AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF


Title: Generativity During Preretirement: Motivation and Actions of Pre-Retirees.

Abstract approved:

______________________________________________________
Shelley I. Dubkin-Lee

This thesis examines the role of Erikson’s (1950) theory of generativity in facilitating knowledge transfer during the preretirement transition. McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) updated framework for generativity is used as a theoretical foundation to explain motivation and actions during this period. Through the use of multiple-case studies, twenty-one recently retired adults are asked to reflect on their experiences just before retirement. A cross-case analysis (Yin, 2012) provides both an in-depth examination of a single case as well as a categorical exploration of replicated cases. Implications for future retiring adults and organizations are discussed.
Generativity During Preretirement:
Motivation and Actions of Pre-Retirees

by
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Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Andrew James Hatlen, Author
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I would like to express my warmest gratitude to my family, friends, mentors, and colleagues—for without your love, support, and encouragement, this accomplishment would not be possible.

Knowledge is created, nurtured, and gifted to those around us. The great fortune of even existing in this world is a testament to preceding generations choosing to create and nurture life—for that, I am forever indebted to my parents James and Lori; my grandparents Jack, Betty, Janice, and Warren; and to all of the generations that came before them. Thank you for having faith in me, keeping my over-confidence in check, and celebrating my positivity.

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Thank you to the colleagues who have made my professional progression an absolute joy. Working and laughing with you has made this whole experience so fun.

The gifts that you have all shared with me have made me the person I am today.
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Generativity During Preretirement: Motivation and Actions of Pre-Retirees

Chapter One: Introduction

The United States is in the midst of a mass-exodus of human capital. Approximately four million adults leave the workforce each year—ten thousand each day—totaling eighty million over a span of twenty years (U.S. Social Security Administration, 2011). This mass-exodus is due to the vast numbers of “baby boomers” (born 1946-1964) reaching retirement eligibility at age 65, with the oldest baby boomers first crossing this threshold in 2011. As the trailing three-fourths of this population prepare for and transition into retirement, for many, this period will also mark an opportunity to pass on their unique knowledge, skills, and experience to the next generation.

During the preretirement transition—the period just before retirement—there is a sense of an impending loss of identity associated with one’s role in the workplace (Miller, 1965). Most adults will feel their occupational and personal identities grow more disjointed following retirement. A former P.O.T.U.S. or other high-profile members of society could be an exception, where the professional status persists after retirement. For the general population nearing retirement, a loss of one’s industrious identity may be a daunting thought. The literature discusses the idea of leaving a legacy behind when one dies, but what about leaving a legacy when a piece of our identity dies entering retirement? What can be done to help ensure that a lifetime of work produces some lasting positive impact on future generations?

As millions in the United States prepare for retirement, it raises several general questions about what happens during preretirement and how retirees feel about their transition. Are transition processes already established to help adults prepare for leaving their employers? How
are supervisors and organizations responding to the departure of their most experienced employees? What do adults hope to accomplish in the final moments before retirement? Why are adults nearing retirement motivated to do anything before exiting? Is there a common sense of ensuring continuity within an organization? How do recent retirees feel about their transition to retirement?

These general questions have led me to think about preretirement as a time frame—within which exists an immense opportunity for generativity to mediate this transition—that could benefit retiring adults, their colleagues, and organizations. Adults preparing for retirement can engage in generative actions, helping to care for and develop the next generation of employees within an organization. Retiring adults can feel a sense of personal satisfaction knowing that they’ve left a lasting legacy, while also selflessly nurturing the growth of their younger colleagues and sustaining institutional knowledge within the organization.

This thesis examines generativity in adults—specifically during preretirement transitions—through interviews with recently retired adults about their experiences. Generativity is, in a broad sense, caring for and nurturing subsequent generations. Erikson (1950) originally coined the term generativity, described as “the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (Erikson, 1963, p. 267). Generativity is central to the seventh stage of Erikson’s (1963) eight psychosocial stages of development.

After being introduced to the concept of generativity more than a year ago, I have been exploring what it is as well as how, why, when, where, and with whom generativity occurs. This journey has led me to a broad review of the relevant literature and the decision to pursue generativity in my interdisciplinary graduate research.
Brief Literature Review

Though seminal work on generativity dates back more than sixty-five years, a modern wave of interest has amassed a growing wealth of knowledge on the subject. A desire to better understand the complexities of generativity has produced a bounty of expanded definitions, theoretical approaches, methodologies, frameworks, and measures. Findings from these studies have connected generativity to wellness, healthy aging, improved work satisfaction, and being a benefit to both the individual and others.

The body of literature has greatly expanded the definition of generativity. Initially, generativity was only mentioned in three pages of Erikson’s (1950) 445-page *Childhood and Society*. Since then, scholars have developed generativity to be a dialectic and complex interactivity of a person’s motivation, contextual influences, actions, and reflections (Kotre, 1984; Browning, 1975; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). Motivation can be both selfish and altruistic (Kotre, 1984); context facilitates and inhibits generative action, which can take myriad forms (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992); and mindfulness or thoughtful reflection can make meaning of painful and rewarding experiences (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992).

Scholars have studied generativity in many settings and within subsections of the population. Researchers have studied generativity in men (Snarey et al., 1987) and women (Rubinstein et al., 2014), young- (Ackerman et al., 2000), middle- (Newton et al., 2014), and older-aged adults (Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012), African Americans (Newton & Jones, 2015), Europeans (Morselli & Passini, 2015), and Japanese (Tabuchi et al., 2015). Generativity has been contextualized within the individual, relational in regards to others inside (e.g. parental role) and outside (e.g. mentoring role) of the family (MacDermid et al., 1998), in films (Berdes, 2015), and also in the workplace (Clark & Arnold, 2008). Scholars studying generativity in the workplace
have compared early- (Stewart and Vandewater, 1998), mid- (Clark & Arnold, 2008), and late-careers of adults (Zacher et al., 2011). Additionally, scholars have also studied how adults in old age, post-career (e.g. retirement), may benefit from continued and renewed generativity (Keyes & Ryff, 1998).

Throughout this review of the literature, I’ve noticed a lack of attention given to adults nearing retirement. Indeed, the research on generativity seems to have missed this critical period in the lives of adults. Work and the workplace are deeply intertwined in the identities of adults, especially in the United States where the first question in social pleasantries is, “What do you do for a living?” In the earlier years of childhood and adolescent development, this query is future-oriented, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” At the other end of the lifecycle, the question is past-oriented, “What did you do most of your life?” However, the preretirement transition presents an exciting locale for further inquiry.

**Summary of Methods**

I decided to use a holistic multiple-case study (Yin, 2014) method to incorporate more than one subjective experience of preretirement. I conducted focused interviews with recently retired adults to elicit their experiences through a formal protocol, asking a set of predetermined questions that allowed for both closed and open-ended responses. These interviews took place either in-person or over the phone, with each being voice-recorded. I transcribed the interviews, focusing on generativity-related questions and accounting for general details about each case.

To make sense of the transcripts, I used cross-case syntheses to analyze multiple cases. First, I examined the individual case transcriptions to build a general characterization of the preretirement experience of each participant. Next, I analyzed a single case in depth based on my theoretical propositions. Then, I used replication logic (Yin, 2014) to compare the experiences of
seventeen additional cases to find commonalities, divergences, and general trends. Finally, I compared the findings from multiple cases with my initial theoretical propositions about generativity.

**Research Questions and Propositions**

Throughout the literature review and research design process, I was guided by three research questions related to generativity in the preretirement transition characterized by *generative motivation and actions*.

RQ1: Why are adults in preretirement motivated to engage in generative actions? *(Motivation)*

RQ2: How do organizations, through opportunities or constraints, influence motivation for generative actions during preretirement? *(Motivation)*

RQ3: How do generative actions in the workplace manifest during preretirement? *(Generative actions)*

These research questions, in concert with McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) framework for generativity, led me to five theoretical propositions that set a baseline of expected findings within each case study.

**Proposition One:** The positive assessment of one’s value (e.g., unique knowledge, skills, and experience) will motivate the pre-retiree to engage in generative actions.

**Proposition Two:** The motivation for generative actions will be positively associated with a pre-retiree’s desire to leave a lasting legacy.
**Proposition Three:** The preretirement period will involve a shift or change in a pre-retiree’s role within the organization to be more generative.

**Proposition Four:** Organizations that lack transition protocols will constrain a pre-retiree’s motivation to engage in generative actions.

**Proposition Five:** Pre-retirees expressions of generativity will manifest in varied forms of creating, maintaining, and offering.

During analysis, each proposition was either supported or rejected. Rejected propositions necessitated accounting for rival explanations.

This study adds to the body of literature by conducting an initial analysis into the lives of recently retired adults who reflect on their preretirement transition regarding *motivation* and *generative actions*. As pre-retirees prepare and plan for their retirement, I believe that understanding and appreciation of generativity can help facilitate this transition in a way that benefits the individual, the next generation of colleagues, and the organization. By studying generativity in pre-retirees, my aim is to understand better the motivation and actions occurring in the workplace during preretirement.

**Chapter Outline**

In Chapter Two, I review and synthesize the relevant literature on generativity, contextualized in the workplace and preretirement. I begin the chapter by establishing a definition of generativity. Next, I explore generativity as *context, as motivation*, and *as actions* in laying the theoretical groundwork for my study. Finally, I discuss the significance of studying
generativity as it serves to benefit pre-retirees, colleagues, and organizations during preretirement.

My research methodology regarding research design, theoretical framework, participant summary, data collection, modes of analysis, and case selection are given in Chapter Three. In explaining my research design, I focus on contextualizing the study, identifying my theoretical framework and methodological approach, offer research questions and propositions, and describe the setting of my research environment. Next, I clarify how I defined, recruited, and screened participants for my scope of interest. In explaining my data collection procedures, I explain in detail how interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed. I also distinguish the variables and measures used to compare my initial propositions to findings in the analysis phase. In my analysis section, I share how I prepared my data and detail the cross-case replication strategy used in the study. Finally, I explain my process to select cases for analysis.

