available for his interaction with Helen. For Helen, she volunteered to be helpful, but her survey results also revealed unexpected benefits: despite being a "Completer" she was surprised by how the "rich process" and "patterns from simple stories" triggered her to rethink who she wanted to be over the next 20 years, what she wanted to prioritize, and to explore how others "let go" of professional identities during their process of retirement. Based on her FCAs, Helen was considering abandoning her career identity and extensive business plans. She revealed her business struggles and a desire to shift away from seeking professional collaborations to refocus on personal relationships with her life partner and friends. In contrast with these successes, various challenges revealed contradictions within the interaction activity.

Object and Outcome. The purpose of the activity was to use a dialogue to elicit the systemic influences affecting Helen's career transition in order to inform Leonard. Despite being Helen's being a Completer entering semi-retirement, and despite her survey responses indicating that the process and questions were "excellent," "thoughtful," "helpful," and "astute" she revealed that she was "still processing" after the meeting, and not sure how to feel or think. Her FCAs showed that she had confronted patterns from her past and was contemplating the abandonment of her professional identity and business plans to refocus on personal relationships and retirement. The abrupt change in FCAs reflected patterns in her career history in which she planned to become a consultant, or pursued a directorial position, but abandoned her plans when she felt shaken. As a result, a contradiction was revealed between the Outcome and Object of the activity and Helen's needs in the Division of Labour. The activity allowed her to explore her patterns but lacked a mechanism to help a Completer process her critical review of her identity and plans.

Community. Several challenges revealed a contradiction between the Community and the Division of Labour. First, Leonard's sudden fatigue and hunger related to the virtual environment straddling a six-hour time difference between North America and Europe where he was visiting. Second, the mechanism for requesting survey and FCA data included a reminder at the end of the meeting, an emailed request, and a link within the email to an online survey software. Leonard's failure to deliver survey and FCA information for the second interview revealed problems with avoiding confusion and tracking the collection of the data.

Rules. Several challenges revealed a contradiction between Rules and the Division of Labour. First, Leonard impeded dialogue by withholding personal information about his own career dilemma. The activity lacked requirements for balanced disclosure during the introduction. Second, Helen noted that she had wanted to hear more from the Seeker, which reflected an inferred rule on her part against asking questions during the meeting beyond basic

probes about shared hobbies. Third, their dialogue ended abruptly without any processing phase when Leonard expressed his hunger and fatigue at the late hour overseas, which in turn reflected a lack of scheduled phases in the activity.

Division of Labour. Leonard's interactions lacked disclosure about his own career dilemma or any processing to relate the Completer's story to his own transition. Instead, he used the activity to explore Helen's perspective on areas of his own general interest such as yoga, advising students, transitioning between private and public industry, and work-life balance. The activity also allowed him to open a traumatic chapter in her past while remaining a detached observer without attempts to empathize or relate. Leonard's approach revealed a secondary contradiction between the Outcome and Object of the activity and his role in the Division of Labour, which may have been affected by his training as a detached, scientific researcher.

Appendix T: Guidance and Templates for Dialogues

This appendix provides guidance for conducting the career dialogues intervention.

Purpose of the Career Dialogues Intervention

Unsatisfied career-changers make decisions with limited information about themselves, their social networks, and their environments, which limits the chance options they perceive and results in poor decision-making. Career dialogues help career changers develop insight into the system of influences that shaped their career path and the career paths of other people who have made successful career transitions. The system of influences addresses individual, social, environmental and chance influences as well as styles of decision-making. By exploring the many influences that affect career change opportunities and success, career changers can identify the strengths and weaknesses of their career navigation strategy and create plans that address each influence in order to expand their options and improve their decisions.

Career dialogues have two major phases to create insights and develop experience in exploration: first, the seeker participates in a dialogue with the facilitator to explore the seeker's influences; second, the seeker co-interviews a career change completer with the facilitator to explore a completer's influences and compare to their own. Seekers are encouraged to use this experience to help them speak with other career changers in the broader world in order to develop their knowledge and skills in exploring options before making decisions. Completers also benefit by reflecting on their pathway and their change in career and considering how to refine their approach going forward.

Overview of the Career Dialogues Intervention

The overall intervention comprises the following phases. Instructions for each phase and necessary templates are provided in the attached forms.

