

**Our Many Possible Selves:  
Re-working our Identities  
to Reinvent our Careers**

by

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**Abstract**

“Am I doing what is right for me and should I change direction?” is a question we all ask ourselves at mid-career. But, for an overwhelming number of mid-career professional and business women today this question attains an even greater urgency. Having achieved great successes in traditional careers and often inflexible organizations, at mid-career the desire to give rein to unexpressed facets of ourselves only becomes pressing. In this article, I describe the “unconventional strategies” that both men and women use to successfully reinvent their careers. While these strategies are by no means gender-specific, the women I studied shared characteristic challenges and dilemmas that extended far beyond the familiar work-life balances issues. As they strove to define who they wanted to become and what they wanted to do next, they discovered how they really felt about money and status. They faced their own pre-conceived notions about “good jobs” versus “women’s work.” They confronted traditional wisdom about the obvious “tradeoffs:” fame versus satisfaction; money versus fun; impact versus flexibility. Their experiences hold valuable lessons for all professional women striving to create choices beyond the binary (and rigid) thinking that pits the high-powered corporate life against the “mommy track.”

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“Something’s missing.”

“I need a change, but I don’t know what.”

“I hope I’m not doing this five years from now.”

“Going to work is no fun anymore but I don’t know what I want to do instead.”

Thoughts like these are increasingly on the minds of the growing number of mid-career women who are at a crossroads, stuck in jobs they’ve lost their passion for, unable to strike a balance among their varied roles and interests yet at a loss for a better alternative. “Am I doing what is right for me and should I change direction?” is a question we all ask ourselves at mid-career. But, for an overwhelming number of mid-career professional and business women today this kind of questioning attains an even greater urgency.

Having achieved great successes in traditional careers and often inflexible organizations, at mid-career the desire to give rein to unexpressed facets of ourselves only becomes pressing. To make matters worse, while most of us can state with utter clarity what no longer works, much fewer have clear idea of – or a reliable method for finding – a better alternative. Consider the following examples:

As a thirty-nine-year-old general manager at a large New York publishing house, Brenda Rayport attended a convention of economists to promote one of her books. “We had hired a caricaturist to draw cartoons of the professors whose textbooks we sold, and he offered to do a caricature of me. His technique was to ask people about their hobbies and interests. He would draw the figures with their little emblems around them. I thought, what will he depict in his drawing of me? A

textbook? I didn't have anything else in my life at that point. My marriage was no good. I didn't have any hobbies. I said to myself, 'I'm passionate about my work, but is this what I want arrayed in the caricature of myself that I'll hang in my office? I don't think so.' It really bothered me. It became clear that I was doing something very wrong in my life. The problem was that I didn't have a forward trajectory. I couldn't see where I wanted to go next. I really wanted a time-out at that point."

It took Susan Fontaine's several years of planning (and gathering up the courage) to leave an unfulfilling job as partner and head of the strategy practice at a top consulting firm. She knew she wanted to travel less and to spend more time with her children. But, a busy schedule had left her no time to figure out a future direction and she felt ambivalent about making a "mommy's choice." "I was thinking about leaving, but because I had been working so hard and I had two small children, I didn't really know what I *could* do, not to mention what I wanted next. I was clear, though, that I didn't want to just go on to another big consultancy and do the same thing in a new company. After a few weeks of wondering what next, a close client, the CEO of a Financial Times 1000 firm, offered her the top strategy job, the "perfect" position, according to what she calls "the relentless logic of a post-MBA CV." Confident that she explained her new priorities, and flattered by the extent to which they wanted her and only her, she took it. No sooner had she started, however, she realized the new job was no different from her old position in all the aspects she was seeking to change.

A Spanish Literature professor, June Prescott returned to her academic department after a one-year sabbatical and realized that the deep-seated discontent with

academic politics and wages that had troubled her for years had become unbearable. “Once I became a mother and wife my interests and values changed. My intellectual life at the university had no importance compared with my wish to create an environment that would permit me a full dedication to my family- a real chance at making more money, giving my children good schools, being with them, and being with them out in the world in a way that would be consonant with my work life.” Her idea: translate her aptitude as an amateur investor into a new career in finance. But, her age and literary background would make her a tough sell to Wall Street. After nearly two years of sustained investigation, the euphoria of new possibilities was damped by the paucity of actual job prospects.