In Chapter Four, I combine my results and discussion sections. Beginning this chapter, I present the analysis of a single case study in detail. This analysis will compare case findings as they relate to my theoretical propositions. Next, I provide additional cases for replication analysis to demonstrate similar and divergent outcomes. Additionally, I summarize the preretirement experience of each case through a brief explanation. Then, I compare my initial propositions about generativity to the results unveiled in the multiple cases, noting potential rival explanations. I close Chapter Four by discussing analytic generalizations about my findings and offering the implications of my findings.
Lastly, Chapter Five will conclude this thesis. I begin the chapter by proposing the value of my study. Then, I review lessons learned while acknowledging the limitations of my study. Finally, I end with a discussion of considerations for future research directions.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

To provide an understanding of generativity, I first unpack the many facets that define this sixty-six-year-old theory. Then, I examine generativity as context, as motivation, and as actions in laying the theoretical groundwork for this study. I showcase these three themes by exploring the evolution of generativity through the writings of Erikson (1950) and other modern scholars. In a thoughtful review of relevant literature, I discuss the multifaceted nature of generativity as a valid theoretical construct for explaining the context, motivation, and generative actions of adults during preretirement.

Generativity Defined

Generativity is the timeless concept underlying some of our most basic human instincts. As a psychosocial theory, generativity is little more than sixty-five years old; however, generative actions have been around since the beginning of human reproduction. Humans have been “establishing and guiding” future generations long before social scientist Erik H. Erikson (1950) coined the term “generativity” (p. 267). Since its theoretical inception, scholars hoping to understand its elegant simplicity better have reinvented generativity. In doing so, the definition of generativity has evolved to serve the diverse needs and applications of those scholars. For this reason, I will briefly examine the evolving definition of generativity.

Generativity began as a broad concept, contextualized within the adult lifespan, to explain various generative actions and motivation. Erikson (1963) defined generativity as “the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (p. 267). In this definition, humans are primarily occupied with the generative actions of procreation and nurturing future generations. Erikson (1963) also noted that generativity “encompasses the evolutionary development which
has made man the teaching and instituting as well as the learning animal” (p. 266). In this sense, Erikson contends that generativity is a universal phenomenon for humans, responsible for motivating the social construction of meaning making across generations. Erikson has pitted his concept of generativity against a self-absorbed and stagnant existence. In this “crises”, only the generative individual can continue on aging with a healthy self-image and ego.

Generativity is one way for an individual’s contributions to the next generation to extend beyond the natural lifespan. Kotre (1984) defined generativity as a “desire to invest one’s substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self” (p. 10). That is, the remains of our life’s work can be viewed as our legacy after we die. Legacy can be motivated by both selfish and selfless intentions while manifesting in many ways. Kotre extended the definition of generativity to encompass multiple motives and actions.

In search of a new understanding of generativity, McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992; 1998) unpacked the concept into seven features (see Figure 2.1). The authors incorporated the previous contributions of Erikson and Kotre on motivation and generative actions when proposing their new theoretical framework. According to McAdams, Hart, and Maruna (1998):

Generativity consists of a constellation of inner desire, cultural demand, conscious concern, belief, commitment, action, and narration revolving around and ultimately justified in terms of the overall psychosocial goal of providing for the survival, well-being, and development of human life in succeeding generations.

(p. 9)

Consistent with previous definitions, the seven features combine to serve the generative goal of caring for future generations. Of the seven features, four are of particular interest to my study: inner desire, cultural demand, conscious concern, and action. Generative actions are a result of
conscious concern for the next generation, motivated by a combination of inner desire and cultural demand (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992).

For the purpose of this study, I have adopted McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) definition of generativity. That is, “In generativity, the adult nurtures, teaches, leads, and promotes the next generation while generating life products and outcomes that benefit the social
system and promote it’s continuity from one generation to the next” (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1003).

This definition succinctly describes the actions and motivations of the generative adult, allowing for a deeper examination of the literature.

Since 1950, the definition of generativity has evolved to become more precise. McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) seven features outline largely how (action) and why (motivation) generativity occurs. Before exploring these in greater depth, I first want to discuss the context of when and where generativity takes place.

**Generativity As Context**

Context provides a sense of timing and locale for when and where generativity occurs. Scholars have somewhat contrasting views on the timing of generativity (Erikson, 1950; Kotre, 1986; McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992). To better comprehend when generativity occurs, I examine these opposing views next. Then, I propose the workplace and preretirement as a locale and period, respectively, worth studying.

Erik H. Erikson’s (1950) seminal work on generativity, *Childhood and Society*, was not about generativity at all. A psychoanalyst by trade, Erikson’s focus on childhood was influenced through his time studying in Vienna and working at the Harvard Psychological Clinic (Erikson, 1963). In fact, Erikson (1963) stated quite directly “this is a book on childhood” (p. 16); interestingly enough, however, he first mentioned generativity in chapter seven.

In this chapter, Erikson (1963) outlined eight psychosocial stages of development: basic trust vs. basic mistrust; autonomy vs. shame and doubt; initiative vs. guilt; industry vs. inferiority; identity vs. role confusion; intimacy vs. isolation; generativity vs. stagnation; and ego integrity vs. despair (p. 274). Erikson (1974) summed up the first seven stages:
In youth you find out what you *care to do* and who you *care to be*—even in changing roles. In young adulthood you learn whom you *care to be with*—at work and in private life, not only exchanging intimacies, but sharing intimacy. In adulthood, however, you learn to know what and whom you can *take care of*. (p. 124)

Embedded in his eight stages of development (see Figure 2.2), Erikson (1963) only briefly touched on the concept of generativity in the seventh stage—dedicating three pages to its discussion—but the ideas expressed on these three pages are the foundation for over sixty-five years of research.

**Figure 2.2: Eight psychosocial stages (Erikson, 1963)**

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<td>Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust</td>
<td>Hope</td>
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<td>II. Early Childhood</td>
<td>Autonomy vs. Shame, Doubt</td>
<td>Will</td>
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<td>III. Play Age</td>
<td>Initiative vs. Guilt</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<td>IV. School Age</td>
<td>Industry vs. Inferiority</td>
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<td>VI. Young Adulthood</td>
<td>Intimacy vs. Isolation</td>
<td>Love</td>
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<tr>
<td>VII. Adulthood</td>
<td><strong>Generativity vs. Stagnation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Care</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Old Age</td>
<td>Integrity vs. Despair</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
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In the seventh psychosocial stage, Erikson (1963) positioned generativity in opposition to stagnation. Stagnation is self-concern where individuals “begin to indulge themselves as if they were their own—or one another’s—one and only child” (Erikson, 1963, p. 267). This form of self-absorption leaves the individual too preoccupied to be concerned with the needs of others.
Failure to overcome selfish preoccupations, Erikson (1963) contended, leads to despair in the next stage of life; therefore, the key to healthy development in this stage is generativity.


The stage of generativity claims the longest stretch of time on the chart—thirty years or more, during which one establishes a working commitment and perhaps begins a new family, devoting time and energy to furthering its healthy and productive life. (p. 111)

Commitments such as work or family can provide opportunities for generativity. In contrast, these commitments can also lead to a denial of generativity—or stagnation—in place of more selfish pursuits. In either case, Erikson and Erikson (1997) reasserted that adulthood serves as the context for generativity.

Kotre (1986) wrote that generativity occurs in many ways and at different times in an adult’s life based on contextual factors. Taking issue with the linear progression of Erikson’s psychosocial stages, specifically with the positioning of generativity as only occurring in middle-adulthood, Kotre (1984) identified four types of generativity: biological, parental, technical, and cultural. Expanding on Erikson’s earlier definition of generativity, Kotre (1984) suggested that the four types of generativity allow for multiple generative outlets that can occur throughout adulthood in varied contexts.

According to Kotre (1984), two major revolutions have changed the context of generativity: contraceptive and demographic. First, the contraceptive revolution occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, which shifted cultural views on fertility and parenthood. With the gain in
popularity of female contraceptives and the Supreme Court case Roe v. Wade in 1976, women’s 
choices for biological reproduction expanded, which then offered women additional 
opportunities to seek generative means outside the context of the home. 

Second, a demographic revolution concerns “the structure of the life cycle” (Kotre, 1984, 
p. 19). Kotre (1984) described several demographic movements, including the postponement of 
death, childfree years, and the Baby Boom cohort. As the human lifespan has extended so too 
have opportunities for generativity. “Not only can we expect more years of life than ever before, 
we can expect more years without children” (Kotre, 1984, p. 22). Childfree years can be related 
back to the greater flexibility in family planning attributed to the contraceptive revolution. This 
new context allowed for more women and men to engage in forms of generativity previously 
beyond socially expected norms, outside and within the home respectively (Kotre, 1984). 

Affected by each of these movements, the Baby Boom generation changed the context of 
generativity through its sheer size in numbers. The earliest Baby Boomers entered adulthood in 
the late 1960s. Kotre (1984) discussed the role of such a large cohort seeking personal identity 
and ultimately shaping the ideals of a decade. The result was that “the 1970s became known as 
the Me Decade” (Kotre, 1984, p. 24). However, these ideals have been challenged and shifted as 
a result of this population continuing to age. With Baby Boomers reaching late-adulthood, 
generativity has become a contemporary issue in American culture. 

Cultural context affects every aspect of generativity. Best described by McAdams and 
Logan (2003), generativity is: 

Expressed in a cultural context, and cultural forces decisively shape how people 
orient themselves to the next generation. The generative adult must work within 
the economic and ideological frameworks made available by society if he or she
is to assume such generative roles as parent, teacher, mentor, healer, arbiter, advocate, leader, activist, organizer, and citizen. (p. 19)

Expressions of generativity, then, are rooted in cultural context. As I will discuss later, context affects how adults are motivated to engage in generative actions as well as the kinds of generative actions that may take place.