1. Conducting a Seeker Dialogue and Follow-up
2. Matching participants
3. Conducting a Seeker-Completer Dialogue and Follow-up
4. Assessing Impact of Dialogues

Guidance on the Role of Emotion During Career Dialogues

Career pathways can involve stories of loss, failure and betrayal. During interviews, participants may experience strong emotions while remembering and sharing their life experiences. However, emotions represent signals of potentially important events that have shaped the career-changers thinking and affect their strategies. Additionally, participants who experience strong emotions may express value in their experience for re-processing the ideas related to those emotions in a more systemic fashion. For that reason, emotions are valuable and should be handled constructively as follows:

1. Inform participants that emotions will emerge during dialogues and that is okay
2. Invite participants to share in taking a few deep in and out breaths

3. Respond to emotional statements by paraphrasing what you heard and offering and acknowledgement of the emotion (allowing them to correct it). Participants need acknowledgement or they may doubt that sharing a painful story had any value.
4. During seeker-completer dialogues, ensure the vulnerability between participants is balanced by having seekers disclose their career challenges. Completers who feel an equality of vulnerability may feel safer sharing their own stories
5. During the processing phase, encourage participants to voice doubts so the other participants can offer more information, assist with problem-solving, or address feelings of offence.
6. When participants express emotional "personal failures" take the opportunity to help them (re)-explore the contributions of individual, social, environmental, chance and decision-making influences to "spread the blame" and offer tools for a different future

Form 1: Conducting a Seeker Dialogue and Follow-up

The Seeker Dialogue comprises an interview by the facilitator of the Seeker to determine their career timeline and the influences that effected their decision-making. Expect the Seeker dialogue to last around 90 minutes. Conduct the dialogue session as follows.

Step One: Future Baseline

1. Ask the participant to complete a Future Career Autobiography.
2. Ensure they label it with the date and time.

Step Two: Introductions

1. Introduce yourself and briefly explain the steps in the dialogue and show them the Career Timeline document you will use to take notes.
2. Ask the Seeker to introduce themselves, state their current role, the career challenges they are facing, and what they want to achieve. They may use their FCA to describe the future they are seeking.
3. Ask the Completer to do the same.

Step Three: Data-Elicitation

1. Interview the Seeker using the Career Timeline, taking notes
2. Use open-ended questions such as WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, HOW
3. As you fill in the timeline, compare life events to identify patterns in how influences affected their decision-making
4. Offer patterns to the participant for their refinement or correction

Step Four: Processing

1. Ask participant to share what they learned from the dialogue in terms of strategy. Note what they say on the career timeline form.
2. Ask participant what they might change in their strategy and any doubts they may feel

Step Five: Conclusions

1. Explain next steps in the procedure
2. Ask if participant has any questions or comments
3. End the dialogue session

Step Six: Future Comparison

1. Ask participant to complete a second Future Career Autobiography
2. Ensure they label it with the date and time

Step Seven: Describe Participant's Career Strategy

1. Review your notes from the Career Timeline
2. Fill out the Career Strategy Worksheet

Step Eight: Request Career Strategy Plans and Follow-up

1. Provide a completed Career Strategy Worksheet to the interviewee
2. Ask interviewee to review the Career Strategy Worksheet and fill out the career strategy plan

Form 2: Future Career Autobiography (Systemic)

Today's Date:

Current Time:

Personal Identifier (Initials of name + year of birth)

Imagine your life five years from today. Write a paragraph describing what you want your life and work to look like. In your paragraph briefly address the following:

Who are you in life and work and how do you feel in those roles?

Where are you located and why?

How are you seeking and exploring ways to progress in life and work?

How are you anticipating and handling challenges?

How are you making decisions?

Who is helping you and how?

Form 3: Career Timeline

Use this form during dialogues to take notes from the participant's career story. A career story includes roles in work, training, and life as well as major events that trigger changes in those roles. Start with their most current life event and work backwards.

Participants may be nervous about your taking notes. Show them this form and explain its purpose as follows:

This form collects events from your life that affected how you entered your current life and work roles. We will start from today and work backwards. For each event, I will ask you how and why you entered or left a role. I will ask follow-up questions to explore how various factors affected your decisions. For instance, you might identify a job offer as an event and I might ask how your age, your family, and your location affected the way you perceive that offer.