Brenda, Susan and June had much more in common than their hard work and successful careers. Like so many of the men and women I studied (see “About the Study”), at mid-career they found themselves at an impasse -- dissatisfied with the old yet unable to imagine or bring to life a new, more fulfilling and economically feasible alternative. In this article I describe the “unconventional strategies” that they, and the rest of the thirty-nine managers and professionals I studied used to explore possible futures.

While these strategies are by no means gender-specific -- both men and women used them quite successfully -- the women in my study shared characteristic challenges and dilemmas that extended far beyond the familiar work-life balances issues. As they strove to define who they wanted to become and what they wanted to do next, they discovered how they really felt about money and status. They faced their own pre-conceived notions about “good jobs” versus “women’s work.” They confronted

traditional wisdom about the obvious “tradeoffs:” fame versus satisfaction; money versus fun; impact versus flexibility. Their experiences hold valuable lessons for all professional women striving to create choices beyond the binary (and rigid) thinking that pits the high-powered corporate life against the “mommy track.”

### **Working Identity**

What is identity? Most traditional definitions – the ones that are the foundation for most career advice – are based on the notion of an “inner core” or a “true self.” By early adulthood, these theories suggest, people have formed a relatively stable personality structure, defined by their aptitudes, preferences and values. Excavating this true self -- often forgotten in a dead-end pursuit of fame, fortune, or social approval -- should be the starting point of any career re-orientation. With the appropriate self-knowledge, obtained via introspection and psychological testing, the search for the right “match” is easier and the mistakes of the past avoided.

The work of Stanford cognitive psychologist Hazel Markus and other behavioral scientists, however, offers a different definition of identity, one that is more consistent with what I discovered: We are not one but many selves. And, they are defined as powerfully by our hopes and fears for the future and by our present circumstances as by our past history.

Possible selves, the images and fantasies we all have of about who we hope to become, think we should become, or even fear becoming in the future, are at the heart of the career change process. Though the conventional wisdom says that pain – a self we fear becoming attaining realistic proportions -- is the only driver for change, in

reality pain can create paralysis. We change only when we have tangible and enticing alternatives, ones we can feel, touch and taste. That is why *working identity*, as a practice, is necessarily a process of experimenting, testing and learning about our possible selves.

How do we work and rework our identities? By doing new things and meeting new people. By telling and re-telling our stories. And, of course by taking the time that trial and error discovery requires. Below I continue the stories of Brenda, Susan and June. As we will see, it is not in a moment of blinding insight but rather by taking small *action* steps that each found her way to a new career.

### ***Step 1. Craft Experiments to test possible selves***

By far the biggest mistake people make when trying to change careers is delaying the first step until they have settled on a destination. Alternatively, like Susan, for lack of better destination, they settle on a position they hope will change everything, while, in fact, changing nothing at all.

Few people really leap into the unknown. Instead, most of create possible selves on the side at first, by getting involved, as Susan did, in extracurricular ventures, freelance work and weekend projects. *Crafting experiments* refers to the practice of creating these small probes and side projects. Their great advantage is that they allow us to try out new professional roles on a limited but tangible scale without compromising our current jobs or leaping too quickly into the wrong position. In almost every instance of successful change that I observed, the leap was not a leap

because the person had already been deeply engaged in the new career for quite some time.

Realizing she made the wrong choice, Susan (the consultant we saw above) gathered her courage again and quit. But she doubted herself: “I asked myself, ‘why did I accept the job when it wasn’t right?’ I also wondered, ‘If *this* isn’t right, what is right?’ I didn’t want to go back to the handful of people I had been talking to about jobs. I wanted some space. But, I felt quite a bit of financial pressure. I knew I would have to work again pretty fast, but I also knew that feeling that I had to move instantly on to the next job, not a spending too long deciding, had doomed me. I had the wits to see I needed some time out to have a think.” Resolved to explore a range of different possibilities, she took some freelancing assignments in her old line of work and did pro bono work for charities, as her “lifeline” to get her through this difficult period. Through that work, she began to develop contacts that led to paid charity consulting. These concrete experiences, more than any amount of self-reflection, helped her get re-oriented.