The workplace offers a unique setting to study generativity as both a personal and social act. Generativity offers a way for the individual to connect with the social world (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1004). “Adults express generativity in social contexts and through social institutions” (de St. Aubin, McAdams, and Kim, 2003, p. 5). The workplace is one such social institution. In the context of work and career, Clark and Arnold (2008) recognized:

It concerns individuals’ productive contribution to organizations and society and the transmission of skills, knowledge, and values between individuals and generations… generativity deserves a central place in the study of middle and late career. However, generativity has seldom been studied in a career context despite substantial advances in the theory and measurement of the construct during the past 20 years. (p. 474)

Considering generativity in a workplace context requires an examination of individuals’ roles in an organization.

An adult’s workplace identity or role may determine expressions of generativity. For adults without alternative generative outlets, such as friends and family, the workplace may offer the only opportunity to create, share, and offer with others. For others, the workplace merely provides an additional context to express generativity. MacDermid, Franz, and de Reus (1998) proposed, “role settings both constrain and provide opportunities for expressions of generativity”
(p. 197). In this sense, an individual’s role within an organization may allow or inhibit generative behaviors.

Workplace or organizational roles change, as individuals grow older, permitting differing aspirations of generativity. Stewart and Vandewater (1998) demonstrated that “the desire to be generative emerges in early adulthood, although only in late adulthood can generativity be accomplished. In the intervening years, the capacity for generativity gathers force” (p. 77). While adults may wish to be generative early in their career, generative opportunities are not fully realized until later. As adults near the end of their careers, these opportunities become more salient.

While retirement marks the end of a career, the period preceding retirement—preretirement—may offer opportunities for generativity in the workplace. Atchley (1977) defines retirement more accurately as “a process that involves withdrawing from a job and taking up the role of retired person” (p. 143). Two preretirement phases precede retirement: remote and near (Atchley, 1977). In the remote phase, retirement can be conceptualized as “a vaguely positive something that will happen someday”; whereas, in the near phase “individuals orient themselves toward a specific retirement date… [and] begin to gear themselves for separation from their jobs and the social situations within which they carried out those jobs” (Atchley, 1977, p. 154). During this preretirement period, adults can prepare to create, share, and offer their skills, knowledge, and values.

For my study, I focus on the near phase of preretirement—the period between when an adult first makes the personal decision to retire and their official retirement date. This phase of preretirement allows for a focused examination of this critical transitional period. Additionally, the term “pre-retirees” will subsequently refer to adults positioned in preretirement.
Even though scholars Clark and Arnold (2008) have stated the importance of studying generativity in the contexts of work and career, I have found minimal literature addressing generativity in the workplace. Even further, there is a complete absence of research regarding workplace generativity during the preretirement period. As such, I will conclude this literature review with an exploration of generative motivations and actions in the literature—offering five theoretical propositions on generativity that are contextualized in the workplace during the preretirement period.

**Generativity As Motivation**

The motivation for generativity originates from a fundamental concern for future generations. While this notion of generative concern may seem straightforward, it requires some unpacking to understand fully. To begin, I explore McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) depiction of motivation for generativity regarding inner desire and cultural demand. Finally, I make the case that the preretirement period may serve as fertile ground for generative action.

Generative actions do not occur sans motivation. Though a unique combination of factors motivates each generative adult, scholars have identified some common motivations within the individual as well as the individual’s social and cultural environment (McAdams et al., 1998). McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) proposed that generative motivations stem from an adult’s inner desire and cultural demand, combining “to promote in adulthood a conscious concern for the next generation” (p. 1005). For the sake of this study, it is necessary to understand both inner desire and cultural demand.

An adult is motivated both selfishly and selflessly through an adult’s inner desire. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) identify two kinds of inner desire: “a desire for symbolic immortality and a desire to be needed by others” (p. 1005). In examining motivation, Kotre
(1984) challenged Erikson’s (1963) notion of generativity vs. stagnation as a duality; instead, he offered that both generativity and threats of stagnation coexist within the individual—influencing inner desire for generative acts. Newton, Herr, Pollack, and McAdams (2014) found that “a combination of high generativity and high narcissism was associated with the highest level of composite legacy” (p. 59). Thus, inner desire can be considered both selfish and selfless ways to exist beyond one’s natural lifespan.

Kotre (1984) described the terms *agentic* (selfish) and *communal* (selfless) as two modes of generativity to help explain the motivation for creating a lasting legacy. As described by Kotre (1984):

In expressing… generativity, one’s life-interest may fall more heavily on oneself or on the generative object. If the life of the progenitor assumes greater weight, if the creation is simply a clone or a monument to the self, we may speak of an *agentic* mode of generativity. On the other hand, if life-interest is transferred to the generative object with the result that its life becomes more important than the progenitor’s, we may speak of a *communal* mode. (p. 16)

Communal modes express the desire to be of some use to others—a “need to be needed” (Stewart, Franz, & Layton, 1988, p. 56). A desire to be needed begins with an internal assessment of one’s value. If an adult feels like they have something to offer the next generation, they create plans to be generative in the future (Peterson, 1998).

**Proposition One:** The positive assessment of one’s value (e.g., unique knowledge, skills, and experience) will motivate the pre-retiree to engage in generative actions.
These generative plans, when actualized, manifest in a “self-defining legacy that may be offered to society and to succeeding generations as a gift” (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1005). Motivated by inner desire, adults create lasting legacies to benefit future generations.

**Proposition Two:** The motivation for generative actions will be positively associated with a pre-retiree’s desire to leave a lasting legacy.

The motivation for generativity is also rooted in cultural demand. According to McAdams et al. (1998):

All societies require that adults care and provide for the next generation. The continuity of a society’s traditions, values, and practices depend on adults’ involvement in activities that affirm and transmit those aspects of culture that are deemed worthy of affirmation and transmission. (p. 15)

Developmental expectations and societal opportunities combine to explain motivation through cultural demand (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992). Generativity is pressured by developmental expectations, as Erikson (1963) mentioned, based on a predictable life cycle and necessary for healthy aging. Role-specific developmental expectations shift along a predictable life cycle as well (Clark and Arnold, 2008).

**Proposition Three:** The preretirement period will involve a shift or change in a pre-retiree’s role within the organization to be more generative.
Furthermore, opportunities for generativity differ across societies. Societies may present contrasting opportunities and constraints for expressing generativity based on occupational, economic, and ideological norms (McAdams et al., 1998). Occupational norms set expectations for employees’ generative actions within the organization, either encouraging or constraining opportunities.

**Proposition Four:** Organizations that lack transition protocols will constrain a pre-retiree’s motivation to engage in generative actions.

Developmental expectations and societal opportunities combine to include many factors that influence an adult’s generative motivation. Together, inner desire and cultural demand explain the motivation for generative actions.

The preretirement period may serve to be fertile ground for generativity. As the end of their careers approach, pre-retirees may be motivated by a desire to leave a lasting legacy and a desire to be needed. Developmental expectations for pre-retirees to assume more generative roles as well as organizational opportunities to share their knowledge, skills, and experience during the preretirement period can add external motivation for generativity. Together during preretirement, inner desire and cultural demand should combine to create an environment ripe for generative action.

**Generativity As Action**

To capture the many forms of generative action, scholars have developed several definitions worth mentioning. I consider these definitions of generative action in regards to the workplace and preretirement period. First, I discuss Erikson’s (1963) early conception of
generative actions. Next, I examine Kotre’s (1984) four types of generativity. Finally, I explore McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) categorization of generative actions as forms of creating, maintaining, and offering.

Erikson (1963) originally defined generativity as “the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (p. 267). In addition to procreation and childrearing, Erikson (1963) extended generative actions to “include such more popular synonyms as productivity and creativity” (p. 267). Productive and creative generative actions can be applied to the workplace. As discussed, generativity can occur in many social roles, including parent, teacher, mentor, and leader (MacDermid et al., 1998). Through these roles, generativity may be expressed differently. For example, a parent’s generative behavior towards their kin may be in the form of nursing or feeding; whereas, a senior partner at a law firm may express generativity by mentoring a younger associate.

Kotre (1984) identified four types of generativity: biological, parental, technical, and cultural (see Figure 2.2). Expanding on Erikson’s (1963) definition of generativity actions, Kotre (1984) suggested that the four types of generativity allow for multiple generative outlets that can occur throughout adulthood in varied contexts. Technical and cultural generativity are of particular interest in my study.

Technical generativity can occur at many points throughout life in relationships among teachers, pupils, and skills. Kotre (1984) explained that technical generativity “is accomplished by teachers at all stations of the journey through life, who pass on skills to those less advanced than themselves” (p. 13). Kotre & Kotre (1998) later identified technical generativity as being “expressed in the teaching of skills and techniques: how to read, how to repair a car, how to perform a healing ritual, how to write a legal brief, and so on” (p. 368). To advance and develop
the growth of the pupil, the teacher must prioritize the potential of the pupil (Kotre, 1984). When this occurs, the teacher’s skills are transmitted to the pupil.

Culture is also transmitted along with skills during technical generativity. Kotre (1984) stated that in “teaching how to do it, the technically generative individual also teaches what it means—but only indirectly” (p. 14). Culture can be seen as background context that sets the scene for skill transfer (Kotre, 1984). In an organization, more experienced employees convey a sense of the workplace culture when skills are shared. Cultural generativity goes one step further.