For each life event, use the following procedure:

Step One: Identify and explore life or work roles using "open" questions such as WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW

1. Ask what the role was
2. Enter the role in the timeline column
3. Ask how they entered that role
4. If applicable, ask why they exited the role (or want to exit)
5. Ask follow-up questions for entry/exit to explore each influence for more details, such as
 1. How did this choice reflect your needs and feelings?
 2. Who in your personal and work life affected this choice?
 3. What role did your neighbourhood, city, locale play?
 4. What unexpected events occurred that affected your choice?
 5. What options did you consider and what was the key reason for your choice?
6. For a Seeker-Completer dialogue, prompt the Seeker to ask questions
7. After exploring a role ask what role they had previous to that one and repeat Step One

NOTE: If they mention other roles in passing, note them in the timeline and continue to explore the current role. If they switch to explaining another role, switch with them and come back later.

Step Two: Review the timeline for gaps. Ask follow-up questions to add in missing roles and explore missing influences.

Step Three: Ask the participant(s) what occurred to them during the dialogue that they would like to add or explore.

Story-Elicitation Phase: Career Timeline

Date:

Facilitator Name:

Participant Name:

Timeline (from current backwards)	Individual (sex, race, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation)	Social (family, friends, co- workers, colleagues, neighbours)	Environmental (economics, geography, social services)	Decision- making (choice and main reason)	Chance (unexpected problem or opportunity)

Processing Phase: Participants' Learning

Note here what participants said they learned during the dialogue.

Form 4: Career Strategy Worksheet

Facilitators use this form to process the notes in the career timeline to determine what strategy the participant is using to navigate their career. Each concept is defined. For examples of each extreme, see the tables "Examples for Concept Extremes."

Step 1: Process the Career Timeline of events

In this step, you will review all of the events in the career timeline and use the career strategy worksheet to categorize them. **For each major event in the timeline:**

1. Examine the first element in column 1 of the Career Strategy Worksheet
2. Consider whether the participant's story for that event addressed concepts for the element
 1. if they did, consider which extreme of the concept they represented
 2. note the event and its year as evidence in the sample events box for that extreme
3. Repeat for the remaining elements until completed

Step 2: Identify Strategy

In this step you will identify the participant's career navigation strategy by determining how much they relied on one extreme or another for each element.

1. For each concept in column 2 of the Career Strategy Worksheet, count the number of life events for Extreme 1 and put that number in the # column, then repeat for Extreme 2
2. Circle the extreme label that has the most sample life events
3. Repeat for all concepts

Career Strategy Description

Element	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Sample Life Events with year	#	Extreme 2	Sample Life Events with year	#
Subject subjective interpretation of career experiences	Identity	a person's subjective sense of membership in a group	belonging			excluding		
	Arousal	a person's subjective emotional state in relation to a life or work experience	encouraging			undermining		
Instruments habits and actions used to navigate career decisions	Scope	a participant's degree of focus in their career choices	wide			narrow		
	Referral style	approach participants used to develop contacts for work or support	active survey			passive familiarity		

Element	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Sample Life Events with year	#	Extreme 2	Sample Life Events with year	#
	Trust	the basis on which participants expected the surrender of power, control and resources	proved			unproved		
	Engagement with Chance	how participants monitored events within their boundaries and took action.	high			low		
	Personal Value	a participant's interpretation of the implications of obstacles when pursuing a role	developed			innate		
	Change Approach	a participant's motivation for changing a role	purposeful			submitting		
Rules limitations placed on career decisions	Power	the authority to make decisions about pursuing or ending a venture in which the participant might play a role	high			low		
	Freedom	the ability, in relation to an established venture, to structure and modify work according to values and preferences	high			low		
Community results of environmental engagement	Market opportunity	the demand in a community for products and services that supported a kind of role	supportive			undermining		
	Resource availability	the participant's ability to access assets and services to pursue a role	high			low		
	Feedback tempo	the timing for participants to experience validating results from the environment	short			long		

Element	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Sample Life Events with year	#	Extreme 2	Sample Life Events with year	#
	Presentation	how well the appearance of an organization or resource reflected its actual qualities	consistent			inconsistent		
	Stretch	the degree to which a participant needed to travel to engage with an opportunity or resource	high			low		
	Local qualification	a location-specific consequence of a participant's level of ability	helping			hindering		
	Chance alignment	how well the outcome of monitoring and addressing chance events supported a participant's goals	high			low		
Division of Labour results of social engagement	Priority alignment	how similar interests and values are among members of a relationship regardless of their roles	high			low		
	Member agency	the distribution of power and resources among members of a relationship to allow them to advance in their desired directions	balanced			unbalanced		

Step 3: Parse and Define Changes in Strategies

In this step you will identify any changes in the strategy used by the participant. The participant may have changed strategies during their lifetime.