Gradually Susan found herself immersed in an industry in which she never expected to work for a living. And she found herself enjoying a style of work—freelancing—that she began only out of necessity. “After about two years my “gift work” became my main line of work. The first realization came after a few months of freelancing, when I realized I would not look for another permanent job. I was doing well financially and enjoying the freelance lifestyle. I would not have risked a freelance career had I not gone taken the wrong job in the first place. But once I started doing it, I found it actually suited me very well. Two years later, when it was clear that I was making a good living, that I was able to get quite interesting work, and that my network was serving me well, I had to decide what really wanted I want to do.” By this time it was clear her heart was in the non-profit sector.

There many ways to set up experiments that work. As we'll see below Brenda also did freelance work, as an editor, as an intermediary step between her old career as a manager and her new career as a literary agent. Other people use temporary assignments, outside contracts, advisory work, and “moonlighting” to get experience or build skills in a new industry. Taking courses or picking up training and credentials in a new area is still another way of experimenting, as June did when she audited MBA classes at her university. June, in fact, did not just limit her search to positions in finance, she experimented with a broad palette of possible selves: She looked at management consulting, knowing it was not for her; she considered whether or not to apply to other literature jobs; she took on a one-year volunteer project coaching high-school instructors to teach literature; she revisited the idea of moving into university administration; and she investigated a range of finance possibilities.

***Step 2. Shift your connections towards the future***

Consider how many times we have heard someone reproach their company by saying “There is no one here I want to be like.” At mid-career our desire for change is rarely only about the actual work we do; it is equally if not more importantly about changing our working relationships so they are more satisfying and more inspiring. *Shifting connections* refers to the practice of finding people who can help us see and grow into our new selves. For most successful career changers that I observed, a guiding figure or new professional community help light the way and cushioned the eventual leap.

June had grown to dislike many of the people she worked with. There was not a single one among them whom she wanted to be like. But, still it was hard to make the break. “My academic department was family, a dysfunctional one,” June says, “but one I was an intimate part of, one I joined at age seventeen when I went to college.” For her, leaving academia meant not just giving up a long-term career objective, but leaving the mentor and family with whom she had grown up professionally. And, by leaving she was necessarily disappointing those who had been her role models and peers.

To make a break with the past we must venture into unknown networks—and not just for job leads. Making a career change requires a more than a little help from mentors, guides, sounding boards and role models. New guides and communities offer inclusion, provide a safe base for trying out new possibilities and replace the community that is being lost. From the start June tried to meet as many people as possible in the world of finance. Those possibilities amplified when she started auditing MBS courses at her University. “I thought it was going to feel like a divorce, a huge loss,” she recounts, “but it didn’t. I loved my business courses and the project groups. It’s a lot easier when you feel emotionally involved in something else.”

At the same time as she did the “usual networking” via the MBA career office and using traditional college alumni listings June pursued another idea: finding a person she admired and convincing him to take her on as an apprentice. One candidate was James Cramer, a financial pundit who wrote a column for the *Wall Street Journal*. June admired his wit and writing style as much as his insights into the markets. . By e-mail, she told him how much she enjoyed his writing and asked for a

meeting. Cramer agreed. He advised her to keep a journal to track her impressions and experiences. A relationship began in which he challenged and guided her.

Finding people with humanities backgrounds as well as finding women who seemed to be successful while still having time for a personal life were, for her, critical tests of her options in the finance world. She made friends, for example, with her teaching assistant: “He considers that my working as a literature professor while taking business classes makes me as weird as he.” At one investment bank, she was impressed with the physicist in fixed-income research, who graduated from her university. At another bank, she met a managing director with an M.A. in philosophy and theology. She drew inspiration from the financial columnist, who like her, had a flair for writing. She especially enjoyed an economics course taught by a professor from Spain, a country where she had spent much time, and in whose culture her academic discipline was rooted. ...Each time June met someone from the new world she was seeking to enter, she ran them through the "Do I want to be like him?" and "Can I be like her?" tests. A “yes” led her to pursue the relationship – and the corresponding possible self – further.