Figure 2.3: Four types of generativity (Kotre, 1984).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Generative Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Biological</td>
<td>Begetting, bearing, and nursing offspring</td>
<td>The infant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parental</td>
<td>Nurturing and disciplining offspring, initiating them into a family’s traditions</td>
<td>The child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Technical</td>
<td>Teaching skills—the “body” of a culture—to successors, implicitly passing on the symbol system in which the skills are embedded</td>
<td>The apprentice, the skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cultural</td>
<td>Creating, renovating, and conserving a symbol system—the “mind” of a culture—explicitly passing it on to successors</td>
<td>The disciple, the culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kotre (1984) explained cultural generativity as occurring “when a teacher turns from how to do it to what it means… [They are] no longer a teacher of skills but a mentor” (p. 14). The teacher’s focus is on both the pupil and conservation of the culture. Culture is considered to be a locale with shared meaning and group identity. Cultural generativity offers the pupil the freedom to engage in meaning making through the past, present, and future experiences. Kotre and Kotre (1998) referred to the “conservation, renovation, or creation of collective meaning systems… In telling someone ‘how to do it’ (technical generativity), one also teaches her or him ‘what it means’ (cultural generativity)” (p. 368). In the workplace, culture is shared through meaningful
mentoring relationships when a mentor communicates both *how something is done* as well as *
what it means*.

Building on previous definitions, McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) categorized generative action into creating, maintaining, and offering. Akin to Erikson’s (1963) earlier conceptualization, generative actions can take the form of creating new things and people. In the workplace, generativity is expressed through the creation of new products, projects, processes, and documents. These creations, as extensions of the self, involve a crafting a product or legacy (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992). In their study, McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) measured this form of generativity by recording participant references of “creating new products, initiating projects, or generating new ideas, or desiring to do so” (p. 1010).

Generative actions can also include “the conservation, restoration, preservation, cultivation, nurturance, or maintenance of that which is deemed worthy of such behavior” (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1006). Adults express generativity through maintenance behaviors in the workplace, including nurturing and cultivating talent in younger employees through mentoring relationships as well as preserving or restoring organizational traditions. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) measured maintenance behaviors through references of participants “putting forth effort toward sustaining an ongoing product, project, or tradition” (p. 1010).

Lastly, the generative act of offering involves giving away “that which has been created or maintained” to the next generation (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1006). Before exiting an organization, adults can carry out generative actions that offer their creations to the next generation of coworkers. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) measured generative acts of offering when participants made reference to the “giving of the self or the self’s products (e.g.,
money or knowledge) or the desire to engage in such giving to other people” (p. 1011). Pre-
retirees may engage in generative actions of creating, maintaining, and offering that benefit their younger colleagues before leaving an organization.

**Proposition Five:** Pre-retirees expressions of generativity will manifest in varied forms of creating, maintaining, and offering.

Generativity can take many forms, influenced by both inner desire and cultural demand, during preretirement. Indeed, de St. Aubin et al. (2003) explained that:

Generative adults are teachers, leaders, mentors... they seek to pass on the most valued traditions of a culture, to teach the most valued skills and outlooks, to impart wisdom, to foster the realization of human potential in future generations.

(p. 6)

Pre-retirees have an opportunity to embody the attributes of generative adults as teachers, leaders, and mentors. Due to the timing of the preretirement period, pre-retirees are in an exceptional position to share their knowledge, skills, and experience with the next generation of employees in an organization.

By studying generativity in pre-retirees, my aim is to understand better the motivation and actions occurring in the workplace during preretirement. In my study, I test the five propositions presented in this chapter through an examination of multiple case studies, each defined by a unique preretirement experience. Through a cross-case analysis, I discuss the selected case to predict similar or divergent findings. In the next chapter, I showcase my methods in detail.
Chapter Three: Methods

Research Design

As adults in their midlife prepare to enter into retirement, there are unique opportunities for generative actions to take place. During this preretirement transition, pre-retirees can leave a legacy by sharing their unique knowledge, skills, and experience with their employing organization and coworkers. This sharing fits McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) description of generative action manifesting as various forms of creating, maintaining, and offering (p. 1006). This way, the transfer of knowledge, skills, and experience in the workplace can be implied as an act of generativity.

To better understand how and why these generative actions occur in the workplace, I selected explanatory case studies as the appropriate methodological approach for my research. Through case studies, Erikson (1958, 1969) examined the lives of Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi to produce convincing examples of generativity. Though many empirical measurements have been developed to pursue a quantitative method of research (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, de St. Aubin, & Logan, 1993; Peterson & Klohnen, 1995; Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2011), case studies allow for a closer qualitative examination of subjects’ unique circumstances and experiences (Yin, 2014).

Due to the extensive use of case studies in both educational and research settings, it was helpful to establish a common understanding of what a case study is. Yin (2014) defined a case study as being “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon
and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 16). In other words, case studies offer a way to more carefully examine the factors leading to how and why something happened (Yin, 2012).

A case study methodology allows for a depth and breadth of information to be obtained from each instance. Yin (2012) offered this explanation for the use of case study methodology:

All case study research starts from the same compelling feature: the desire to derive a(n) (up-)close or otherwise in-depth understanding of a single or small number of ‘case(s)’, set in their real-world contexts... The closeness aims to produce an invaluable and deep understanding—that is, an insightful appreciation of the ‘case(s)’—hopefully resulting in new learning about real-world behavior and its meaning. (p. 4)

Indeed, such an examination of the context as well as other case conditions is required to understand the complexities of a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2012).

Erikson’s (1950) initial conceptualization of generativity can be considered a contemporary phenomenon. The notion of generativity as a commonly accepted experience in adult development has since been widely examined. Scholars have offered many frameworks (Erikson, 1963; Kotre, 1984; Valliant, 2002; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; Rubinstein et al., 2015) to study the complex nature of generativity. I chose McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) “A Theory of Generativity and Its Assessment Through Self-Report, Behavioral Acts, and Narrative Themes in Autobiography” as the principle theoretical framework for my study.

**Theoretical Framework**

To explain how and why generativity occurs in the workplace, I used McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) extension of generativity to design of my case study methodology. McAdams
and de St. Aubin’s (1992) framework consists of seven psychosocial features of generativity: cultural demand, inner desire, concern, belief, commitment, action, and narrative. In this framework, generativity is unpacked to consider an adult’s motivational sources, thoughts and plans, generative behavior, and reflection. These considerations suggested a launching point for further investigation.

I wanted to examine the generative motivations and actions of pre-retirees occurring within their respective employing organizations during preretirement. Throughout the literature review and research design process, I was guided by three research questions related to generativity in the preretirement transition characterized by *generative motivation and actions*.

RQ1: Why are adults in preretirement motivated to engage in generative actions? *(Motivation)*

RQ2: How do organizations, through opportunities or constraints, influence motivation for generative actions during preretirement? *(Motivation)*

RQ3: How do generative actions in the workplace manifest during preretirement? *(Generative actions)*

These research questions, in concert with McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) framework for generativity, led me to five theoretical propositions that set a baseline of expected findings within each case study.

**Proposition One:** The positive assessment of one’s value (e.g., unique knowledge, skills, experience, etc.) will motivate the pre-retiree to engage in generative actions.
**Proposition Two:** The motivation for generative actions will be positively associated with a pre-retiree’s desire to leave a lasting legacy.

**Proposition Three:** The preretirement period will involve a shift or change in a pre-retiree’s role within the organization to be more generative.

**Proposition Four:** Organizations that lack transition protocols will constrain a pre-retiree’s motivation to engage in generative actions.

**Proposition Five:** Pre-retirees expressions of generativity will manifest in assorted forms of creating, maintaining, and offering.

I selected holistic multiple-case design to study the preretirement transition of twenty-one recently retired adults. A holistic design refers to each case having a single unit of analysis (e.g., interviews). As an individual researcher, limited time and resources made this type of case study the best available option. Including multiple units of analysis (e.g., surveys, archival data, etc.) would have allowed for a triangulation of data in each case. However, Yin (2012) suggested, “a stronger and potentially more desirable use of the method is in conducting *multiple-case* studies—that is, a single empirical inquiry or study that contains two or more cases” (p. 131). I followed Yin’s advice to consider multiple cases, each with a single unit of analysis, to employ cross-case syntheses following replication logic (Yin, 2014).

By using cross-case syntheses logic for analysis in my study, I had an opportunity to search for patterns across the individual cases, with each case being treated as an independent study (Yin, 2012, p. 158). In this way, comparisons could be made between the findings of the individual cases, reducing potential biases present in a single study, while also serving to predict
similar or contrasting results. I carefully selected each case and followed the aforementioned theoretical framework (Yin, 2014).

Participants

The 21 participants in my study accounted for a total of 528 years of experience, with a range of 6-41 years, and an average 25 years with their previous employers. Fourteen females and seven males participated, ranging in age from 56-72 years old. Participants reported an average preretirement period of nine months and an average retirement age of 63. The sample included one engineer, eleven managers, one rural postal carrier, one law librarian, one paralegal, two lawyers, one natural gas lineman, one environmental scientist, and two administrative support staff. Nine participants retired from private-sector jobs while twelve retired from the public sector. The sample included participants from Oregon (7), Washington (7), Virginia (3), Minnesota (2), Georgia (1), and Arizona (1). I did not collect additional demographic information.

Before participant recruitment could occur, I needed to receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) through Oregon State University. Due to the nature of research involving human subjects, the IRB required that I obtain consent from all participating adults before conducting interviews. Once my study was approved (see Appendix A), I moved forward with participant recruitment.

Participant recruitment. I recruited potential participants based on three essential conditions; potential participants must: (1) speak English, due to a lack of resources for translating; (2) have retired within the last twenty-four months, to help with recall of the preretirement period; and (3) have not retired from a self-employed position. My last condition
was made to focus on generative actions of employees within organizations (see Zacher et al., 2012 for generativity-mediated succession in family-owned businesses).