1. Review the career strategy description to determine which concepts changed between extremes sometime in the participant's past
2. If multiple concepts changed, consider whether they (as a group) represent a different strategy with a common goal and approach
 1. If so, mark or colour-code the life events that represent that different strategy
 2. Once all strategies are identified, create a separate worksheet that represents each one

Step 4: Define the Goal and Approach of Each Strategy

In this step you will consider the kinds of roles the participant pursued for each strategy, and then identify what they were trying to achieve and by what means.

1. Review the career strategy description to identify groups of roles that represent a common approach
2. In the Example Roles column below, list those common roles
3. In the description column below, describe the common outcome they were pursuing
4. In the description column below, describe the common approach they used to pursue that outcome
5. If needed, create a Career Strategy Definition for each different strategy

Career Strategy Definition

Description	Example Roles
Outcome What they pursued	
Approach How they tended to pursue it	

Examples for Concept Extremes

Element	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
Subject subjective interpretations of career experiences	Identity	a person's subjective sense of membership in a group	belonging	external validation personal habits desire to become past roles relationships	excluding	perceived lack of fit internal contradiction external invalidation traumatic loss
	Arousal	a person's subjective emotional state in relation to a life or work experience	encouraging	enjoy a role attracted to a role encouraged by potential of role initially relieved by role	undermining	dislike experience anxious about failure lost or devalued
Instruments habits and actions used to navigate career decisions	Scope	a participant's degree of focus in their career choices	wide	expand a role manage a business explore career options create preferred role confront expanded responsibility	narrow	accept non-preferred role enrol in training accept preferred role
	Referral style	approach participants used to develop contacts for work or support	active survey	targeted networking general networking	passive familiarity	colleagues and clients friends and acquaintances family and lovers classmates and educators service providers avoiding familiar contacts
	Trust	the basis on which participants expected the surrender of power, control and resources	proved	suspend based on performance proved from work proved from interaction	unproved	gave without proof expected or received without proof

Element	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
	Engagement with Chance	how participants monitored events within their boundaries and took action.	high	explored options pursued training, support indicated interest in role built own venture accepted offer based on past demonstrated competence prioritized family support	low	lacked awareness, contingency avoided engagement
	Personal Value	a participant's interpretation of the implications of obstacles when pursuing a role	developed	built on past embraced learning while doing adapted to achieve success sought insight from mentor pursued learning to change managed negative arousal	innate	invalidated by circumstances validated by circumstances pursued validation avoided invalidation
	Change Approach	a participant's motivation for changing a role	purposeful	improve identity fit improve arousal fit improve freedom fit improve power fit improve scope fit improve social trust	submitting	perceived no choice avoided failure accepted lesser alternative "trusted the process"
Rules limitations placed on career decisions	Power	the authority to make decisions about pursuing or ending a venture in which the participant might play a role	high	control a venture invest in learning engage a service join professional association	low	employment gig-based work
	Freedom	the ability, in relation to an established venture, to structure and modify work according to values and preferences	high	align work with values control place, schedule, workload control tasks	low	comply with tasks compromise values
Community results of environmental engagement	Market opportunity	the demand in a community for products and services that supported a kind of role	supportive	ongoing needs expansion addressing challenges	undermining	failed to connect changing expectations
	Resource availability	the participant's ability to access assets and services to pursue a role	high	access training resources network connections helpful suppliers financial support	low	financial gap supplier gap
	Feedback tempo	the timing for participants to experience validating results from the environment	short	manageable incoming work validation in the moment	long	validation too infrequent required persisting, adapting seemed unachievable