Making a major career change is not simply about picking up new technical skills and repackaging one’s image and résumé. It is also about finding people we want to emulate and places where we want to belong. From beginning to end, June’s story is punctuated by people she met who made a difference, from the day traders and stock-market speculators who inspired her at the start to the kindred spirits who gave her encouragement and advice along the way. Her desire to move into a career in finance and out of academia grew -- in appeal and in feasibility -- not as an abstract

idea but as a tangible reality embodied in the people she did (and did *not*) want to be like.“

### ***Step 3. Tell and Re-tell Your Story***

In the middle of the confusion about which way to go many of us hope for one event that will clarify everything, that will transform our yearning for change into a coherent trajectory. For Brenda, the cartoon episode was the “click” that got her moving. The third working identity practice, *making sense* refers to the practice of creating our own triggers: infusing events -- the momentous and the mundane -- with special meaning and weaving them into a story about who we are becoming.

In fact, Brenda experienced a multitude of triggers. A major change in her firm’s internal management (one she did not like), a new “commuter” relationship, and a looming fortieth birthday were all nudging her to reexamine her fifteen-year career in publishing. “I met my future husband, Aaron, who lived in Chicago. As a general manager, I had completely given up any personal life. The business was global, I was on the road two weeks out of four the whole year round. Suddenly I was getting married again.”

“I moved Chicago determined to be a whole person again, which meant having to develop those parts of me that were quite underdeveloped. I was going to make damn sure that the next time someone had to draw a picture of me, there would be plenty of things to put around it. The big decision wasn’t moving to Chicago. It was deciding not to go back to my firm in a comparable position. I could have done that, and they encouraged me to, but I really didn’t want to. Then, I was headhunted

by everybody, for jobs close to what I had done before. But I didn't want that. The problem was, I didn't have a forward trajectory, I couldn't see where I was going." Not knowing what next, Brenda took a time-out.

A year and a half sabbatical allowed her much more than rest and recovery from her punishing schedule as a manager. Taking time, doing volunteer work and exploring diverse alternatives allowed her to come to terms with her desire for work that was both fun and lucrative. "I thought I wanted to work in education. I volunteered in the public schools. I had to learn to listen more to myself, to reflect on what I wanted to do and what I enjoyed doing. I include being successful and making money in 'enjoy doing,' but I had to figure out how to put the pleasure back in into a money-making job."

Taking a time-out also allowed Brenda the time to explore a line of work that, while appealing, she had dismissed as "women's work." "An ongoing dialogue with my husband helped me see that education wasn't it. He urged me look at what I did back in my twenties, what I fell in love with when I left school. I had loved being an editor. I remember having enormous discussions with him, often pretty anguished ones. I felt editing was women's work. I thought it was a submissive, or subordinate, kind of helping work. I really fought that. But, that dialogue allowed me to start working as a freelance editor, which was really only a step. I thought it would lead to something else, but I didn't know what. Slowly, it began to dawn on me that being a literary agent might be the absolute best option."

Trigger events don't just jolt us out our habitual routines, they are critical components of good stories, and, therefore, the necessary elements of plot for our emerging stories. Arranging our life events into a coherent story is one of the subtlest yet most demanding challenges of a career transition. Without a story that explains why we must change, the people to whom we are pitching our reinvention remains dubious and we too, feel unsettled and uncertain of our own identity. June's attempts at explaining herself—why she wanted to make such a seemingly “crazy” career change, from literature to Wall Street, why a potential employer should take a chance on her, why she was attracted to a company she had never heard of a day before—were at first provisional, sometimes clumsy ways of redefining herself. But, each time she wrote a cover letter, went through an interview, or updated friends and family on her progress, she better defined what was exciting to her, and in each public declaration of her intent to change careers she committed herself further

Good stories develop in the telling and retelling, by putting them into the public sphere even before they are fully formed. It took Brenda close to three years after the cartoon episode to figure out a new direction. In the interim, the cartoon episode became a guiding image she used each time she came to a fork in a road, to remind herself of the feared possible self she was still at risk of reverting to, and its counterpart, the still vague but much desired Brenda with a multifaceted, rich life.

### **Dropping the Rocks**

Like many who switch careers, Susan's transition brought her back to her starting point: working full-time for a top consultancy. Yet her professional life—the way she does her work, the way she relates to coworkers and employers, and the way

she balances her personal and professional life—changed because of what she learned a long the way. Making a career move is a chance to make fundamental changes in one’s life. Many people, like Susan, have long-held dreams about their careers but for one reason or another—including financial, family, or social pressures—have put them off. In some cases, like Susan’s, the issue is less the *substance* of the work than the *lack of flexibility* of the institutional structure in which the work gets done. In other cases, a person may have dreamed of becoming a writer, musician, or entrepreneur, but the practicalities of life constrained them. Still others experience the deeper problem as an issue of authenticity, finding themselves caught in a work situation that asks them to suppress too much of who they are in order to fit in. Whatever the cause, a time comes when long-ignored values, priorities, and passions reassert themselves—or the inconsistencies in our lives grow too blatant to ignore.