I recruited participants through a snowballing method of referral. The snowball method involves finding sponsors (e.g. those who found some benefit from participating in my study, were willing to vouch for my research, act as gatekeepers, etc.) that were keen to connect me to other potential cases (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, pp. 100-101). Several constraints limited the diversity and extent of my potential case studies, including lack of access to databases of recently retired adults, limited resources for recruitment and outreach, and reliance on personal connections and networks for participants. Instead, I relied on this method of referral to recruit as wide a variety of cases as possible given my resources.

Based on my recruitment methods, I used a telephone screening process to confirm participant eligibility. During this screening, I ascertained whether the potential participant met the necessary criteria for consideration in my study. At the conclusion of the telephone screening, I either made an appointment to conduct an interview or the volunteer was informed of their ineligibility and graciously dismissed. I also asked eligible participants for their email address so that I could send them the informed consent document for review (see Appendix B).

**Data Collection**

Each case study consisted of one focused interview with a participant, lasting an average of 51.5 minutes. I conducted seven interviews in-person and fourteen by telephone. As suggested by Yin (2014), though I followed a preconceived set of questions for each case (see Figure 3.1: Case study interview protocol), the interviews remained open-ended and conversational. The strengths of this data collection method allowed me to elicit targeted and insightful responses.
(Yin, 2014); meanwhile, the weaknesses were mitigated by the case study protocol (e.g. accounting for poor recall, etc.).

**Interview protocol.** My interview protocol consisted of four phases once I obtained consent. The initial phase aimed to bring my participants back into the frame of mind of when they were still working for their previous employer. General questions served this purpose by asking about their employer, the workplace relationships, and daily duties. The next phase intended to set a context about the nature of participant’s relationship with their employer as well as their retirement decision-making process. The third phase included questions focused on unveiling transition-specific directives and actions, including what, if any, organizational transition processes were in place to facilitate generative actions. Finally, the last section was designed to wrap up the interview in a way that allowed for reflection on the retirement transition. Together, these phases of the interview protocol led participants through a guided reflection of their preretirement transition, while also allowing me to understand their generative motivations, generative actions, and contextual influences.

I decided to audio record the interviews, with participant consent, using software applications. Recordings allowed me to actively listen and engage with each case study during the interview. Then I transcribed the audio recordings using InqScribe, a computer software program.

**Measures.** Establishing consistent variables and measures for each proposition are necessary for data analysis. As such, I adopted the variables and measures provided by McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) “A Theory of Generativity and Its Assessment Through...
Self-Report, Behavioral Acts, and Narrative Themes in Autobiography”. I have summarized each measure for clarity (see Table 3.1: Measures of generativity).

Figure 3.1: Case study interview protocol

1) Please, tell me about your previous employment.
   a. How long did you work at your previous place of employment?
   b. Approximately, how many employees are/were a part of the organization?
   c. Was your workplace part of a larger organization?
   d. Please describe your relationship with management.
   e. If applicable, describe your relationship with subordinates.
   f. Please describe your relationship with younger coworkers.

2) Take me through a summary of your daily work duties.

3) What was your employer like?
   a. What did they do to make you feel valued?
   b. What made you feel enjoyment at work?

4) When did you retire?
   a. How far in advance to your retirement date did you make the decision to retire?
   b. What factors led you to this decision?
   c. What, if any, uncertainties did you feel about this decision?

5) At what point did you decide to tell your employer that you were going to retire?
   a. Who did you tell first?
   b. What response did you receive after informing your employer of your plan to retire?
   c. How did that effect your decision?

6) Tell me about the time between when you informed your employer of your decision to retire and when you actually retired.
   a. When did your co-workers find out about your retirement?
   b. Did you feel your role within the organization shift or change? If so, in what ways?
   c. Did your employer have you engage in any sort of a transition? If so, what did you do during this transition?

7) Do you feel like you were able to pass on any of your knowledge and experience to other employees before retiring?

8) In what ways did your employer do a good job of helping you share your knowledge and experience with others?

9) In what ways could your employer have done a better job of helping you share your knowledge and experience with others?

10) Do you believe that you have unique information, experience, or knowledge that would be useful to share with your previous employer or coworkers?
    a. Even though you are now retired, do you feel that you would be willing to share this unique information, experience, or knowledge if asked to by your previous employer?
       i. Please explain further.

11) When thinking about retiring from your previous employer, was your experience positive or negative? Why?

12) At what age did you officially retire?
    a. Is that the age you’d planned on retiring? If not, please explain.
Table 3.1: Measures of generativity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition One:</th>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Measure:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The positive assessment of one’s value (e.g., unique knowledge, skills, experience, etc.) will motivate the pre-retiree to engage in generative actions.</td>
<td>Need to be needed</td>
<td>Reference to having unique knowledge, skills, or experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition Two:</th>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Measure:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The motivation for generative actions will be positively associated with a pre-retiree’s desire to leave a lasting legacy.</td>
<td>Symbolic Immortality</td>
<td>Reference to leaving a legacy, having an enduring influence, or leaving behind products that will outlive one’s physical existence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition Three:</th>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Measure:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The preretirement period will involve a shift or change in a pre-retiree’s role within the organization to be more generative.</td>
<td>Change or shift in role</td>
<td>Reference to change or shift in current organizational roles, responsibilities, or duties to allow more generative behavior.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition Four:</th>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Measure:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizations that lack transition protocols will constrain a pre-retiree’s motivation to engage in generative actions.</td>
<td>Organizational opportunity</td>
<td>Reference to a lack of transition planning, processes, or actions by the organization or supervisors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition Five:</th>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Measure:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-retirees expressions of generativity will manifest in assorted forms of creating, maintaining, and offering.</td>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>Reference creating new products, initiating projects, or generating new ideas, or desiring to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining</td>
<td>Reference to putting forth effort towards sustaining an ongoing product, project, or tradition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offering</td>
<td>Reference to giving of the self or self’s products or the desire to engage in such giving to other people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis

To analyze the participant responses, I prepared the data and conducted a cross-case analysis using Yin’s (2012) replication strategy. During the data preparation stage, I de-identified participants’ personal information, coded responses, and collated data into partially ordered meta-matrices (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 135). My cross-case analysis followed Yin’s (2012) replication strategy to study one case in depth before examining successive cases for similar and diverging patterns. Through replication, I was able to analyze my data in a way that reflects an individual case’s unique experience in the preretirement period, and then later consider patterns across multiple cases.

**Data preparation.** My initial step in analyzing the case study data was to de-identify participant responses before working to make sense of it all. Following recommendations from the IRB, I disguised the identities of all participants by assigning pseudonyms to each case. I use these pseudonyms for consistency when describing, analyzing, and discussing each case study.

My next step involved organizing the data I collected from multiple cases. I used transcriptions to record general demographic, employment, and chronology information for each case (see Table 3.2: Participant summary). Additionally, I created individual case profiles with contextual information as a quick-reference during analysis. These profiles helped to begin making sense of my data before coding.

Adopting the method suggested by Saldana (2013), I used two cycles of coding to summarize and refine my data. For the first cycle, I applied provisional coding to organize the participant responses into categories based on my five initial theoretical propositions. In the second cycle, I inserted participant data into a partially ordered meta-matrix (Miles, Huberman,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Decision to Retire</th>
<th>Notice to Employer</th>
<th>Retirement Date</th>
<th>Retirement Age</th>
<th>Current Age</th>
<th>Duration at Organization (Years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Driver/Route Supervisor/Captain</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10/01/14</td>
<td>10/01/14</td>
<td>04/01/15</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>08/01/13</td>
<td>11/01/13</td>
<td>01/01/14</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>05/01/15</td>
<td>05/01/15</td>
<td>08/01/15</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>06/01/14</td>
<td>03/01/15</td>
<td>06/01/15</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Rural Postal Carrier</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12/24/13</td>
<td>09/24/14</td>
<td>12/24/14</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Airport General Manager</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10/01/14</td>
<td>08/02/15</td>
<td>10/20/15</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Law Librarian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10/16/14</td>
<td>10/20/14</td>
<td>02/04/15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffery</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>01/27/15</td>
<td>01/30/15</td>
<td>03/30/15</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Lineman</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>04/02/15</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>Jan</td>
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<td>Senior Lecturer/Director of Leadership Program</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>02/01/15</td>
<td>06/30/15</td>
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<td>02/01/15</td>
<td>05/04/15</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Washington</td>
<td>Environmental Scientist</td>
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<td>01/01/15</td>
<td>01/01/15</td>
<td>10/03/15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Lawyer/General Counsel</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11/01/13</td>
<td>11/01/13</td>
<td>02/04/14</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Washington</td>
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<td>01/01/14</td>
<td>09/01/14</td>
<td>10/15/14</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Oregon</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>03/01/15</td>
<td>05/01/15</td>
<td>06/01/15</td>
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<td>05/01/15</td>
<td>06/01/15</td>
<td>08/01/15</td>
<td>62</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>05/01/14</td>
<td>05/01/15</td>
<td>05/01/15</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Sign Language Interpreter/Manager of Services</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>03/01/14</td>
<td>12/18/12</td>
<td>12/18/14</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Senior Transition Manager</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>07/01/14</td>
<td>12/01/14</td>
<td>06/01/15</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaime</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Vice President of Instruction</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>01/05/11</td>
<td>07/01/15</td>
<td>01/05/16</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12/31/14</td>
<td>12/31/14</td>
<td>12/31/15</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By displaying the data in a meta-matrix (see Table 3.3: Case-level display meta-matrix), I was able to search for patterns in the coding and further refine the data.

