

Abstract

This inquiry is built around the stories and dialogue among six women who experienced job transition when they were over 50 years of age. Background about the economic times in which these transitions occurred, input from individuals supporting people in job transition and related literature around the topic provide context for the rich narrative of the women involved. Generativity is built through their common feelings, language, and themes and reveals their passion for sharing, their eagerness to adapt and recreate themselves, and their desire to share their wisdom with others in new roles.

In order to fully explore the shared ways of experiencing transition and derive the greatest shared meaning from the inquiry, a social construction framework and stance is used. The methods within this framework are co-researcher one-on-one dialogues done in an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) style, autoethnography, narrative analysis, and a focus group dialogue around the narrative themes using the Art of Focused Conversation process (Stanfield, 2000). The women, as co-researchers, generate new meaning around the transition experience through their narratives and dialogue.

What emerges from the collective voices and dialogue is a message of connection, resilience, and re-creation, along with a strongly expressed desire to mentor and share wisdom with others in future roles. Negative, challenging feelings are explored through the dialogue, but the focus turns to hope and renewed energy. Relationships that held value during the process are nurtured and expanded. Positive connections are built with new enthusiasm, and the women highlight their relatedness and their desire to continue engagement with others.

A possibility for this inquiry includes connecting the positive, re-creative energy of the over 50 woman in transition with entrepreneurial environments and those workplaces experiencing high rates of change. Maximizing the desire of women over 50 to mentor and share their wisdom could also add richness to the shared community of women.

Continued dialogue with the over 50 worker to explore implicit biases, prejudice, stigma and ageism in the employment process and workplace is needed. Explorative dialogue around increasing the economic and human vitality of the over 50 worker could help address future labor shortages, ensure financial security and optimize the value and contributions of workers of all ages.

Keywords: involuntary job transition, women in transition, over 50 worker, age discrimination