Elizabeth McKenna, who wrote about the life and career changes of women struggling to balance work and personal life, tells a parable about a woman swimming across a lake with a rock in her hand. As the woman neared the center of the lake, she started to sink from the weight of the stone. People watching from the shore urged her to drop the rock but she kept swimming, each time sinking more and more. To the gathering crowd the solution was obvious. Their “drop the rock” chorus grew louder and louder. with her increasing difficulty staying afloat. But all their yelling did little good. As she sank, they heard her say, “I can’t. It’s mine.”

McKenna uses this story of a drowning woman to illustrate how stubbornly we can hold ourselves back. Susan, in fact, had many “rocks.” One was her definition of a good job and, therefore, a good career move, what she called the “relentless logic of one’s

post M.B.A. CV.” That rock was made heavier by her ambivalent feelings about sacrificing her ambition in order to be a better parent. Another rock was her fear of not having enough money, an understandable but untested fear. Although she knew what deep change she sought—better balance, greater meaning—when a job came up that allowed her to hold on to the rocks, she convinced herself that it was a good move.

The inconsistencies between what Susan said she wanted and the choices she kept making created fault lines in her evolving life. Taking the wrong job led to the first “crack” in a tight system of interlocking assumptions and priorities that, consciously or not, had always informed her career decisions. But without having had time to explore options, to experiment, to assimilate discrepant experiences, the mistake simply made her doubt her judgment. She still could not see her own responsibility for the out-of-whack work-life balance, hence she was unable to fully make use of the new information about herself to take stock of past events or identify future steps.

Many people in transition stumble onto the fact that they derive much of their sense of identity from their title and employer, and that such an overidentification with any institution can lead to stunted growth in other arenas. Far into our careers we can remain the victim of other people’s values and expectations. Susan worried that peers would think she was downshifting from an ambitious consulting career for the mommy track. When she accepted the wrong job, she got lots of validation: Everyone wanted her business card, and asked her to have lunch. She moved, not according to her own logic but according to the logic of a “traditional” MBA career.

Becoming our own person, breaking free from our “ought selves”—the identity molded by important people in our lives—is at heart of the transition process. June’s parents were proud of her Ivy League position and her mentor felt he’d groomed her for academic fame and glory. As she began to identify with the values, norms, attitudes, and expectations of people working in the business world and began building relationships with people outside academia, her colleagues attributed her diminished engagement to marriage and motherhood. She was no longer as available for lunches and extracurricular activities. Now that she had “ a personal agenda,” as her mentor had put it, she was obviously less committed to the scholarly life.

June, in fact, faced a typical dilemma: how to reconcile her ambition and her family responsibility. Her desire to better provide for her children informed her desire for career change, yet she recognized that bringing up motherhood in her job interviews amounted to shooting herself in the foot. She came to understand that the most attractive places from a career standpoint would leave her little time for her family. When her stockbroker, who worked for a rapidly growing US brokerage house, encouraged her to apply there, she was not interested. Her strategy was to go for “the top names,” figuring that starting at one of the most prominent companies would offer the best learning opportunity. A year into the search and exploration process she took a different view. What at first had seemed so far from the world of Wall Street, so much less glamorous than private banking, revealed a different set of advantages: independence, flexibility, good training, good public schools for the girls, the prospect of buying a house with land around it, and a less stressful environment in which to earn her stripes.

In career transitions, the basic assumptions that typically prove most resistant to change include our benchmarks for success and our preconceived notions about what are viable or appealing work arrangements. Brenda's first reaction to a trigger—the menace of a cartoon picture—was to overcompensate for the void she felt by putting her career at the bottom of her list of priorities. She did volunteer work and considered a career in education. She struggled to reconcile her natural talents with her disdain for “women's work.” But stepping back led her to a more creative solution, in which she combined the best of all worlds.