Table 3.3: Case-level display meta-matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Need to be Needed</th>
<th>Desire for Legacy</th>
<th>Shift in Role</th>
<th>Employer-Directed Transition</th>
<th>Generative Actions Observed</th>
<th>Generative Action: Creating</th>
<th>Generative Action: Maintaining</th>
<th>Generative Action: Offering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Hattie</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abigail</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaime</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cross-case analysis.** Before attempting to understand how the cases compared, I first had to study the individual cases using a case-oriented approach (Ragin, 1987; in Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I opted to use a case-oriented approach because I was able to consider the case “as a whole entity—looking at configurations, associations, causes, and effects within the case—and only then turns to comparative analysis” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 102). Yin’s (2014) replication strategy allowed me to dive into a single case study to explore generative
actions, motives, and the workplace context in which they occurred. After analyzing the first case based on my theoretical framework, I examined subsequent cases for similar or divergent explanations. Similar cases were predicted to be direct replications while divergent cases were theoretical replications explained by rival explanations.

Case selection. Due to the large number of participant responses in my study, I needed to screen which cases to include in my cross-case analysis. To do this, I used a replication strategy of comparable case selection (Huberman et al., 2014). Huberman et al. (2014) explained that the strength of this approach allowed me to select “individuals, sites, and groups on the same relevant characteristics over time” (p. 32). My strategy of selecting comparable cases made for easier pattern recognition. Using this method, I reduced the number of cases to reflect emerging patterns in the meta-matrix (see Table 3.4: Partially ordered meta-matrix with emergent pattern). I selected eighteen remaining cases to proceed with predicting direct and theoretical replications.

Next, I selected the first case recorded to serve as my basis for replication. Then, I selected additional cases to predict similar and differing outcomes, through replication, based on the five propositions of my study. In accordance to Yin (2014), “each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal [or direct] replication) or (b) produces contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (p. 57). I selected fifteen cases that share similar criteria to predict similar results as well as two cases to produce contrasting results.

To explore the context of these preretirement experiences, I elected to analyze my first case in-depth before reviewing subsequent cases. I chose to the first case I recorded as a way to
begin my cross-case analysis. My first case, “Jack”, confirmed each of my five theoretical propositions. As such, this case served to be the foundation for further replications. I chose additional case replications to predict similar outcomes. I selected five sets of cases based on similarly measured variables. I summarize these case sets as a way to characterize direct and theoretical replications.

I used these five sets to explain rival explanations. The first set I observed, involved two cases that were direct replications of Jack’s preretirement experience, and also confirmed all of my theoretical propositions. The next three sets included at total thirteen cases. I predicted these cases to have similar outcomes as the first; however, each set of cases reflected experiences that

Table 3.4: Partially ordered meta-matrix with emergent patterns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Need to be Needed</th>
<th>Desire for Legacy</th>
<th>Shift in Role</th>
<th>Employer-Directed Transition</th>
<th>Generative Actions Observed</th>
<th>Generative Action: Creating</th>
<th>Generative Action: Maintaining</th>
<th>Generative Action: Offering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Hattie</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
differed in some way from Jack’s. I selected the last two cases as theoretical replications that represent a different outcome than the rest. Through an examination of these five case sets, I provide several explanations of pre-retiree’s generative motivations and actions in the next chapter.
Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings of my study. Following Yin’s (2012) replication strategy for cross-case analysis, I first offer a thorough analysis of a single case. Second, I offer fifteen cases as direct replications to predict similar outcomes. Third, I use two additional cases to represent a theoretical replication. Lastly, I discuss analytic generalizations and implications from my findings.

Individual Case Analysis

My first case involves a participant named Jack. Jack is a 59-year-old male living in Oregon. He retired less than a year earlier at the age of 58. Jack worked for 30 years at his previous place of employment. He started out driving semi-trucks, making deliveries in and around Portland, OR. Jack rose to be the Route Supervisor in only four years, responsible for organizing all of the drivers, routes, and deliveries. After twenty years as the Route Supervisor, he worked all the way up to be co-owner of the company—one of nine “Captains”. In this role, Jack had direct influence over the future of the organization while also continuing to manage the distribution of products.

During his tenure with the company, Jack experienced a significant transition in management. For the first 24 years, Jack’s direct supervisor was the owner of the enterprise. According to Jack, the owner knew how to make his employees feel valued. “He knew people who liked the pat on the back. He knew if you enjoyed talking about fishing or hunting, or kids activities. He was a very pleasant man.” Shortly after the owner passed away, the Captains’ Group was dissolved, and a series of external managers were hired to carry the organization forward. With each new manager hired and fired, some only lasting one year, Jack’s relationship
with the replacement supervisors worsened. Jack explained, “A new man was brought in, an investment man, and I had no relationship with him at all. He had no desire to have distribution for the company.” The organization hired two more outside managers next and “they didn’t want any advice from anybody.” In the restructuring of the organization, these managers replaced the existing “open-door policy” with a hierarchical style resembling that of the armed forces’ chain of command. Jack vented about the frustrating change in organizational culture, “In the beginning, it was a great atmosphere. It was like a giant family… Once it became structured, it was terrible… It was not a pleasant place to be.”

Jack maintained positive relationships with his subordinates and younger coworkers. Having hired most of his subordinates, he was able to set expectations early on. Based on a mutual respect for one another, Jack often granted his drivers autonomy. With this freedom from micromanagement, he expected that his subordinates would come to work and give their “best effort.” Additionally, Jack mentioned that he had been to many seminars where they taught supervisors “how to deal with their employees.” These seminars, along with good hiring practices and personal connections with employees, helped Jack to have positive relationships and minimal turnover.

Jack’s preretirement period began in October of 2014 when he decided that he was going to retire by the following June. That October, Jack let his supervisor know about his plans to retire explaining, “I knew that I really didn't want to work in the summer of 2015, and I thought it was going to be a drawn out process for them to find someone to replace me.” By February, however, he grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of communication about the company and
how they were doing. After a few months of feeling left out of the loop, he decided that his last
day would be April 1st, 2015. In total, Jack’s preretirement period lasted seven months.

A need to be needed. Reflecting back on his preretirement period, Jack referenced a
need to be needed. His motivation stemmed from a sincere acknowledgment of having unique
knowledge, skills, and experience worth sharing. Jack expressed a belief in his value to the
organization and coworkers, “I had thirty years of knowledge. It was not on a computer program.
It’s things that I had learned the hard way.” Much of his knowledge came from years of
experience on the job “preparing for the worst that might happen.” For example, Jack recalled
countless instances of “trucks breaking down, or accidents, or customers that are unhappy.” He
developed skills to manage the “things that are preventable” and used past lessons to be able to
“just put out fires.” Jack’s belief in his value led to a desire to be needed by others, motivating
him to engage in generative actions.

Symbolic immortality. Jack’s experience in preretirement was not well facilitated by his
supervisors or the organization, yet he was still motivated to leave a legacy behind. Jack was
self-motivated to share his knowledge, skills, and experience with his colleagues. He referenced
a desire to leave behind a legacy that will continue after his retirement. Jack communicated his
desire to extend the work ethic and respect the late owner had taught him. He hoped that by
modeling and expecting such behaviors, his drivers would feel empowered to continue
developing into hard-working, respectful adults. This motivation for outwardly oriented
generativity echoes Kotre’s (1984) notion of communal generativity.

Shift in role. Jack also referenced two shifts in his organizational role. Initially, he
discussed feelings of being “left out” of the decision-making process and “cut out of the loop”
from informative meetings, adding, “I knew that I was being phased out.” This shift away from having an influential role only further isolated Jack, making him feel unappreciated. He attributed this to the fact that the managers “didn't think what I was going to give, or my knowledge would improve the company at all.” Though the management removed Jack from a having a larger influence on the business, he mentioned later that his role also shifted to include training his successor. Jack’s shift in the organization allowed him some, albeit limited, opportunity to be generative. He was able to rearrange his work duties to engage in generative behaviors to benefit his replacement.

**Organizational opportunity.** A theme throughout Jack’s experience was a lack of transition planning on behalf of the organization and administration, constraining his ability to be generative. Consistent with the literature, the culture of the organization constrained Jack’s motivation and ability to be generative. Jack explained the details of how unprepared the management was:

Maybe the first week in March, they decided to have a meeting with me, and they were going to do a Vulcan "mind-meld" and absorb all the information from me.

So I said, "Hey, sounds great. Let's have the meeting."

And then when it was time to have the meeting, it was going to be at ten o'clock. And we had 1 hour to absorb my 30 years of knowledge, and I just kind of chuckled.

So then when we had the meeting, I asked them, "So, what kind of questions do you have for me? We have an hour here I guess."
He goes, "Well, we don't have any questions. What do you want to tell us about your job?"

They had no, no idea. So I went over the twenty-two drivers and gave them my rundown, from top to bottom, what I know about each driver and what their personal needs were, what made them tick as an employee. I told them about the difficult routes, especially Astoria, how difficult it was.

I was pretty much shut down, and by 10:45 AM… [One manager] announced that he had a meeting he had at eleven and [another manager] said, "Well, I've got a meeting too."

So, the both left after 45 minutes. I talked to my replacement for another fifteen minutes, and that was it. It was incredible.

Although Jack’s supervisors asked for the meeting, they were unable to ask probing questions that may have led to more generative responses. The management’s lack of preparedness for Jack’s transition demonstrates how an organization’s culture can limit opportunities for generativity.

**Generative actions.** Jack made several references to a variety of generative actions during his preretirement period. In our interview, Jack provided examples of generative actions that fell into both maintaining and offering. Regarding maintenance, he discussed nurturing his number one driver. “He knew what was going on and had a clue… I had been grooming him for ten years,” Jack stated, “He knew some hiring techniques, DOT regulations, some of the finer points of what the job entailed… so I knew they were going to be in good hands with him.” Also,
Jack’s desire to preserve a tradition of hard work and respect aligns with McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) definition of maintaining “that which is deemed worthy of such behavior” (p. 1006).