Element	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	Examples	Extreme 2	Examples
	Presentation	how well the appearance of an organization or resource reflected its actual qualities	consistent	fulfilment of expectations safety or dependability	inconsistent	undermined expectations disrupted safety, dependability
	Stretch	the degree to which a participant needed to travel to engage with an opportunity or resource	high	changed country or continent changed region changed city	low	same city same organization same neighbourhood own home
	Local qualification	a location-specific consequence of a participant's level of ability	helping	language ability enabling status, background	hindering	disabling status, background language deficit
	Chance alignment	how well the outcome of monitoring and addressing chance events supported a participant's goals	high	acceptance aligns needs acceptance not align needs achieved fit in a role bridged to new role "stars were aligned"	low	betrayal of expectations unsatisfying role business failure lack of fit to get role crisis of confidence lack of supportive resources
Division of Labour results of social engagement	Priority alignment	how similar interests and values are among members of a relationship regardless of their roles	high	shared interests valued experience or ability supported general success facilitated cooperation supported specific goal	low	diverging interests, priorities undermining interactions undermined a goal disregard of experience, value
	Member agency	the distribution of power and resources among members of a relationship to allow them to advance in their desired directions	balanced	sought rebalance of power power shared to them power shared from them	unbalanced	had or created dependence relinquished power wanted more power

Form 5: Career Strategy Plan (Systemic)

A career strategy describes how you navigate your career. The facilitator has used the details from your career story to fill out a career strategy description. The description provides a broad, systemic view of your strategy that includes the Subject (which is you), Instruments (your habitual choices), Rules (limitations you or others place on your career), Community (the environment in which you pursue a career), and Division of Labour (the people who affect your career).

Step 1: Reflect. Take a look at the career strategy description from your facilitator. Examine each concept, the extremes for each concept, and the examples from your life that the facilitator has provided for each extreme.

Step 2: Analyze. For each concept, which extreme is strongest for you? Is that extreme helping you achieve the identity and feelings you want for yourself? Which sample life experiences for each extreme helped you or held you back from the kind of life you wanted?

Step 3: Plan. Review your most recent Future Career Autobiography (FCA) which described how you saw your future. Then refer to the Career Strategy Plan below to consider how to improve your strategy to achieve your FCA. For each concept below, write 2-3 specific actions you can take in the next 3-5 weeks to enhance your ability to experience Extreme 1.

Career Strategy Plan

Element	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	What Steps Can You Take To Enhance Extreme 1?
Subject subjective interpretations of career experiences	Identity	a person's subjective sense of membership in a group	belonging	
	Arousal	a person's subjective emotional state in relation to a life or work experience	encouraging	
Instruments habits and actions used to navigate career decisions	Scope	a participant's degree of focus in their career choices	wide	
	Referral style	approach participants used to develop contacts for work or support	active survey	
	Trust	the basis on which participants expected the surrender of power, control and resources	proved	
	Engagement with Chance	how participants monitored events within their boundaries and took action.	high	
	Personal Value	a participant's interpretation of the implications of obstacles when pursuing a role	developed	
Rules limitations placed on career decisions	Change Approach	a participant's motivation for changing a role	purposeful	
	Power	the authority to make decisions about pursuing or ending a venture in which the participant might play a role	high	
Community	Freedom	the ability, in relation to an established venture, to structure and modify work according to values and preferences	high	
	Market opportunity	the demand in a community for products and services that supported a kind of role	supportive	

Element	Concepts	Concept Definition	Extreme 1	What Steps Can You Take To Enhance Extreme 1?
results of environmental engagement	Resource availability	the participant's ability to access assets and services to pursue a role	high	
	Feedback tempo	the timing for participants to experience validating results from the environment	short	
	Presentation	how well the appearance of an organization or resource reflected its actual qualities	consistent	
	Stretch	the degree to which a participant needed to travel to engage with an opportunity or resource	high	
	Local qualification	a location-specific consequence of a participant's level of ability	helping	
	Chance alignment	how well the outcome of monitoring and addressing chance events supported a participant's goals	high	
Division of Labour results of social engagement	Priority alignment	how similar interests and values are among members of a relationship regardless of their roles	high	
	Member agency	the distribution of power and resources among members of a relationship to allow them to advance in their desired directions	balanced	

Form 6: Matching Participants

The Career Dialogue Intervention comprises two major parts: the facilitator's interview of a person seeking a career change (the "seeker"); and that seeker and the facilitator co-interviewing a person who has completed a career change (the "completer"). The second part requires matching a seeker to a completer.

Participants can be matched based on shared skills, values, hobbies, training, and life experiences. If participants don't relate to each other, their dialogue may be reduced to basic question and answer. However, participants who can relate to each other may share more of their personal stories, compare and contrast their experiences throughout the dialogue, and share their doubts and engage in problem-solving during processing.

Relatability does not mean that participants have the same past or the same desired career. Relatability means they have some shared life experiences such that they believe they can learn from each other. Resumes and curricula vitae may focus more on marketing and not include these kinds of experiences. Participants may require screening questions to reveal strong aspects of relatability. For instance, participants may share a life experience of losing a business, but that fact might only be disclosed during screening. Life experiences may also relate to cultural gender roles.

Following are some suggested screening questions to elicit criteria for matching:

1. What experiences in your life led to your desire or need for career change?
2. What personal, professional or other challenges do/did you face when planning and implementing that change?

Given the vulnerability involved from sharing career change pathways, people may be reluctant to participate without a referral from a trusted person. Facilitators should seek and build relationships of trust with leaders in diverse communities to build a broad pool of participants for matching and relatability.

Form 7: Conducting A Seeker-Completer Dialogue and Follow-up

The Seeker-Completer Dialogue comprises an interview by the facilitator of the Completer to determine their career timeline and the influences that effected their decision-making. The facilitator should encourage the participants to ask each other questions and compare and contrast their experiences. Expect the Seeker-Completer dialogue to last around 90-120 minutes. Conduct the dialogue session as follows.

Step One: Future Baseline

1. Ask each participant to complete a Future Career Autobiography.
2. Ensure they label it with the date and time.

Step Two: Introductions

1. Introduce yourself and briefly explain the steps in the dialogue and show them the Career Timeline document you will use to take notes.
2. Ask the Seeker to introduce themselves, state their current role, the career challenges they are facing, and what they want to achieve. They may use their FCA to describe the future they are seeking. Ensure enough of the seeker's story is shared to balance vulnerability with the completer.
3. As the Completer to do the same.

Step Three: Data-Elicitation

1. Interview the Completer using the Career Timeline, taking notes
2. Use open-ended questions such as WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, HOW
3. As you fill in the timeline
 1. compare life events to identify patterns in how influences affected their decision-making, and offer those patterns to the participant for their refinement or correction
 2. compare events from the Completer's Timeline to the Seeker's past interview, and offer patterns for participants to accept, reject or refine
 3. encourage participants to compare their experiences and ask questions of each other

Step Four: Processing

1. Ask participants to share what they learned from the dialogue in terms of strategy. Note what they say on the career timeline form.
2. Ask participants what they might change in their strategy
3. Ask participants what doubts they may have about using what they learned
4. Encourage participants to address the doubts by sharing personal experiences of problem-solving those issues

Step Five: Conclusions

1. Explain next steps in the procedure

2. Ask if participants have any questions or comments
3. End the dialogue session

Step Six: Future Comparison

1. Ask each participant to complete a second Future Career Autobiography
2. Ensure they label it with the date and time

Step Seven: Describe Participant's Career Strategy

1. Review your notes from the Career Timeline
2. Fill out the Career Strategy Worksheet

Step Eight: Request Career Strategy Plans and Follow-up

1. Provide a completed Career Strategy Worksheet to the Completer
2. Ask Completer to review the Career Strategy Worksheet and fill out the career strategy plan
3. Ask Seeker to review and update their career strategy plan
4. Ask both participants to share their career strategy plans to get reactions from each other. If they are willing, schedule a follow-up meeting to do so

Form 8: Assessing Impact

To assess the impact of the intervention, consider how participants expressed changes in their thinking about themselves and their career navigation. Those changes will be reflected in statements they made during dialogues and in documents they completed. Use the following procedure to assess impact:

Step One: Review Notes of What Participants Said They Learned

Review the Career Timeline for your notes during the processing phase to see what participants said they learned during the dialogue.

Step Two: Compare Future Career Autobiographies (FCA)

For each participant, compare the FCA they wrote before their dialogue to the one written after their dialogue

1. How does the second FCA change in word count?
2. How does the second FCA change in detail?
3. How does the second FCA change in scope in terms of addressing all of the concepts of a career strategy plan?

Step Three: Examine the Career Strategy Plans

Review each participant's career strategy plan to determine what they decided to do to improve their strategy. Consider whether their plan reflects a change in their existing strategy.