Even when we start a career transition with these deeper questions in mind, it can take time to discover what we truly want to change. Trying to tackle the big changes at the beginning can be counterproductive. Our customary mind-set about who we are and what others expect undermines us in myriad subtle ways. Just as starting the change process by trying to identify one's "true self" can cause paralysis rather than progress, starting by trying to change basic assumptions inevitably leads to an exercise in abstraction and, all too often, avoidance of real change. We are simply not equipped to make these deeper changes until we come to understand what they really mean, not as concepts but as realities that define our daily lives.

### **A life of possibilities**

Major career transitions take three to five years. The years preceding the actual change necessarily involve difficulty, turmoil, confusion, and uncertainty. One of the hardest tasks of reinvention is staying the course when it feels like you are coming undone. Unfortunately, there is no alternative but foreclosure—retreating

from change either by staying put in the old or taking the wrong next job as Susan did at first. It takes a while to move from old to new.

The careers of most of the women in my study are still evolving. After two years with brokerage firm that opened the door to her financial career, June was recruited by a top Wall Street firm. In her new position she now has the means practice her teaching vocation: she has reinvented her job as financial consultant to include financial planning seminars, educational experiences for her clients and television commentary on market reactions. Even more important to her is the “holistic” character of her new life: “everywhere I go with the children, their schools, their field trips, can and sometimes does lead to more business. All is joined together. There is no pull between the life of the mind and the life of the heart.”

Today, Susan is working with the largest UK consulting firm that specializes in charities. She envisions continuing her career in the non-profit sector recognizes that she is likely to move from back and forth from independent contracting to traditional employment and from consulting to line work, and has this to say: “All I hope is that I never again make the mistake of jumping before giving myself the chance to explore what I really want to do.”

After two years in partnership with a more established agent, Brenda has founded her own literary agency and moved backed to the city where she grew up. Her conclusion: “Being an agent gives me a complete career and a complete life. There’s no trade-off. Sure, I get busy and, of course, on any given task, I have to decide what comes first, my job or my life. My life is more enjoyable all around. It’s

not just about work versus personal life. It's about 'What's my voice? Can I be creative? Am I just a corporate drone? Do I just exist as a thank-you in people's prefaces? Am I a writer?' If someone were to draw that cartoon of me now, what would I tell the artist about myself? Lots: arts boards, philanthropy, a dog, a great marriage, a Jewish faith, Pilates, dance class . . ."

Most of us know what we are trying to escape: the lockstep of a narrowly defined career, inauthentic or unstimulating work, numbing corporate politics, a lack of time for life outside work. But finding an alternative that truly fits, like finding one's mission in life, is not a problem that can be solved overnight. It takes time. Whether we feel closer to June Prescott, who struggled to leave the literary life she had so loved as younger woman or Susan Fontaine who lost her way following the logic of a "good MBA career," there is no substitute for constant exploration. We don't find ourselves in a blinding flash of insight, and we neither do we change overnight. We learn by doing, and each new experience is part answer and part question. Whatever the first step, the process gradually changes the nature of what we know and what we seek to learn. Transformation happens less by grand design or careful strategy than by the ongoing experiments that enhance our capacity to become the myriad possibilities that define us.

### **About the Research**

My research, reported in *Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career* (HBS press, 2003) is an in-depth study of 39 managers and professionals who changed, or were in the process of trying to change, careers. After interviewing dozens of people making a range of different career moves, I settled on a

three-part definition of career change. Some of the people in my study made significant changes in the context in which they work, for example, jumping from large, established companies to small, entrepreneurial organizations or to self-employment, or between the for-profit and non-profit sectors. Others made major changes in the content of the work itself, sometimes leaving an occupation, such as medicine, or law, for which they had trained many years. Most made significant changes in both what they do and where they do it, but most important, all experienced a subjective feeling of reaching a crossroad, one that would require significant personal change.

My sample ranged in age from thirty-two to fifty-one, with an average of forty-one. Sixty-five percent of the study participants are men; thirty-five percent are women. Almost half live and work outside the US, mostly in France and the UK. It is a highly credentialed sample: All have college degrees, and about three-fourths have graduate degrees (for example, business, science, law, and so on).

My methodology consisted of clinical interviews. Some were retrospective, with people who had already completed a major transition. Most, however, were longitudinal: I conducted an average of three interviews, over a period of two to three years. The interviews were open-ended, typically beginning with the question “Tell me about your career to date.” Between the interviews, I had e-mail exchanges and telephone conversations with participants to keep track of their progress.