Additionally, Jack mentioned generative acts that offered himself, his time and energy, and his knowledge. He expressed a desire to share his knowledge, skills, and experience with colleagues, supervisors, and the organization during preretirement. Jack clearly conveyed excitement and eagerness when I asked him about sharing his experience, “Oh sure! I had lots, lots of ideas, lots of knowledge, lots of things I would have loved to have told them.” Even though he is now retired, Jack continues to offer willingly his time and energy to help out his successor. Six months after retiring, he went back and spent three hours volunteering his time to help his replacement with some problem solving. Jack even gaily mentioned that he had visited the organization earlier in the day, before our interview, just to “help out.”

**Summary.** To conclude my analysis of Jack’s case, I believe that his preretirement experience showcases the many features of generativity discussed in my five propositions (see Table 4.1: Self-directed transition with role shift). Motivated by a belief in his value and a desire to leave a legacy, he persevered through an unsupportive organizational culture to engage in generative actions that care for his younger colleagues. In examining Jack’s generativity during preretirement, I am beginning to understand the generative experience of pre-retirees better. Next, I continue following Yin’s (2014) replication strategy by examining additional direct replications case to further my understanding of generativity in pre-retirees.
Direct Replications

After examining my first case at length, I can now present additional direct replications to predict similar results. I selected fifteen cases based on a comparable criterion, each resulting in generative actions. I have grouped each replication into four unique sets of cases that share common features related to my five theoretical propositions. For each set, I provide a summary of their common characteristics. In addition, I explore any rival explanations as needed.

**Self-directed transition with role shift.** The first set I observed involved two cases that were direct replications of Jack’s preretirement experience. These cases, Renee and Albert, also confirmed all of my theoretical propositions (see Table 4.1: Self-directed transition with role shift). This set demonstrated a positive assessment of value and a need to be needed. Renee and Albert referenced their desires to leave lasting legacies. Confirming measures of inner desire, the pre-retirees were motivated to engage in generative actions. Both cases experienced a shift in their respective roles, allowing more opportunity to be generative. However, neither case was directed by employing organizations for their preretirement transition. In fact, neither organization had transition protocols in place for pre-retirees. This lack of a transition plan constrained Renee and Albert’s opportunities for generativity. Echoing the findings in Jack’s case, the cases in this set are characterized by transitions that were entirely self-directed. Driven

### Table 4.1: Self-directed transition with role shift.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Need to be Needed</th>
<th>Symbolic Immortality</th>
<th>Shift in Role</th>
<th>Organizational Opportunity</th>
<th>Generative Action (Creating, Maintaining, Offering)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>M, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
by inner desire and symbolic immortality, each of these cases was in a position that allowed for generative actions to take place. Renee and Albert expressed their generativity through acts of creating, maintaining, and offering.

Though initially constrained by the lack of a transition plan, both cases in this set were able to be generative. The union of other motivational sources, including inner desire and a shift in organizational role, may explain this. Consistent with my theoretical propositions, inner desire and positionality act as motivators while a lack of organizational opportunity only constrains generative actions. Furthermore, the literature presents societal influences regarding opportunities and constraints, rather than as assurances and prohibitions (McAdams et al., 1998). Consistent with the literature and my propositions, both Renee and Albert are direct and literal replications of my first case. Next, I offer a set of direct replications that differ slightly from my first three cases.

**Self-directed transition without role shift.** I examined a second set of direct replications to predict similar outcomes. This set was the largest grouping of cases, comprised of eight individual cases. Based on my theoretical propositions, I selected this set because each case shared nearly identical experiences (see Table 4.2: Self-directed transition without role shift). The preretirement transitions in these cases were defined by self-direction and multitasking. These cases referenced employers that had no transition plans in place, citing a lack of organizational opportunity. While remaining in their respective roles, the pre-retirees assumed additional responsibilities to ensure that colleagues and supervisors would be effective once they were retired. The cases in this set referenced motivations based on the value of their knowledge as well as wanting to leave a lasting legacy. Motivated entirely by inner desire, they passed on
unique knowledge and experience through creating generative products, nurturing others, and offering these gifts to colleagues. This set represents the shared experiences of eight participants, all of whom were successful in manifesting generative actions without employer-directives or shifting roles.

These cases are marked by a strong inner desire to be generative, rather than deriving motivation through cultural demand. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) wrote that generative action “may be motivated directly by cultural demand or inner desire” (p. 1004). In essence, a generative adult can be motivated by either inner desire or cultural demand. This set commonly referenced a need to be needed and a desire to leave a legacy; conversely, these cases did not mention any organizational opportunities, employer-directed transitions, or shifts in formal roles. Nevertheless, each case in this set expressed generative actions through creating, maintaining, or offering. I offer a set of cases next that combine inner desire and cultural demand to motivate generative action.

Table 4.2: Self-directed transition without role shift.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Need to be Needed</th>
<th>Symbolic Immortality</th>
<th>Shift in Role</th>
<th>Organizational Opportunity</th>
<th>Generative Action (Creating, Maintaining, Offering)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeffery</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanda</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>M, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaime</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>M, O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Employer-directed transition with role shift.** My next set of direct replications shared similar motivations for generative actions through inner desire and cultural demand (see Table 4.3: Employer-directed transition with role shift). The cases all spoke of a need to be needed through an acknowledgment of their value to the organization and colleagues. They also mentioned a desire for symbolic immortality in references to leaving lasting legacies. Each of the three cases was fortunate enough to experience an employer-directed transition that included a shift in organizational role, allowing for greater generativity. Uniting inner desire and cultural demand as motivation, the cases expressed generativity via creating, maintaining, and offering. Though this set is a direct replication, the organizational opportunities noted in these cases differ from earlier outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Need to be Needed</th>
<th>Symbolic Immortality</th>
<th>Shift in Role</th>
<th>Organizational Opportunity</th>
<th>Generative Action (Creating, Maintaining, Offering)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These three cases confirmed four of my five theoretical propositions directly; however, one proposition is confirmed indirectly. I initially posit that a lack of organizational opportunity would constrict a pre-retiree’s ability to be generative. These cases, however, referenced employers that helped to facilitate generative actions in preretirement. Rather than feeling constrained by a lack of transition planning, these cases were encouraged to be generative by an administration prepared for the eventual departure of pre-retirees. Therefore, this set indirectly
confirmed my third proposition. Next, I showcase a fourth set of cases that are direct replications similar to the third only without a shift in role.

**Employer-directed transition without role shift or need for symbolic immortality.**

The last set of direct replications was motivated by a need to be needed and organizational opportunity (see Table 4.4: Employer-directed transition without role shift or need for symbolic immortality). Brenda and Lisa recognized that the unique knowledge, skills, and experience were of value to their employer and colleagues. They referenced their need to be needed as the sole motivation stemming from inner desire. Neither mentioned a desire to leave a legacy or for symbolic immortality. Similarly, neither Brenda nor Lisa discussed a shift in their organizational role. They did speak about how their employers had transition plans in place. These transition plans assisted the pre-retirees in increasing their opportunities for generative actions. Brenda and Lisa referenced organizational opportunities and a need to be needed in explaining their motivation for generative actions. The two cases both indicated engaging in generative actions of creating, maintaining, and offering during preretirement.

**Table 4.4: Employer-directed transition without role shift or need for symbolic immortality.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Need to be Needed</th>
<th>Symbolic Immortality</th>
<th>Shift in Role</th>
<th>Organizational Opportunity</th>
<th>Generative Action (Creating, Maintaining, Offering)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>C, M, O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most notably, this last set of direct replications were not motivated by a need for symbolic immortality. Neither Brenda nor Lisa mentioned leaving a legacy or a desire to do so; nonetheless, both still expressed generativity in forms of creation, maintenance, and offering.
This result reinforces the depiction of generativity by McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) as a constellation of features that explain motivational sources, thoughts, plans, behavior, and meaning. Brenda and Lisa were simply not driven by symbolic immortality as a source of motivation to engage in generative behaviors. Instead, the need to be needed and employer-directed transition plans were enough to provoke generative actions and support their colleagues and organization.

These four sets of direct replications provided me with an even clearer picture of what motivates pre-retirees to be generative in the workplace. Though each set of replications reflected a unique pattern of motivational sources, all resulted in generative actions during preretirement. Every case discussed also recognized an inherent value in their unique knowledge, skills, and experience. In addition, each case paired their recognition of value with at least one other motivational source (e.g., symbolic immortality, shift in role, and organizational opportunity). The combination of multiple sources of motivation referenced by each case also accompanied more than one form of generative action. Without a clear correlation, I examined this repeated occurrence another way. To this end, I present one last set of cases—each with only one source of motivation—as a theoretical replication to predict an outcome with limited generative actions.

**Theoretical Replication**

I selected two final cases, Hattie and Dale, as a set of theoretical replications that predict limited generative actions in preretirement (see Table 4.5: Limited generative action). Based on my previous findings, I posit that limited motivational sources will be associated with limited generative actions. Hattie and Dale referenced one source of motivation, a need to be needed. In
explaining their value, both cases also expressed a desire to offer their unique knowledge, skills, and experience. Unfortunately, neither case was able to engage in generative behaviors with their colleagues or organization. Hattie and Dale did not mention any other sources of motivation; however, both cited a complete lack of organization support as the insurmountable obstacle to their generative behavior.

Table 4.5: Limited generative action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Need to be Needed</th>
<th>Symbolic Immortality</th>
<th>Shift in Role</th>
<th>Organizational Opportunity</th>
<th>Generative Action (Creating, Maintaining, Offering)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hattie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the results of these two cases affirm my prediction, I gleaned greater insight from their critiques of organizational support. Although both cases assessed their knowledge, skills, and experience as worth sharing with others, neither was able to do so. This finding illuminates the importance of employer-directed transition planning as well as encouraging generative opportunities through role shifting. Hattie and Dale also lacked a desire for symbolic immortality, which may have helped motivate more generative behaviors as discussed with the second set of direct replications.

Analytic Generalizations.

Based on the replication methods used in my study, I offer a discussion of analytic generalizations that extend my results to other preretirement situations. The emerging patterns in my direct and theoretical replications showcase several trends regarding pre-retirees’ generative motivation and actions. My findings match the theoretical propositions posited through my
review of the literature on generativity, allowing for some logical extensions to be applied to preretirement transitions in general.

In the workplace, pre-retirees face many internal and external forces that affect their motivation to be generative. The creation of a lasting legacy, desire to be needed, developmental expectations, and societal opportunities converge to determine generative behaviors during preretirement. Inner desire drives the internal motivation of pre-retirees, while cultural demand in the workplace effects external motivation.

A pre-retiree’s internal motivation is driven by both a desire to leave a lasting legacy on the workplace and a desire to be needed by coworkers, supervisors, and the organization. My findings show that a pre-retiree is motivated to be generative when they feel a desire to be needed. When a pre-retiree feels like they have something valuable to offer (e.g., unique knowledge, skills, and experience), they are motivated to engage in generative behaviors.

Moreover, a pre-retiree has likely accrued extensive knowledge, skills, and experience after spending years working for an organization. My findings indicate that most pre-retirees desire to leave a legacy within the organization based on their amassed experience. As mentioned earlier, leaving a legacy can be a selfish and selfless act. Pre-retirees are often motivated by a desire to have their creations or influence continue after they retire. Pre-retirees also desire to benefit the organization and the colleagues they are leaving behind through their generative actions.

In addition to a pre-retiree’s inner desire, the motivation for generativity is affected by cultural demand in the workplace. As with aging in society, certain developmental expectations can occur within an organization. Unlike the early years of their career, adults nearing retirement
can be assumed to take on more generative roles in the workplace (e.g., teacher, mentor, leader, organizer). When a pre-retiree is in a generative role, they are better positioned to engage in generative actions.

Furthermore, societal opportunities can affect motivation for generativity in preretirement. Just as societal and cultural norms shape how pre-retirees are motivated to engage in certain generative actions, so do workplace opportunities. How prepared an organization is to facilitate generativity in the workplace affects the pre-retiree’s motivation. Organizations that recognize generative opportunities encourage pre-retirees to participate in generative behaviors. Alternatively, organizations that do not understand or support generative opportunities constrain pre-retirees’ motivation for generative actions.

My findings indicate that pre-retirees engage in generative actions of creating, maintaining, and offering that benefit their younger colleagues before leaving an organization. Adults nearing retirement extend their work by creating new processes, products, and innovations. Pre-retirees express generativity through maintenance behaviors in the workplace, including nurturing and cultivating talent in younger employees through mentoring relationships as well as preserving or restoring organizational traditions. Before exiting an organization, pre-retirees can carry out generative actions that offer their creations to the next generation of coworkers.

**Implications**

As more pre-retirees move closer to retirement, it is vital that they engage in generative behaviors that contribute to the well-being of colleagues and sustainability of the organization. Generative actions of pre-retirees offering and sharing help to transfer knowledge onto younger
employees, furthering the development of the next generation. In addition to fostering the healthy development of others and the self, organizations can benefit from the generative actions of pre-retirees. Calo (2005) explained that:

If we have indeed become a “knowledge society,” then the very survival and competitiveness of organizations depends on their ability to transfer knowledge of products, processes and culture within themselves. When a long-term valued employees retires, he or she often takes their accumulated knowledge and skills with them rather than leaving them behind by transferring that knowledge and those skills to others. A critical need for organizations is to capitalize on transferring the expertise, skills and wisdom of these retiring professionals to others in the organization. This process of “knowledge transfer” must be planned and managed as a high organizational priority. (p. 304)

As pre-retirees prepare and plan for their retirement, I believe that understanding and appreciation of generativity can help facilitate this transition in a way that benefits the individual, the next generation of colleagues, and the organization.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

By extending McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) framework to explain preretirement transitions, my research adds to the body of knowledge on workplace generativity. In examining the motivation and actions of generative pre-retirees, I contribute a detailed qualitative analysis of an exemplary case study. Additionally, I confirmed my five theoretical propositions through subsequent case replications:

**Proposition One:** The positive assessment of one’s value (e.g., unique knowledge, skills, experience, etc.) will motivate the pre-retiree to engage in generative actions.

**Proposition Two:** The motivation for generative actions will be positively associated with a pre-retiree’s desire to leave a lasting legacy.

**Proposition Three:** The preretirement period will involve a shift or change in a pre-retiree’s role within the organization to be more generative.

**Proposition Four:** Organizations that lack transition protocols will constrain a pre-retiree’s motivation to engage in generative actions.

**Proposition Five:** Pre-retirees expressions of generativity will manifest in varied forms of creating, maintaining, and offering.

I conclude this thesis by acknowledging the limitations of my study as well as offering suggestions for future research directions.
Limitations

My study has several limitations regarding methodology. I chose a subject recruitment method that was limited to my immediate contact network and those to whom I was referred. While the snowball method was helpful in recruiting a high percentage of eligible participants, I was limited to a subject pool that was not as diverse as it could have been (e.g., mostly affluent, educated, upper-middle class, white-collar retirees). Furthermore, I did not collect additional demographic information from my participants that may have been useful to discuss (e.g., salary, education, ethnicity, family status).

I was also limited by my interview protocol. My interview protocol focused too much on orienting the participant to their past work experience rather than asking more challenging questions about generativity. In the same sense, providing my participants a general definition of generativity may have elicited more relevant and less cryptic responses. As a result, I spent more time than expected transcribing questions and answers unrelated to generativity.

Lastly, I was limited by my research design. Inherent in case study research, I was only able to describe the experiences of my participants with limited generalizations. By choosing to use this method, I was unable to draw conclusions that could be generalized to the larger population. While this approach did limit my ability to make statistical generalizations, I was able to offer some analytic generalizations from the valuable insight gained into the motivations and actions of pre-retirees.

Future Research Directions

I noted many self-critiques throughout this iterative thesis process. There were distinct populations I would have liked to target, questions that I wish I had asked, and follow-up surveys
I wish I had sent. These critiques could have resulted in me spending additional years at Oregon State University in graduate school studying generativity in pre-retirees. With the guidance of my advisor, however, my notes resulted in a compilation of future research directions.

Due to the diversity of the workforce, future studies might do well to target specific populations of pre-retirees. Locating the experiences of pre-retirees in particular fields may offer an analysis of industry-specific needs. Future studies could compare the perceived knowledge, skills, and experience worth sharing of blue-collar and white-collar professions. Similarly, studying the impact of gender identity on preretirement transitions may illuminate ways in which value is constructed by the individual and others.

Future studies should also consider incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies when examining pre-retirees’ generativity. A plethora of quantitative measures already exists to study generativity in adults. Employing these measures, in addition to qualitative case study methods, could allow for a triangulation of the data. A mixed methodology may offer a way to explore additional questions about generativity in pre-retirees.

Finally, future studies should consider conducting a longitudinal study that examines the long-term effects of being generative during the preretirement phase. It would be interesting to follow adults throughout the latter part of their careers and into retirement. Also, it may be valuable to study the effects of generativity and knowledge sharing on an organization’s sustainability. Perhaps an investigation into the retention of institutional knowledge could provide new insights about generativity during preretirement.
References


Appendices
The above referenced study was reviewed by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and determined to be exempt from full board review.

**EXPIRATION DATE:** 11/29/2020

*The exemption is valid for 5 years from the date of approval.*

Annual renewals are not required. If the research extends beyond the expiration date, the Investigator must request a new exemption. Investigators should submit a final report to the IRB if the project is completed prior to the 5 year term.

Documents included in this review:

- ✔ Protocol
- ✔ Consent forms
- ✔ Assent forms
- ✔ Alternative consent
- ✔ Letters of support
- ☐ Recruiting tools
- ☐ Test instruments
- ☐ Attachment A: Radiation
- ☐ Alternative assent
- ☐ Grant/contract
- ☐ External IRB approvals
- ☐ Translated documents
- ☐ Attachment B: Human materials
- ☐ Other:

**Comments:** revised study to allow for phone and online interviews and obtaining verbal consent

**Principal Investigator responsibilities:**

- ✔ Certain amendments to this study must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to initiating the change. These amendments may include, but are not limited to, changes in funding, study population, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment material, sites of research, etc. For more information about the types of changes that require submission of a project revision to the IRB, please see: [http://oregonstate.edu/research/irb/sites/default/files/website_guidancedocuments.pdf](http://oregonstate.edu/research/irb/sites/default/files/website_guidancedocuments.pdf)
- ✔ All study team members should be kept informed of the status of the research. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study team members have completed the online ethics training requirement, even if they do not need to be added to the study team via project revision.
- ✔ Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be submitted to the IRB within three calendar days.
- ✔ The Principal Investigator is required to securely store all study related documents on the OSU campus for a minimum of three years post study termination.
VERBAL CONSENT GUIDE

Project Title: Generativity in Recently Retired Adults
Principal Investigator: Dr. Shelley Dubkin-Lee
Student Researcher: Andrew J. Hatlen
Version Date: January 14th, 2016

Purpose: You are being asked to take part in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to measure generativity, in recently retired adults. Generativity is defined as a concern for people besides self and family that usually develops during middle age; especially, a need to nurture and guide younger people and contribute to the next generation. This study is being conducted by an Oregon State Graduate Student for the completion of a master’s thesis.

Activities: The study activity is a voice-recorded interview.

Time: Your participation in this study will last about one hour.

Confidentiality: It is possible that others could learn that you participated in this study. We will make every effort to protect your identity but there is a risk that information which identifies you could be accidentally disclosed. The information you provide will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Voluntary: While study participation is voluntary, all questions must be answered in order for their individual responses to be included in the study results. Voice recording is a required activity. You should not participate if you do not consent to voice recording.

Study contacts: If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Dr. Shelley Dubkin-Lee (via email: shelley.dubkin-lee@oregonstate.edu or by phone 541-737-4733). If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu