CAREER ROCK CLIMBING—FACILITATING CAREER ADAPTABILITY OF

GRADUATE BUSINESS STUDENTS

by

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(Under the Direction of Karen E. Watkins)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to identify an individual's current stage of career adaptability and assess whether their capacity to move through the developmental tasks associated with career adaptability was enhanced by participating in interventions designed to increase their self-awareness and in alignment with adult developmental challenges. Three research questions framed this study:

1. In what ways are individuals' capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced through focused interventions?

2. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced the awareness of the action research team to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability?

3. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase an individual's capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability impacted the system?

The findings from this study indicate introducing an innovative framework which integrated cognitive and psycho-social developmental theory and offering developmentally focused

interventions enhanced self-awareness and empowered participants to start making the behavior changes necessary to move from being "stuck" developmentally towards increasing their career adaptability. In addition, the action research process created a holding environment which allowed the team to see across the levels in the organization and the boundaries of the system which increased the capacity of the individual team members to address complex challenges.

The results implied individuals who pro-actively engage in increasing their career adaptability throughout adulthood are more likely to enhance their professional opportunities. Institutions of higher education seeking to provide participants with a differentiated experience should consider integrating career adaptability into the program framework. Lastly, this study identified theoretical connections between career adaptability and adult development. Future research studies should consider measuring outcomes by utilizing the new Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) to measure career adaptability.

INDEX WORDS: Action Research, Adult Development, Career Development, Career
                      Adaptability, Adaptive Capacity

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DEDICATION

To

Leland David Aldrich and Margaret Elizabeth Mee Aldrich

My father and mother

For their many sacrifices to ensure my brother Erik and I earned advanced degrees.

Your unwavering commitment to each other and our family continues

to inspire me to strive for excellence.

and

Courtney Brooke Gazlay Aldrich

My wife and partner

Your love, patience, encouragement and friendship motivates me to new heights

and

Elizabeth Ann, Leslie Margaret, Troy Christopher and Paige MacMillan

My Children

I am proud of you and love you.

Thank you for your patience, support and encouragement.

You are amazing individuals who inspire me to be the best I can be.

"What lies behind us

and what lies before us

are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I entered the doctoral program following fifteen years working in career services at three highly competitive institutions in the southeast. I work at the crossroads where students and employers connect on the topic of careers. Through countless meetings with students, alumni and employers, I have seen the dance between individual career desires and organizational talent needs in a personal way. I have coached alumni through job loss and re-employment, and helped major organizations develop recruitment and retention strategies. Additionally, I have seen the impact that low and high rates of employment have had on individuals and organizations. It is from this perspective I approach the challenges that frame this study.

From my experience in the late 1990s through 2005, it was clear the combination of economic growth, the rise of the global economy, and the early stages of baby boomer retirement was creating real talent shortages. During this time, employees moved between employers more frequently in a protean, or "boundaryless", fashion which had not been seen in the past. As Arthur and Rousseau (1996) say, "Put simply, *boundaryless* careers are the opposite of 'organizational careers'—careers conceived to unfold in a single employment setting" (p.5). While the concept of careers was evolving significantly for individuals, organizations started to seek ways to leverage the shift employees underwent. This change by organizations toward Organizational Career Management (OCM), is described by De Vos, Dewettinck, and Buyens (2009), who state, "In an era characterized by a changing psychological contract, organizations can not only affect their employees' commitment by providing them with inducements, but also

by stimulating them to become more actively engaged in managing their own career" (p. 74). However, organizations also became aware there are trade-offs related to retention of staff to consider when offering OCM activities. Employees who are embracing the idea of the new career by taking more career self-managing initiative are less dependent on the organizational support they receive for feeling successful (De Vos, Dewettinck, and Buyens, 2009). As a result, individuals who take the initiative to manage their own career expect a higher level of organizational commitment to provide career support. Organizations recognized the key to retaining top talent was to provide career support in order to prepare outstanding staff for future roles. The most prevalent approach taken by organizations to influence career adaptability was the design of talent management systems.

The move towards the development of talent management systems began in the 1990s as employers began to recognize two trends. The first was an increasing shortage of talent and recognition that much of their value was in the intellectual capacity of their people. McKinsey sounded the alarm on this trend in a report called the *War for Talent,* originally published in 1997 and updated by Axelrod, Handlefield-Jones, and Welsh (2001). The results indicated the war for talent will persist for at least the next two decades, driven by deep and powerful forces. At the time, a few companies were realizing this and revolutionizing their approach to talent management; but most were not yet out of the starting blocks. This report, along with the pressures of a fast moving economy, led to a shift by firms back towards a more proactive involvement in the recruitment, development, and retention of talent. As Capelli (2008) says, "Except at a few very large firms, internal talent development collapsed in the 1970s because it could not address the increasing uncertainties of the marketplace" (p.76). This trend is highlighted by Wooldridge (1996) in *The Economist* who stated:

All the same, structural changes are making talent even more important. The deepest such

change is the rise of intangible but talent-intensive assets. Baruch Lev, a professor of

accounting at New York University, argues "intangible assets"— ranging from a skilled

workforce to patents to know-how—account for more than half of the market

capitalization of America's public companies. (p.3)

As a result, organizations develop talent management systems designed to link individual career

development to the achievement of organizational goals. This approach is described by Capelli

(2009) who says:

Talent management is the process through which employers anticipate and meet their

needs for human capital. Getting the right people with the right skills into the right jobs—

a common definition of talent management—is the basic people-management challenge

in any organization. (p.4)

Just as firms began to find a balance between talent management programs and the need to allow

individuals more freedom than in the past, and as individuals began to become adept at handling

this new "boundaryless" career environment, we entered the Great Recession in 2008. As a

result, most organizations are currently in transition when it comes to the concept of career and

may find research focused on understanding how to facilitate career adaptability useful from an

organization perspective.

As the downturn continues, individuals struggle to redefine what career success means

once again. Many baby boomers, most of whom hoped to work in their jobs for another five to

seven years, find themselves having to reinvent and lengthen their retirement timeline. A survey

by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (2011) indicates half of baby boomer

clients who have postponed retirement due to the economic downturn expect to work at least

four years longer than they originally planned. Organizations adjusted as well, many keeping talent management programs in place, but focusing those efforts on what would be considered top talent. As a result, individuals and organizations now recognize that the ability to adapt quickly to new conditions is the key differentiator in this competitive work environment.

As the Executive Director of Career Management, I was invited to meet with the Executive MBA (EMBA) program director in 2009. During our initial meeting, I learned from 2000-2005 there was a gradual shift where fewer students were fully or partially funded by their employers supporting their enrollment in our EMBA programs, dropping from 75% fully or partially funded down to 60%. Furthermore, from 2005-2009, this change accelerated rapidly from 60% to only 30% fully or partially funded; and we anticipated the majority of EMBA students would pro-actively seek career changes outside of their current organizations (F.D. Tucker, personal communication, February 10, 2009).

The trends in our EMBA program were also experienced in other EMBA programs on a global basis. The Executive MBA Council (2011), a professional association whose members include the top EMBA programs around the globe, issued a five year trend report indicating, "The percentage of students receiving full financial sponsorship from employers has declined from 34 percent in 2007 to 27 percent in 2011" (p.1).

As a result, from 2009 to the present, I worked closely with the EMBA program director to develop a number of career development initiatives and to increase our emphasis on alumni networking in order to increase EMBA students' adaptive capacity and accelerate their career progression. This move was in line with other adjustments made by other EMBA programs. The Executive MBA Council (2011) five year trend report states, "Programs are increasing their emphasis on alumni outreach through hosting alumni events; using social networking to connect

former students; leveraging or founding alumni committees or boards; and expanding alumni career services" (p.2).

With this context in mind, I noticed the services and programs we offered worked well for some graduate students, but our one-size-fits-all approach did not work well for many. As I researched the issue, one factor seemed clear: our student profile is much more diverse than it used to be in terms of age and years of work experience, and the number of students seeking a significant career change has increased to over 50% as the percentage of fully and partially funded students plummeted below 30%. It became clear that, although our increased emphasis on career development was helpful, a more differentiated approach to facilitating career change was needed to meet the diverse career needs of our changing student body.

In the spring of 2010, I explored doctoral degree programs with the idea that an advanced education program of study might offer an opportunity to better understand some of the challenges emerging around how to support mid-career adults returning to graduate school and seeking career changes. The Adult Education program at UGA offered a unique opportunity to leverage Action Research to explore this challenge.

I had been working with some of the EMBA program staff since 2009 to implement leadership and career development initiatives for students, aiming to improve their adaptive capacity. This project provided a starting point for discussions with the program director about collecting some initial data. We agreed to conduct an initial evaluation to assess the effectiveness of leadership development and career development interventions already in place. We also agreed this data collection would inform our key questions about the problem of "Are we building students' career adaptability?"

Although the response rate to this initial data gathering was not strong [N = 8], it provided some interesting initial data and comments which helped define the problem. Analysis of the data provided a hint of evidence that the move towards intentionally offering interventions around leadership and career development could increase students' adaptive capacity. From a high level, the comments confirmed what our action research team suspected: EMBA students are pro-actively seeking career changes and are looking to the program to help them build the capacities necessary to implement their plans. The data provided some evidence the interventions were perceived as helpful, but we do not know to what extent.

In addition, the current state of the literature on career adaptability indicates the fundamental problem in career management for individuals and organizations has two parts: how will individuals adapt to rapidly changing career environments, and how will organizations facilitate their adaptation in order to achieve organizational objectives? As a result, while there was support for the identification of the problem, there was also a need to collect more data before we could fully assess whether the leadership and career development interventions were increasing student career adaptability. The action research team initially defined career adaptability as "the ability to understand your own career strengths, risks and opportunities, expand your academic knowledge base, increase your self-awareness, and enhance your leadership competencies in order to successfully move your career in a new direction."

This action research project took place within a large, public business school Executive MBA program which attracts mid-career professionals who are pro-actively seeking career change. Historically, the majority of Executive MBA students globally were fully sponsored by their organization and not seeking immediate career change. However, the focus on career change by students in this program has shifted significantly during the last decade as very few

firms fully sponsor their employees. This global trend has impacted the Executive MBA program where I work and resulted in increased demand from students for individualized career management support. This trend was highlighted recently by Korn (2012) in the *Wall Street Journal*:

> Career-services offices at business schools have a new job these days: catering to executive M.B.A. students. Traditionally, companies sent promising up-and-comers to business school, paying for their executive M.B.A. degrees and then installing them in managerial positions. But as companies pull back on sponsorship for education, executive M.B.A. candidates are footing a bigger share of the tuition bill—and are less willing to stick with their employers. The change has created new expectations for career-services offices, and many are jumping to meet the challenge. (p. B8)

Furthermore, the College of Business's other graduate programs attract a large percentage of career changers. As a result, there are multiple stakeholders who will benefit from the knowledge gained from this action research project, including the EMBA program director, directors of other graduate business programs in the College, and students in the program. Senior leaders within the College of Business, including the Assistant Dean for Executive Programs, Assistant Dean for Admissions and Student Services, and Associate Dean for Academic Programs are also stakeholders.

An action research team was formed to work together to explore how to facilitate the career adaptability of students in the EMBA program. The action research team consisted of a faculty member in leadership development, a career counselor, and program management who shared a mutual interest in collaborating to learn more about how to facilitate career adaptability.

The purpose of this action research project was to test the effectiveness of identifying an individual's current stage of career adaptability and implementing interventions designed to facilitate the career adaptability of Executive MBA students enrolled in a competitive College of Business. The majority of students entering graduate business programs at the College of Business indicate that they are seeking career change as a result of their educational experience. As a result, prospective students, admissions staff, and program directors have expressed an interest in developing more effective ways to facilitate these career changes. Another important element of this research is the utilization of faculty and staff in the college in addition to career management center staff working together to explore and identify new methods of facilitating career adaptability. This cross-unit collaboration is a critical component of the action research process itself and is itself a critical change in how things are typically done at this institution.

Problem Statement and Purpose

Given this context, and the needs identified in the literature, the fundamental problem in career management is understanding how individuals adapt to a rapidly changing career environment. The goal of the research is to help individuals and organizations enhance their adaptive capacity in order to reach their objectives. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to identify an individual's current stage of career adaptability and assess whether their capacity to move through the developmental tasks associated with career adaptability is enhanced by participating in interventions designed to increase their self-awareness in alignment with adult developmental challenges.

The research questions guiding this study were the following:

1. In what ways are individuals' capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced through focused interventions?

2. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced the awareness of the action research team to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability?

3. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase an individual's capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability impacted the system?

These questions form the basis of my conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1. This model draws from the broader areas of Adult Learning and Development, Individual Career Development, Organizational Career Management, Talent Management, and Leadership Development.

Figure 1
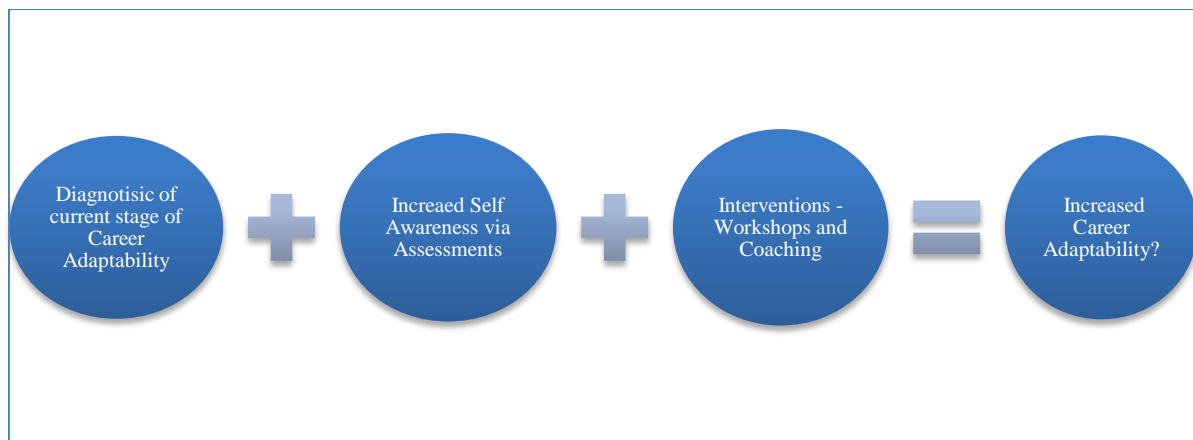
Conceptual Framework for Increasing Career Adaptability

Significance

My experience in career management has shown that facilitating individual learning and career development in late adolescence and early adulthood is similar to adjusting the direction of a small sailboat, whereas helping mid-career adults develop the career adaptability necessary to purse a protean career is more like turning the Titanic. In many ways, this perspective is supported by Schein's career anchor theory; given today's complex, fast-paced world, we are left trying to facilitate career adaptability in the face of these limitations. The research problem presented here builds on current knowledge to specifically look at whether the interventions provided to increase self-knowledge and adaptability for EMBA students, who are pro-actively trying to make a career change, are effective. This research expanded our understanding of how individuals adapt to changing career environments and how organizations can facilitate the adaptations which must occur for individual and organization advancement to occur. On a practical level, this research helps individuals improve their ability to successfully navigate an increasingly challenging career environment and helps educational institutions understand how to help students develop career adaptability. In addition to helping educational institutions, it also contributes to how organizations manage talent management systems, and helps HR professionals further refine their role in talent management by adding to our understanding of how career adaptability is developed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature that provides the theoretical grounding for this study. This research included an examination of over one hundred books, journal articles, and dissertations spanning several topic areas related to careers from an individual and organizational perspective from databases including Dissertation Abstracts, EBSCO, ERIC, Galileo, Google Scholar, LexisNexis Academic and ProQuest. The literature search focused on the past 10 years, as well as on seminal works and theories.

Organizations and individuals appear to be moving towards an increased focus on career adaptability. The pace of change which impacts individuals and organizations in the twenty-first century is driving individuals and organizations to develop a better understanding of adult development, career development, and leadership development to more effectively navigate an increasingly complex world moving at a higher and higher speed. The fundamental challenge in career management explored in this research is: How will individuals adapt to rapidly changing career environments and how will organizations facilitate their adaptation in order to achieve organizational objectives?

In an effort to understand how to develop interventions to address these challenges, this review examines theoretical perspectives and empirical research from a variety of fields. This review focused on adult learning and development, individual career development, organizational implications from organizational career management (OCM), talent management systems, and leadership development across the career span. Drawing from these broader

knowledge bases provided a holistic view of how we might develop career adaptability from the individual and organizational perspectives. The summary synthesizes the theoretical perspectives and empirical research identified into key themes and resulted in the development of a conceptual framework and research questions for career adaptability.

Adult Learning and Development

A deep understanding of how adults learn and develop is critical to addressing the challenge of facilitating the development of career adaptability. Robert Kegan's and William Torbert's works appear in both adult development and leadership development literature and focus on how adults learn, adapt, develop, and subsequently lead. Thus their theories are particularly relevant to this study.

Kegan's Constructive Developmental Framework

Robert Kegan developed a framework for understanding how adults continue to develop throughout the life span. His work is based on Jean Piaget who identified the cognitive stages of development through which children move. Kegan (1982) suggests there are five levels of development adults move through after infancy. The basic premise is that adults, like children, have the potential to continue developing new skills and abilities that allow them to navigate life successfully at increasingly complex levels. His view is that adult development is an on-going, dynamic process which he describes in *The Evolving Self* (Kegan, 1982). While many in adult learning define stages of development, what makes Kegan's work significant is his focus on a spiraling process of constructive development. Kegan (1982) summarizes his theory when he states:

> The heart of the constructive-developmental framework- and the source of its own
> potential for growth- does not lie so much in its account of stages or sequences of

meaning organizations, but in its capacity to illuminate a universal on-going process (call it "meaning making," "adaptation," "equilibration," or "evolution") which may very well be the fundamental context of personality development. Accordingly, it is to this process and its experience, rather than to stages, that I would direct the invested attention of the constructive-developmental counselor. (p. 264)

Kegan's theoretical framework is helpful when considering how to facilitate career adaptability because of the focus on adaptation as the process by which constructive development occurs. As Kegan (1982) states, "All these descriptions speak to the same process, which is essentially that of adaptation, a differentiation from that which was the very subject of a new organization on behalf of a new subjectivity that coordinates it" (p. 85). See Figure 2 for Kegan's theory of adult development.

Kegan's interest in how adaptation occurs led to his work with Lisa Lahey on *Immunity to Change* (2001) which provides insight into why personal development is so difficult and offers interventions to help change behavior. As Kegan and Lahey (2001) state, "An employee has the skills and smarts to make a change with ease, has shown a deep commitment to the company, genuinely supports the change-and yet, inexplicably, does nothing" (p. 85). What their research revealed is that resistance to change does not reflect opposition, nor is it merely a result of inertia. Instead, even as they hold a sincere commitment to change, many people are unwittingly applying productive energy toward a hidden competing commitment. As a result, what looks like resistance is in fact a kind of personal immunity to change (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). In order to identify these competing commitments, they ask a series of questions

Figure 2

Interindividual

[5]

Institutional

[4]

Interpersonal

[3]

Imperial

[2]

Impulsive

[1]

Incorporate

[0]
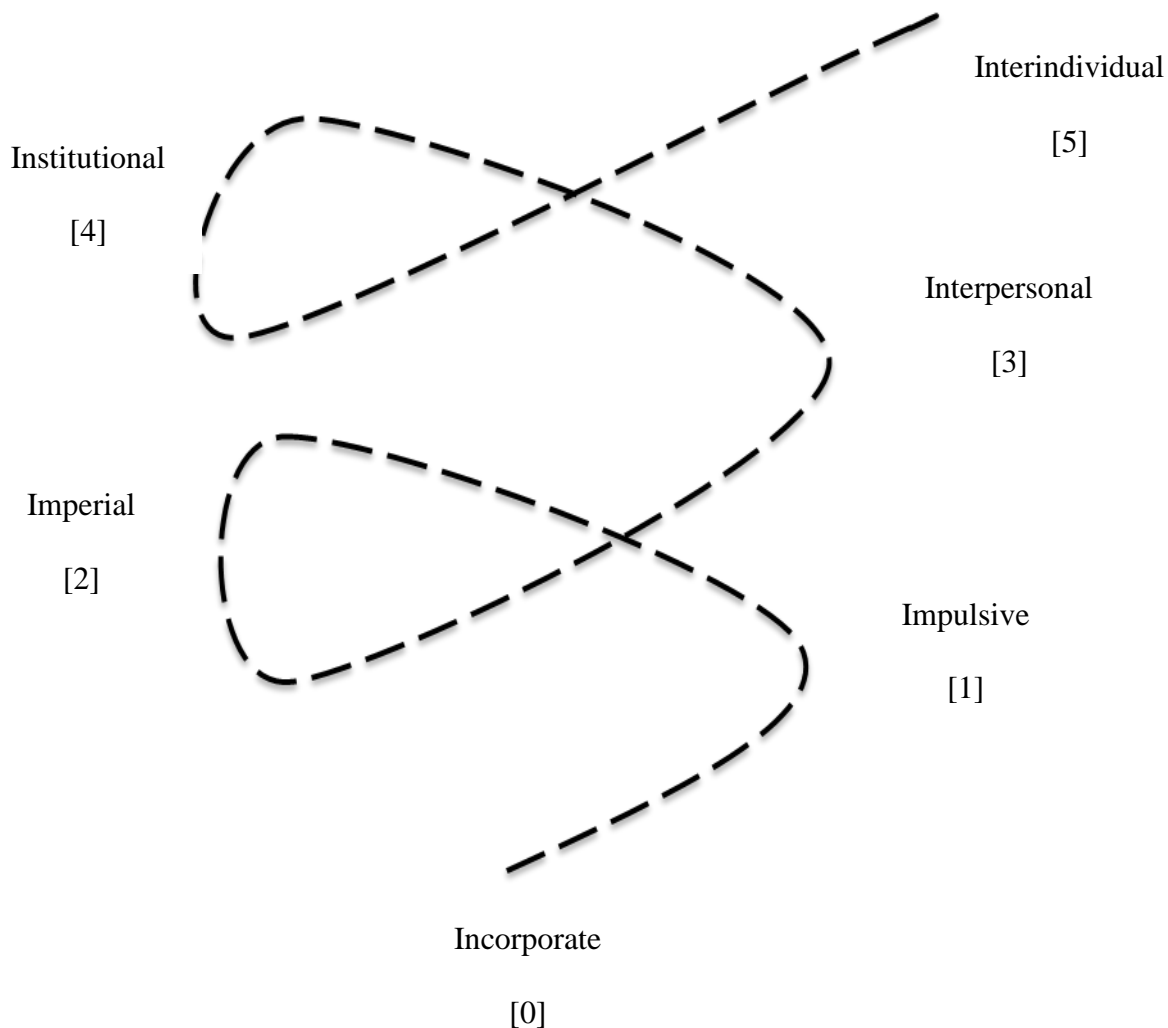
Kegan's Helix of Evolutionary Truces

and record key responses in a simple grid called an "Immunity Map" which individuals or

groups can utilize to identify the forces working for and against a change in behavior they are

interested in making (Kegan & Lahey, 2001).

Kegan's work on immunity to change contributes to our understanding of how to facilitate

career adaptability by highlighting the importance of building adaptive capacity and exploring

the disconnect that exists between individuals' desires and their current behavior. For example,

Kegan and Lahey (2002) state, "Working adaptively on adaptive challenges means helping to bring about—even in adulthood—the ongoing growth of the mind. It means building increasingly complex capabilities, individually and collectively, which are portable to all regions of one's living" (p. 305). In addition, his work offers unique interventions which may help adults understand the forces impacting their desire to make career changes and then pro-actively develop the adaptive behaviors necessary to achieve their career objectives. Kegan's contributions are noted by McCauley and Wakefield (2006) who wrote:

> Kegan's work has emphasized developmental movement more than the orders of development themselves, particularly the ceaseless interaction between the demands placed on individuals by an ever more complex culture and the capacity of individuals to continue to refashion themselves to meet those challenges. He points to a human "immunity to change," a fear of losing meaning in seeking new forms of meaning, and posits that this immunity can be overcome in holding environments that both support and challenge current meaning-making systems. . . . Kegan's framework has been primarily used to examine three propositions: (a) An individual's order of development is related to his or her effectiveness as a leader; (b) Followers' order of development impacts their evaluation of leaders; (c) Formal leader development interventions should create holding environments conducive to developmental movement. (p. 638)

In conclusion, Kegan's theoretical framework articulated in *The Evolving Self* contributes to our understanding of how to facilitate career adaptability because of the focus on adaptation; and his work with Lahey in *Immunity to Change* provides us with an intervention to help those engaged in career change explorations. Lastly, while Kegan is primarily focused on

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understanding adult development, there is a direct connection to the potential impact on leadership. As Kegan and Lahey (1984) highlight:

> A person whose way of being in the world—in a family, at work, or as a citizen—amounts to the exercise of authority on behalf of facilitating the development of those around him or her, is the person who can truly be called a leader. (p. 226)

Torbert's Leadership Development Profile

With a similar focus on leadership, William Torbert's work on adult development provides support for the notion that development is tied to self-awareness. Torbert has been involved with the creation of two interventions and a theoretical framework for adult development which may be helpful in facilitating career adaptability. The first is the Leadership Development Profile (LDP), a sentence completion assessment, which was developed through close collaboration with psychologist Susanne Cook-Greuter and designed to reveal an individual's "action-logic," in other words, how one thinks. Additionally, knowing your own action logic can be the first step toward developing a more effective leadership style (Rooke & Torbert, 2005). Rooke and Torbert (2005) describe why understanding your "action logic" is powerful when they state:

> Most developmental psychologists agree that what differentiates leaders is not so much their philosophy of leadership, their personality, or their style of management. Rather, it's their internal "action logic"—how they interpret their surroundings and react when their power or safety is challenged. Relatively few leaders, however, try to understand their own action logic, and fewer still have explored the possibility of changing it. They should, because we've found that leaders who do undertake a voyage of personal

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understanding and development can transform not only their own capabilities but also those of their companies. (p. 45)

Torbert's work supports the notion that change is possible, as Rooke and Torbert (2005) state: "The most remarkable—and encouraging—finding from our research is that leaders can transform from one action logic to another" (p. 51). Based on the data gathered through LDPs, which are interpreted by highly trained evaluators to paint a picture of how participants interpret their own actions and the world around them, they created a framework of seven developmental action logics which describe a leader's dominant way of thinking: Opportunist, Diplomat, Expert, Achiever, Individualist, Strategist, and Alchemist (Rooke & Torbert, 2005). See Table 1 which depicts Rooke & Torbert's model of action logics (Rooke & Torbert, 2005).

This theoretical framework is useful because it specifically addresses the challenge we face in our attempts to facilitate career adaptability within MBA populations. For example, Rooke & Torbert (2005) state:

Within business education, MBA programs are apt to encourage the development of the more pragmatic Achievers by frustrating the perfectionist Experts. The heavy workloads, use of multidisciplinary and ambiguous case studies, and teamwork requirements all promote the development of Achievers. By contrast, MSc programs, in particular disciplines such as finance or marketing research, tend to reinforce the Expert perspective. (p. 52)

Rooke & Torbert (2005) support the use of the LDP in career development interventions by stating, "Leaders can move through these categories as their abilities grow, so taking the Leadership Development Profile again several years later can reveal whether a leader's action has changed" (p. 46).

Table 1

Rooke & Torbert's Model of Action Logics

Action Logic	Characteristics	Strengths	% of research sample at this action logic
Opportunist	*Wins any way possible.* Self-oriented; manipulative; "might makes right."	Good in emergencies and in sales opportunities.	5%
Diplomat	*Avoids overt conflict.* Wants to belong; obeys group norms; rarely rocks the boat.	Good as supportive glue within an office; helps bring people together.	12%
Expert	*Rules by logic and expertise.* Seeks rational efficiency.	Good as an individual contributor.	38%
Achiever	*Meets strategic goals.* Effectively achieves goals through teams; juggles managerial duties and market demands.	Well suited to managerial roles; action and goal oriented.	30%
Individualist	*Interweaves competing personal and company action logics.* Creates unique structures to resolve gaps between strategy and performance.	Effective in venture and consulting roles.	10%
Strategist	*Generates organizational and personal transformations.* Exercises the power of mutual inquiry, vigilance, and vulnerability for both the short and long term.	Effective as a transformational leader.	4%
Alchemist	*Generates social transformations.* Integrates material, spiritual, and societal transformation.	Good at leading society-wide transformations.	1%

Torbert developed a second intervention, a specific method of dialogue called "action inquiry," designed to help adults advance to the higher levels of leadership which Torbert (2004) describes as "a moment-to-moment way of living whereby we attune ourselves through inquiry

to acting in an increasingly timely and wise fashion for the overall development of the families, teams, and organizations in which we participate" (p. 1-2). Torbert (2004) highlights the importance of speech in leadership when he states:

> Speaking is the primary and most influential medium of action in the human universe – in business, in school, among parents and children, and between lovers. Our claim is that the four parts of speech – framing, advocating, illustrating, and inquiring – represent the very atoms of human action. (p. 27)

This shift in speech, the conscious focus on others and the impact of our actions, has the potential to transform individual leadership to higher levels. What I find interesting about action inquiry as a vehicle to increase self-awareness and develop leadership is it can be interwoven into your everyday life. Torbert (2004) argues that this increasing self-awareness occurs when:

> Through single-, double-, and triple-loop feedback, action inquiry can help us increase the efficiency, the effectiveness, and the legitimacy of our actions, while simultaneously generating an inner sense of integrity. When our actions generate outer efficacy and inner integrity simultaneously, they become timely in a profound way. (p. 56)

Torbert (2004) defines these feedback loops as:

1. *Single-loop feedback* about results in the outside world that require us to change behaviors if we wish to achieve our goal more efficiently.

2. *Double-loop feedback* about what *goals and strategies* we may need to change to become more effective.

3. *Triple-loop feedback* about what *quality of ongoing awareness* we need to cultivate in order to embrace the four territories of experience and test the legitimacy and integrity of our actions. (p. 55)

In our efforts to facilitate career adaptability, action inquiry could be an excellent way to help individuals learn to identify areas where they need to develop new capabilities. For example, as Torbert (2004) states:

Action inquiry begins because we (any one of us, or any family, or organization) experience some sort of gap between what we wish to do and what we are able to do. The awareness of this gap can lead to the development of a clear intent to accomplish something beyond our current capacity. (p. 5)

In conclusion, Torbert's theory of action logics is critical to our understanding of career adaptability because it provides a theoretical framework for assessing how individuals currently think and his work supports the notion that leadership transformation occurs through increased self-awareness.

Individual Career Development

This review began with career development theory from the first half of the twentieth century. Since organizations espoused lifetime employment to employees during much of the twentieth century and invested heavily in their training and development, this led to the creation of career development theory in a stable work environment which has evolved. This view is supported by Donald Super when asked in an interview by Freeman (1993) to describe how career development theory has changed. He states:

Part of my perspective is that the term "career development" did not even exist 40 years ago. Then the focus was on vocational choice almost as though it were a one-shot thing. You know, you get married (to an occupation) and live happily ever after. Well, that's not true of career development any more than it is of other things. So what we've been learning is the fact that careers really evolve over the years—they emerge from a person's

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experience. That obviously has demanded a lot of research time. It has created

controversies. It has been a rather exciting field. And today I think we're reaching a

consensus point. (p. 255)

As organizations moved away from the concept of lifetime employment in the last quarter of the

twentieth century, new theories emerged to help individuals cope with the responsibility of

managing their own career. This led to the development of new concepts of protean and

boundaryless careers and career self-management. In addition, the very idea of career success

broadened beyond extrinsic signs of success to a more holistic view. This perspective is reflected

by Hall & Moss (1998) who state, "Personal career choices and search for self-fulfillment are the

unifying or integrative elements in his or her life. The criterion of success is internal

(psychological success), not external" (p.25). What are the implications for individuals when it

comes to advancing a career in a post-Great Recession environment? In order to address this

question, the following section traces the evolution of career development from the early part of

the twentieth century to the present, including career development theory, protean and

boundaryless careers, and career self-management.

Career Development Theory

A number of career development theories describe how individuals and organizations

function. Each theory has been revised, updated, or built upon with an increasing emphasis on

the importance of adaptability in response to an increasingly complex, dynamic work

environment.

Donald Super is often referred to as the father of career development theory. His impact

on the field is captured when Herr (1997) states:

The intellectual legacy provided by Donald Super's writings have spanned more than 50

years during which his theoretical perspectives, empirical research, assessments of

various elements of career behavior, and models of career counseling, career education,

computer-assisted career guidance, and other interventions have revolutionized, in

dramatic and subtle ways, the rationale for, the content of, and the practice of

intervention in career development. (p. 238)

Super's original work developed the construct of adolescent career maturity, or the

readiness to make educational and vocational choices. Super (1980) went on to propose four

major developmental stages for adults: Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and

Disengagement; and identified adaptation as the primary developmental process for adults and

the psychological tasks that characterize each stage. Super asserts that adaptation occurs by

accomplishing the psychological task that characterizes each of the sub-stages. In order to

understand how adults were progressing through these stages, Super, Thompson, and Lindeman

(1988) developed the Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI) to:

Assess the developmental stage of an individual in relation to his or her career. Each of

these stages has 3 substages, resulting in a total of 12 substages. The 12 substages are

each measured by a subscale of the ACCI: (a) crystallizing, (b) specifying, (c)

implementing, (d) stabilizing, (e) consolidating, (f) advancing, (g) holding, (h) updating,

(i) innovating, (j) decelerating, (k) retirement planning, and (l) retirement living. (p. 81)

Table 2 illustrates Super's stages of career adaptability and the associated developmental tasks.

Table 2

Super's Stages of Career Adaptability

Stages	Developmental Tasks
Exploration	Crystallization
	Specification
	Implementation
Establishment	Stabilizing
	Consolidating
	Advancing
Maintenance	Upholding
	Updating
	Innovating
Disengagement	Decelerating

It is important to note there are no ages associated with Super's stages of career adaptability. Super sees these as very flexible and each transition involves a recycling through the stages, a "mini-cycle," with growth serving as the development activity that drives the process throughout an individual's career. Figure 3 illustrates the mini-cycle process which is similar to Kegan's view of adult development.

Before he passed, Super later modified his framework to include learning and decision making as potential integrative variables of his theory as they deal with how things are done (Savickas, 1997). The increasing emphasis Super placed on adaptability, learning, and decision making as key variables of his original theory provides support for additional research into how to facilitate career adaptability.

Figure 3
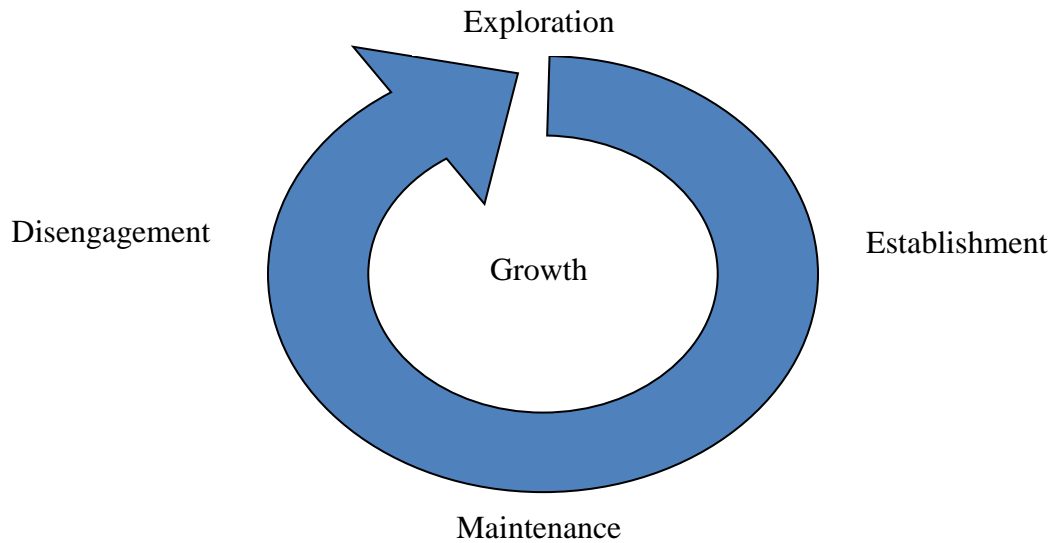
Super's Mini-Cycle of Career Development

In conclusion, from Super we have a model of career development and a measure of career adaptability to guide the action research study.

Edgar Schein's career anchors theory is another seminal work that contributes to our understanding of career adaptability. The overarching concept of career anchors is well stated by King (2004): "Career anchors provide a central organization principle that guides a person's career-related decisions, and drives and constrains choices about how to achieve desired career outcomes" (p. 124).

Schein (1996) updated his original Career Anchor theory to reflect the changes in society and the workplace when he stated:

The concept of career anchor becomes especially applicable in today's turbulent world as more and more people are laid off and have to figure out what to do next in their lives. One might also expect that the content of the anchor will have shifted in the 1990s and will continue to shift as we speculate about the 21st century. (p. 81)

In addition, it is important to note Schein (1996) recognizes the changes in today's workplace also have a direct tie to the need for individuals to be adaptive when he states, "The only reliable prediction is that we will have to become perpetual learners, more self-reliant, and more capable than ever in dealing with surprises of all sorts. It should be a field day for those anchored in pure challenge" (p. 88). In addition, research on career anchors revealed that instead of concentrating on differences in functional areas, older students should focus on differences in career paths with careers that are best suited to them. The implication for mature students is their key task is not simply choosing a major and functional area to list on a resume, but rather choosing a career track, potentially implementable in a variety of functional areas which best meets their needs (Feldman & Bolino, 1996).

Schein's contributions to our understanding of careers are important because they address the reality that there are real limitations to the extent to which individuals may be able to adapt their careers. His contributions also provide a theoretical framework for individuals to think about how to effectively be adaptive, particularly in a world which is increasingly demanding and complex.

Although the seminal work in career development theory was developed in the first half of the twentieth century when stable employment with one organization was often the norm, the contributions of Super and Schein provide a foundation that continues to add to our understanding of the concept of career in today's environment. For example, Super's life-span, life-space theory has been updated by Savickas (1997) with an emphasis on career adaptability. Savickas (1997) states:

> Functionalist methods for theory construction have produced both the strengths and
> weaknesses of life-span, life-space theory. Currently, its major weakness is its

fragmented structure, with the concomitant complexity and lack of parsimony. Possibilities for integrating the disparate segments of the life-span, life-space theory approach to knowledge organization and construction include the use of processes such as learning, decision making, or adaptation as bridging constructs. I contend that adaptation offers the greatest potential for integrating the segments, increasing the theory's parsimony, and generating explanatory principles and new hypotheses. (p. 257)

The importance of career adaptability for individuals and organizations has been validated in a study by Dix and Savickas (1995) who concluded, "The results of the present study show that the coping dimension of career adaptability can be characterized by instrumental behaviors that conform to a developmental continuum" (p. 105). In fact, research on career adaptability by Dix and Savickas (1995) used the critical incident technique to understand the task coping used by 50 workers who were successfully coping with the developmental tasks of the establishment stage of Super's career development theory. The following are examples of the coping behaviors in the organizational adaptability developmental task that individuals in this study successfully exhibited: increase job knowledge, learn from mistakes, listen to advice, take a broad perspective, and prove competence.

Building on the work of Super, Savickas (2002) developed Career Construction Theory which includes 3 key components: Life Themes, Vocational Personality, and Career Adaptability, and highlights a set of specific attitudes, beliefs, and competencies—the ABCs of career construction. The ABCs shape the actual problem-solving strategies and coping behaviors that individuals use to synthesize their vocational self-concepts with work roles. The ABCs are grouped into four dimensions of adaptability: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (Savickas, 2002). From a constructionist viewpoint, career, or more precisely subjective career,

denotes a moving perspective that imposes personal meaning on past memories, present experiences, and future aspirations by weaving them into a pattern that portrays a life theme. Counseling for career construction begins with an intake interview that presents to the client a series of questions that make up the Career Style Interview (CSI). Based in Adler's Individual Psychology, the questions elicit information and stories about how clients think an interest can solve a problem or make them more complete. Career counselors can help facilitate adaptation by utilizing the CSI in order to assess where clients are within this model and then offering interventions to move them forward (Savickas, 2002).

This theory comes closest to describing the central role adaptation plays within a career. For example, as Savickas (2002) explains:

> Career construction theory views adaptation to these transitions as fostered by five principal types of behaviors: orientation, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement. These constructive activities form a cycle of adaptation that is periodically repeated as new transitions appear on the horizon. (p. 154)

This theory helps define the behaviors which constitute adaptation and builds on the key themes of self-concept development, continuous adult learning, and self-knowledge emphasized by other theorists in adult development and career development.

Each of the career development theories in this review identifies career adaptability as a central element for adults engaged in career change. In addition, a number of assessments have been developed to understand adaptability, but given the rate of change in today's work environment there is a need for additional research into which interventions help facilitate adaptability. Table 3 illustrates how adult learning and development and career development theory contribute to the concept of career adaptability.

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Table 3

Theoretical Perspectives Contributing to Career Adaptability

Scholar	Theoretical Perspectives	How Adaptation Occurs
Kegan	Views transformation as a developmental process that leads to a deep shift in perspective where an individual is able to handle increasing levels of complexity. Theory indicates adults move through these in a spiraling fashion that is fluid and allows for movement in both directions.	Educators help individuals grow by supporting the movement from a more dualistic worldview to one that is more inclusive and differentiated. This growth supports adaptation by reducing our built in resistance to change.
Torbert	Views adult transformation through the lens of action inquiry. Action Inquiry is an approach to daily interactions which engages individuals in being more aware of what they say and how others react.	Action Inquiry can facilitate adaptation by leading to higher levels of awareness, intentionality, and vulnerability which lead to transformations to high action logics.
Super	Career Development Theory – His original work, developed as a construct adolescent career maturity, or the readiness to make educational and vocational choices, identified the stages of development and psychological tasks that characterize each stage. Super went on to propose four major developmental stages for Adults: Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Disengagement and identified adaptation as the primary development process for adults.	This theory asserts that adaptation occurs by accomplishing the psychological tasks associated with each stage. Career counselors can help facilitate adaptation by assessing the stage of development an individual is at utilizing the ACCI and implementing interventions designed to help the individuals accomplish the psychological task associated with that stage.
Savickas	Career Construction Theory highlights a set of specific attitudes, beliefs, and competencies. The ABCs are grouped into four dimensions of adaptability: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Thus, the adaptive individual is conceptualized as (a) becoming *concerned* about the vocational future, (b) increasing personal *control* over one's vocational future, (c) displaying *curiosity* by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and (d) strengthening the *confidence* to pursue one's aspirations.	These constructive activities form a cycle of adaptation that is periodically repeated as new transitions appear on the horizon. As each transition approaches, individuals can adapt more effectively if they meet the change with growing awareness, information-seeking followed by informed decision making, trial behaviors leading to a stable commitment projected forward for a certain time period, active role management, and eventually forward-looking deceleration and disengagement.

To summarize, the theoretical perspectives which contribute to the notion of career adaptability move from making meaning, which is a cognitive process that occurs within the individuals, to the psycho-social process which occurs as the individual interacts within the workplace which leads to changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors relative to one's career objectives. This theoretical framework reflects the integrated nature of facilitating an

individual's career adaptability and brings an interdisciplinary set of theories to bear in order to capture the complexity practitioners face.

Protean Careers, Boundaryless Careers, and Career Self-Management

As a result of the restructuring and downsizing that began in the 1970s, new career development concepts were developed. Initially, they were developed as a reaction to the disruption in what had been a fairly stable work environment since the late 1940s. However, as the employment landscape stabilized, these new concepts of career became more pro-active in nature. Douglas Hall has been a key figure in developing the modern concept of career which he coined as Protean. The key shift illustrated by this concept is a shift towards individuals taking responsibility for driving their career. Hall and Moss (1998) state:

> The protean career is a process which the person, not the organization, is managing. It consists of all the person's varied experiences in education, training, work in several organizations, changes in occupational field, etc. The protean person's own personal career choices and search for self-fulfillment are the unifying or integrative elements in his or her life. The criterion of success is internal (psychological success), not external. (p. 25)

A related concept that has emerged is the career as boundaryless. This extension of the career from being merely self-directed to lacking boundaries is important for individuals and organizations as one considers the potential for individuals to work remotely via technology, to move around the globe physically, or move from one organization, industry, or functional area to another.

Some interesting empirical research, with implications for career adaptability, was conducted by Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) in a medium size, public organization in New

Zealand to further explore these concepts from an individual and organizational perspective using an in-depth qualitative, instrumental case study approach. Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) state:

> The findings show that there is significant merit in conceptualizing and researching the new career forms, such as protean career, within an organizational context. Our research shows that career management and development has a significant role to play in achieving mutuality of organizational and individual interests. (p. 789)

As individuals also become aware of organizational efforts to influence their approach to the new career environment, the give and take relationship which now exists is very interesting. Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) capture this current dynamic best in summarizing the results of their research when they say:

> There are five career development practices that collectively represent a "career dance" between two "partners"—the employee and the organization. These steps of this dance are the mutual effects between organizational change and employee career development that are played out on the foundation, or "ballroom floor" of the five career practices that we have identified: Developing Capacity and Employability, Strategic Integration, Cultural Integration, Managing Diversity, and Communication. (p. 789)

The character of protean and boundaryless careers has evolved into a more action-oriented concept of career self-management. The focus of career self-management is on the behaviors an individual can take to effectively implement a protean or boundaryless career. This move towards operationalizing the protean attitude is illustrated when King (2004) argues:

> Careers that unfold within one organization are likely to be affected by "local" gatekeepers, such as immediate supervisors or other senior managers, personnel

professionals or mentors. Careers that span organizational boundaries are likely to be

affected by a more diverse set of gatekeepers, including prospective employers, agency

representatives, clients, project managers, or other contractors. (p. 118)

There are some potential downsides to embracing the career self-management approach. King

(2004) states that:

engaging in career self-management can deliver positive psychological outcomes,

including career and life satisfaction, enhanced self-efficacy and well-being, if desired

career outcomes are achieved. Career self-management may therefore be greatly

beneficial for self-motivated high skilled workers seeking to adapt to a changing world of

work. (p. 130)

Protean, boundaryless, and career self-management concepts are based on an individual's ability

to adapt to a changing career landscape. As a result, additional research on how to foster this

ability, or career adaptability, would be beneficial to individuals and organizations.

Overview of Empirical Studies

Looking across these studies reveals they fall into three categories, which include ACCI

constructs and evolution, Mid-Career Change, and the Organizations Role in Career Resilience.

The following summarizes the key findings and themes in each category.

ACCI. The literature review revealed four empirical studies which focused on the

validating the ACCI and the construct of career adaptability. For example, Niles, Lewis &

Hartung (1997) administered the ACCI and two additional assessments to 150 undergraduates at

a midsized university in order to assess the planning attitudes and career adaptability construct.

Their findings support the idea that career adaptability is the dimension that impacts individuals'

movement through the developmental subscales associated with the Exploration stage of the

ACCI. This study demonstrates how assessing career adaptability and attitude using response scales may provide counselors with important information which can be utilized to facilitate the adaptability of clients. Another study by Rottinghaus, P. J. (2004), asked 690 undergrads from a large mid-western university to take a 25-item measure called the Career Futures Inventory (CFI) that assesses positive career planning attitudes. This theory-driven scale development project attempts to assess domain-specific career optimism and perceived adaptability including planfulness, decisional skill, and self-awareness. The findings indicated three subscales: (1) Career Adaptability; (2) Career Optimism; and (3) Perceived Knowledge exist. Results demonstrated that optimistic and adaptable people appear to strive higher academically, report greater comfort with their educational and career-related plans, show higher levels of career identity, and engage in career exploration activities more thoroughly. Additionally, the findings support Savickas' (1997) extension of Super and Knasel's (1981) career adaptability construct.

Mid-Career Change. Several studies have been designed to examine the nature of mid-career change. Dix & Savickas (1995) utilized the critical incident technique with 50 employees to identify the explicit knowledge of workers who were exhibiting the coping responses that effectively address the six developmental tasks in the career establishment stage. The results indicated the coping dimension of career adaptability can be characterized by behaviors that conform to a developmental continuum. Converting tacit knowledge of workers who are mastering the development tasks involved in this transition into worksheets and lesson plans for deliberate career education may prove a particularly effective intervention. Another study focused in this area was conducted by Mahler (2008). This narrative study was designed to explore individual responses to the rapidly changing, highly technological, and global work environments of the 21st century. Ten men made the intentional decision to move from a career

with all the socially defined external trappings of success to one that was more personally defined as successful. Its purpose was to better understand how individuals make sense of a work role transition, a change that suggests a realignment of social and psychological indicators of career success to support an evolving adult identity structure. A work role transition was "unpacked" and analyzed through the lens of the individual psychosocial needs that both drive and are driven by the transition process. Six conclusions emerged from this study. First, adult development is a lifelong process that consists of both change and stability. Second, work plays a central role in the evolution of identity in adulthood. Third, the contemporary career context is a critical element in understanding the relationship between identity and careers. Fourth, the alignment of personal ideologies with the work role promotes positive self-perception. Fifth, learning promotes adult development, perhaps particularly in times of change. Sixth, both subjective and objective knowledge contribute to a holistic understanding of adult identity development, transitions, and careers. The findings contribute to the idea that career adaptability is becoming increasingly important give the rapidly changing 21st century environment.

   The Organization's Role in Career Resilience. A number of studies have looked at the impact of organizations' efforts to facilitate career resilience**.** Lips-Wiersma & Hall (2007) ran a qualitative case study focused on the contemporary phenomenon of the protean career in the context of real-life change. The focus of the study was whether and how, in an increasingly unpredictable career environment, individuals are taking responsibility for their own career development. Fifty individuals were interviewed from eight work units and the implication is that career is becoming less central to organizational management practices. This study identified five career development practices representing a "career dance" between the two "partners"—the employee and the organization. The practices are: Developing Capacity and Employability,

Strategic Integration, Cultural Integration, Managing Diversity, and Communication. For organizations that want to obtain buy-in to a change process, this study indicates a need to proactively and systemically create mechanisms through which career concerns are integrated into organizational management.

Career-Adapt-Abilities. Building on the work of Super and Savickas, Leong and Walsh (2012) indicate participants from numerous countries launched the International Career Adaptability Project in 2008 and committed to collaboratively construct a model and measure of career adaptability. The results of this initiative were summarized by Savickas and Porfeli (2012) in a special issue of the Journal of Vocational Behavior when they reported, "Several years' work by a team of collaborators from 13 countries has produced an international measure of career adaptability called the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)" (p. 670). Leong and Walsh (2012) add:

> The articles in this special issue report the results from both the quantitative and qualitative studies. With this special issue launching the new conceptual model and psychometric measure, we hope to encourage and facilitate more research on the construct of career adaptability, especially collaborations by international teams, and extensions to diverse populations. (p. 660)

One the studies which contributed to the development of the CAAS is a qualitative study by Brown, Bimrose, Barnes, and Hughes (2012) which evaluated the career biographies of 64 adults across two contrasting country contexts, the UK and Norway. The research sought to represent the wide range of goals, aspirations, achievements, and identities that shape the way that adults interact with, and move through, labor markets. It also highlighted the dynamic ways in which adults engage with learning and development pathways, sometimes with transformational shifts

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in perspective as their careers unfold, often involving periods of up-skilling and/or re-skilling. Data analysis increased understanding of career adapt-abilities, how it is mediated and how it can be fostered. Four key dimensions emerged relating to the role of learning in developing career adapt-abilities at work: learning through challenging work (including mastering the practical, cognitive, and communicative demands linked with particular work roles and work processes); updating a substantive knowledge base (or mastering a new additional substantive knowledge base); learning through (and beyond) interactions at work; and being self-directed and self-reflexive. Drawing upon the key findings of this research, it is argued that career adapt-ability competencies play a crucial role in understanding skills development and successful labor market transitions of mid-career changers. They could also transform career counseling practice for this client group. However, this would require a shift away from traditional and static concepts of employability, to more of a focus on career adapt-ability, with the goal of supporting individuals to become more resilient and able to manage both risk and uncertainty in fast changing, unpredictable education, training and employment contexts.

In reviewing these empirical studies, there are a number of themes which are of interest as we consider how to facilitate the career adaptability of the EMBA students. The first is the numerous studies which validate utilizing the ACCI as an assessment that is well suited to identifying adults' current stage of career development and the associated developmental tasks. The second theme that emerges from reviewing these studies is that exploring how to facilitate career adaptability for adults is increasingly relevant given the complexity of our environment. The third theme identified is that organizations have a role in facilitating career adaptability. Whether the organization is an employer or an institution of higher education, engagement of individuals is increased when the organization provides opportunities to enhance career

adaptability. Lastly, the study by Brown, Bimrose, Barnes, and Hughes (2012) supports the

notion that an increased focus on facilitating career adaptability of mid-career individuals is

warranted. Table 4 summarizes key themes and overarching issues across several empirical

studies on career adaptability.

Table 4

Career Adaptability Studies

Researchers	Methodology	*n*	Focus	Findings
Duarte, M (1995)	Participants responded the ACCI, the VS, and the SI.	881 full-time workers, all men, working for the same organization	This study tested the dimensions of the adaptability model to examine how career development concerns, values, and role salience relate. Also, the study further examined the construct and concurrent validity of the ACCI, VI, and SI	All these findings suggest that the ACCI, VS, and SI may be useful and complement each other in career assessment with employed men.
Niles, Lewis & Hartung (1997)	Administered the– ACCI, CDS, and VI	150 Undergrads at a midsized University in the Southeast US	The ACCI used an attitudinal item-response scale to measure the planning attitudes dimension of career adaptability.	The results supported the hypothesized unidimension-ality of the ACCI-B Exploration subscales.
Creed, Fallon & Hood (2009)	Survey measures of career concerns, the Career Salience Scale, the Career Exploration Survey, and Career Decision Scale.	Participants were 245 full-time, first-year students (83.7% female) from a medium-sized public university in south-east Queensland, Australia.	The findings should inform the design of interventions to promote the development of a learning goal-orientation and the use of self-regulation strategies with young adults when they think about careers.	This study confirmed Savickas' (1997) suggestion that the career adaptability variables of planning, exploration and decision-making and a general measure of self-regulation were inter-related and could be represented by a second-order factor, which we labeled career adaptability.

Dix & Savickas (1995)	The critical incident technique.	50 employees	Identify the explicit knowledge of workers who were exhibiting the coping responses that effectively address the six developmental tasks in the career establishment stage.	The results of the present study show that the coping dimension of career adaptability can be characterized by the behaviors that conform to a developmental continuum.
Rottinghaus, P. J. (2004).	Career Futures Inventory (CFI), a 25-item measure that assesses positive career planning attitudes.	690 undergrads from a large mid-western university	This theory-driven scale development project attempts to assess domain-specific career optimism and perceived adaptability including planfulness, decisional skill, and self-awareness.	Results revealed three subscales: (1) Career Adaptability; (2) Career Optimism; and (3) Perceived Knowledge. These results support the concurrent validity of the CFI scales. Findings also support Savickas' (1997) extension of Super and Knasel's (1981) career adaptability construct.
Wise & Millward (2005)	A qualitative methodology was employed. Data gathering was by means of semi-structured interviews.	10 participants had each experienced a voluntary career change during their 30s.	The purpose of the study was to discover the key psychological issues involved in voluntary career change in 30-somethings, with implications for career theory and guidance.	Three themes were generated. The first relates to issues of continuity and discontinuity during the change process, the second deals with participant's values directing the change, and the final theme covers the influence of context on the change process.

Ito & Brotheridge (2005)	Central career development unit supplied questionnaires to departmental contacts who in turn, distributed the questionnaires to employees within their departments.	Participants included 600 full-time employees in the prairie region of the Canadian federal civil service.	Employees are encouraged to become career-resilient and engage in career development activities to deal with changes in required knowledge, skills, and ability.	This study indicated anticipation in decision making [PDM] and autonomy, along with supervisory career support (information, advice, and encouragement), fostered career adaptability.
Lips-Wiersma & Hall (2007)	Qualitative, instrumental case study approach. Focus on the contemporary phenomenon of the new career in the context of real-life change.	Interview 50 individuals in total from eight work units	A prominent focus in this research has been whether and how, in an increasingly unpredictable career environment, individuals are taking responsibility for their own career development. The implication is that career is becoming less central to organization-al management practices.	This study identified five career development practices representing a 'career dance' between the two 'partners'—the employee and the organization. The practices are: Developing Capacity and Employability, Strategic Integration, Cultural Integration, Managing Diversity, and Communication.
Park & Rothwell (2009)	The Self-directed Career Management Scale, the DLOQ, and the Career Strategies Inventory were used.	The target population for this study included 298 staff from a Korean financial company for the current study.	This study assessed the individual protean career attitude and investigated the relationships between the protean career attitude and other variables.	The results provide useful information on the direct effects of career-enhancing strategy and work orientation on the protean career attitude.

Mahler, E. B. (2008)	This narrative study explores individual responses to the rapidly changing, highly technological, and global work environments of the 21st century.	10 men who made the intentional decision to move from a career with all the socially defined external trappings of success to one that was more personally defined as successful.	Its purpose was to better understand how individuals make sense of a work role transition, a change that suggests a realignment of social and psychological indicators of career success to support an evolving adult identity structure. A work role transition was "unpacked" and analyzed through the lens of the individual psychosocial needs that both drive and are driven by the transition process.	Six conclusions emerge from this study. First, adult development is a lifelong process that consists of both change and stability. Second, work plays a central role in the evolution of identity in adulthood. Third, the contemporary career context is a critical element in understanding the relationship between identity and careers. Fourth, the alignment of personal ideologies with the work role promotes positive self-perception. Fifth, learning promotes adult development, perhaps particularly in times of change. Sixth, both subjective and objective knowledge contribute to a holistic understanding of adult identity development, transitions, and careers.
Brown, Bimrose, Barnes, and Hughes (2012)	Semi-structured interviews were conducted by telephone, which enabled the collection of rich data on individuals' career pathways and transitions.	An explicitly qualitative evaluation of the career biographies of 64 adults across two contrasting country contexts, the UK and Norway (32 in	The research sought to represent the wide range of goals, aspirations, achievements and identities that shape the way that adults interact with, and move through, labor markets. It also highlighted the	Data analysis increased understanding of career adapt-abilities, how it is mediated and how it can be fostered. Four key dimensions emerged relating to the role of learning in developing career adapt-abilities at work: learning through

each) was undertaken.	dynamic ways in which adults engage with learning and development pathways, sometimes with transformational shifts in perspective as their careers unfold, often involving periods of up-skilling and/or re-skilling.	challenging work (including mastering the practical, cognitive and communicative demands linked with particular work roles and work processes); updating a substantive knowledge base (or mastering a new additional substantive knowledge base); learning through (and beyond) interactions at work; and being self-directed and self-reflexive.

Chapter Summary

This literature review has considered adult learning theory, individual career development, and organizational career literature to develop a conceptual framework to understand facilitating career adaptability. Seen from this perspective, the overarching issue is understanding how adults learn, and how organizations increase individuals' self-awareness in order to facilitate career adaptability while helping organizations accomplish their objectives in an increasingly complex, fast-paced world. A number of key themes for individuals and organizations have emerged.

For individuals:

1. There is a clear connection between self-awareness and the ability to modify behavior in order to develop to high levels of thinking.

2. Adult learning and leadership development is directly linked to career adaptability.

3. There are limitations to the extent adults will continue evolving through self-awareness, cognitive capacity, and continuous learning. Those limitations influence who receives facilitation towards career adaptability.

4. While individuals have a built-in immunity to change, there is evidence adults can and do adapt as a result of life experiences. Engaging in interventions designed to help adults develop a higher level of self-awareness can allow them to objectively assess their own behavior.

Hall and Moss (1998) summarize these themes clearly when they state:

The new career has become a continuous learning process. In particular, the person must learn how to develop self-knowledge and adaptability. We call these meta-competencies, but without self-awareness, adaptability could be a reactive process and produce what

Chris Argyris calls "Model 1" reactive change, while adaptability plus self-knowledge

promotes "Model 2" generative change. (p. 31)

The literature also revealed two consistent themes for organizations:

1. Organizations need to create systems and processes that identify high potential

    leaders. Then they must engage them in challenging work assignments at the

    appropriate level of development, which will spur individual growth and the growth

    of the organization. This plays an important role in facilitating career adaptability.

2. Facilitating career adaptability through activities which promote increased self-

    awareness and continuous learning appears to positively impact the success of

    organizations by helping develop leaders who can meet increasingly complex

    challenges over the horizon; however, there is also a downside for organizations that

    may lose top talent if they become less reliant on the organization.

De Vos, Dewettinck, and Buyens (2009), in summarizing the results of their research, show the

clear link between these themes:

In conclusion, this study indicates that both organizational and individual career

management initiatives are important in explaining employee outcomes. Both play a role

in explaining employees' level of commitment to the organization as well as their career

progress, while career self-management also enhances feelings of career success. (p. 77)

We have learned a great deal about the importance of career adaptability and the nature of it.

Two gaps in the literature have been identified. First is the gap that exists due to the discipline

bounded framework of current theories, which may be more powerful when viewed and applied

through a more integrated lens. Second is a gap in identifying developmentally targeted

interventions to facilitate career adaptability, and this study proposed to address these gaps.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to identify an individual's current stage of career adaptability and assess whether their capacity to move through the developmental tasks associated with career adaptability is enhanced by participating in interventions designed to increase their self-awareness and in alignment with adult developmental challenges. The three research questions guiding this study are (a) in what ways are individuals' capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced through focused interventions?, (b) how has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced the awareness of the action research team to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability?, and (c) how has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase an individual's capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability impacted the system?

This chapter describes the methodology utilized in this study and includes the following sections: design of the study, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness of the data.

Design of the Study

The methodology of the study was action research (AR). Stringer (2007) describes action research as a "systematic and rigorous investigation that allows people to understand the problem or event" (p. 4). Action research is also described as research in action, on action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). The study utilizes qualitative research methods for data collection and analysis.

The qualitative methods included collecting data from documents, notes, memos, meetings, and interviews.

Action Research Methodology

Action research is unique because it occurs concurrent to the action taking place, unlike traditional models where research often occurs on data collected following an event or intervention. Action Research is a cyclical process described by Coghlan and Brannick (2010) as consisting of four core processes, including Constructing, Planning Action, Taking Action, and Evaluating Action. A key feature of action research is the opportunity it provides to apply what is learned from the research to the next iterative cycle. As Herr and Anderson (2005) note, the plan, act, observe, and reflect process "forms an action research spiral in which each cycle increases the researchers' knowledge of the original question, puzzle, or problem and, it is hoped, leads to its solution" (p. 5).

Action research also provides organizations with an opportunity to examine their own practices on a deeper level. Stringer (2007) indicates action research helps organizations focus on "how things are happening, rather than merely on what is happening" (p. 19). This provides organizations with an opportunity to identify root issues and implement organizational change which may impact outcomes. Although an individual action research study is primarily focused on the needs of a specific firm, the findings may support the transformation of organizations in other contexts (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). As a result, action research has the potential to identify system level changes which can be exported to other organizations in different settings.

Perhaps the most unique feature of action research when compared to traditional research is the collaborative nature of AR. As Coghlan and Brannick (2010) indicate, action research is "an approach to problem solving, it is an application of the scientific method of fact-finding and

experimentation to practical problems requiring action solutions and involving the collaboration and cooperation of action researchers and members of the organizational system" (p. 5). In AR, Coghlan and Brannick (2010) believe collaboration between researchers and participants helps determine which methodology to use. AR is not just about the researcher; it is not just about the organization; it concerns all of the people and perspectives involved. Stringer (2007) says, "Stakeholder perspectives are placed alongside viewpoints found within the academic literature" (p.171). Building on the concept of engagement of relevant parties, Stringer states action research involves the "maximization of the involvement of all relevant individuals" (p. 35). This approach ensures an ongoing dialogue occurs between stakeholders and researchers throughout the process.

Due to the collaborative nature of AR, it is critical for the researcher to consider their positionality throughout the process. As Coghlan and Brannick (2010) say, "You as the researcher are yourself an instrument" (p. 31). As an active participant in the system, along with action research team members, the role of the researcher in the process is a vital point to consider because, as Herr and Anderson (2005) state, "AR is usually conducted in institutions which are nested in communities and are inherently political" (p. 64). Herr and Anderson go on to say:

When taking into account the context for the research question, it is not really possible to anticipate the direction the inquiry will take or the kinds of interest it will threaten or attract. Still it is a good idea for the individual insider researcher to consider the politics of their own contact and who—including themselves—they may be putting at risk through their inquiries. (p. 74)

Coghlan and Shani (2005) add:

There are ethical dilemmas attached to how action researchers hold their researcher and

their organizational action roles. In terms of the organizational action, they are bound to

provide a quality service to the organization's management; as researchers they have a

responsibility to go beyond the boundaries of the particular project to contribute to the

generation of knowledge." (p. 540)

Being mindful of these challenges, I trained myself to be a better action researcher by completing

several action research courses, attending an action research workshop conducted by David

Coghlan, and transparently discussing my dual roles with the action research team, the leadership

in my organization and the staff in my unit. Additionally, I pro-actively engaged in regular

conversations with my major professor to address ethical and political dilemmas.

It is important to consider the delicate nature of assuming such a role because research

sometimes reveals what some stakeholders do not want to hear. Most of the time, they already

know something is wrong but choose to ignore it for political, technical, or non-technical reasons

(Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). As an employee of the organization where the study occurred, I

was an insider researcher, which increased the complexity and potentially political nature of the

study. As a result, it was important to be fully aware of the multiple roles I played in the system.

To downplay or fail to acknowledge one's insider status is deception (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

As Coghlan (2007) explains, the context for insider action research is the strategic and

operational setting that employees of the organization confront in their managerial work lives.

Given the nature of insider action research, it is also important to acknowledge the political

dynamics at play. As Coughlan and Shani (2005) further describe, doing action research is

political. Indeed it might be considered subversive because it examines everything. It stresses

listening. It emphasizes questioning. It fosters courage. It incites action. It abets reflection and it

endorses democratic participation. These characteristics may be threatening to existing

organizational norms. As action researchers attempt to generate valid and useful information,

they may find what constitutes valid information is intensely political. Accordingly, action

researchers need to be politically astute.

However, it is important to note that the existence of politics is not necessarily a negative.

According to Coghlan and Brannick (2010), a recommended reflection for selecting the research

project is "the degree to which issue resolution offers the possibility of increasing your profile in

the organization" (p. 59). In fact, Herr and Anderson (2005) go on to say, "Anderson and Jones

found that when researchers authentically positioned themselves as insiders doing action

research or self-studies, they moved individual, organizational, and social transformation through

actions taken within the setting to the forefront" (p. 47). Understanding the political nature of

action research, I purposefully identified an area of study which had the potential to help the

organization in other areas beyond the scope of the study, was purposeful in the selection of

action research team members, and regularly kept senior leadership and the staff in my unit

informed of the progress of the study.

It is important for action researchers to make explicit their presence in the study. As Herr

and Anderson (2005) point out, "We must be aware of our own positions of power and how that

position may influence the process and the outcome of the research. This positionality will

determine how we frame epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues in the dissertation"

(p. 30). Along these lines, it is important to note, action research is very similar to consulting

which often creates a unique set of challenges. As Baskerville (1999) explains, both ethical and

professional problems can develop when researchers do not carefully explain their research

orientation to clients who expect consulting style performance. Ethical challenges also occur

regarding informed consent and the potential for researchers to become embroiled in the problem setting, and lose contact with their obligation to develop general knowledge about related theories. As a result, throughout the study, I took proactive steps beyond simply being aware of my own biases, positionality, and insider status to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Actions included journaling, identifying trusted advisors with experience conducting action research, and regularly conferring with my major professor regarding the research process. Furthermore, in an effort to increase transparency and trust within the action research team, I shared with them the proactive steps I took and encouraged them to ask questions regarding my positionality throughout the process. As Herr and Anderson (2005) explain, we should build in self-reflective structures that inform the research community of how and what we learned using tools such as journals and diaries. Besides a dissertation committee, most action researchers also seek independent critical friends, which I did too, to help problematize the taken-for-granted aspects of their setting. This is an additional step I also took to counter possible bias.

Action research is not without limitations. As Baskerville (1999) indicates, "It is parked solidly outside the valid positivist techniques. Its qualitative and interpretive foundations make journal length articles difficult" (p. 25). Another limitation of action research is highlighted by Baskerville (1999) when he says the action research collaborative framework diminished the researcher's ability to control the process and the outcomes of the research. Further exacerbating this control issue, participatory action research empowers client members of the research team with partial control over theoretical developments.

Limits to validity also exist when conducting action research. As Checkland and Holwell (1998) explain, the power of the scientific method is the ability of others to replicate their results and make the findings public, but later the concept emerged of a researcher immersing oneself in

a human situation and following it along whatever path it takes as it unfolds through time. Social phenomena are not "homogeneous through time" thus the idea of taking part in change in organizations as a basis for research in the social world. This means the only certain object of research becomes the change process itself. This approach is something which worries natural scientists and those who would emulate their method of inquiry. In order to address the issue of replicating results and enhance the validity of action research, Checkland and Holwell (1998) suggest all research contain a framework, methodology, and area of concern, which they call F, M, and A. These elements are susceptible to change during the research process, as the researcher becomes involved in the flux of real-world social situations. This susceptibility leads to what is perhaps the most important principle in action research: naming the elements F, M, and A in advance provides the intellectual structure which will lead to findings and research lessons being recognized as such." Checkland and Holwell (1998) also point out, "Since any organizational situation at a particular time, with its particular participants having their own individual or shared histories, may be unique it cannot be guaranteed that the results can be made richly meaningful to people in other situations" (p. 17). Checkland and Holwell (1998) go on to say action researchers should declare this methodology in advance in such a way that the process is recoverable by anyone interested in subjecting the research to critical scrutiny. By doing so, well-organized action research has a truth claim less strong that that of laboratory experimentation, but one much stronger than that of mere plausibility. Furthermore, action research can lead to results which can be generalized and transferred to other situations. However, action research cannot aspire to the same claim of validity as that associated with natural science. Despite these limitations Baskerville (1999) indicates action research "provides a rewarding experience for researchers who want to work closely with the practitioner community"

(p. 26). In order to ensure the validity of this action research study, I worked closely with my major professor and action research team to declare in advance of the study the framework, methodology and area of concern. Although no action research study can be replicated, by declaring these elements in advance, I ensured the study is recoverable.

Action research also offers the opportunity for individual professional development to occur along with organizational transformation. As Stringer (2007) says about action research, "It is valuable in that it is diverse. It lends itself to individual, group, community, and organizational change" (p. 1). Individuals engaged in action research develop as a result of the learning. The process essentially focuses on a learning approach to solving problems at work and in organizations. Through work in peer learning groups, participants select issues, examine them, make plans, take action, and reflect on that action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). From a broader perspective, in AR, individuals view the world as changing. However, their views are framed by understanding themselves, their experiences, their relational world, and their knowledge (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 50). In this study, the researcher facilitated learning within the action research team by encouraging open dialogue and debate. In addition, ample time was allocated for discussion of external events and experiences impacting team members throughout the process. Learning was further encouraged through challenging the action research team to consider how they might play a role in developing and delivering some of the interventions. Perhaps the best example which demonstrates that learning occurred within the team was the collaboration to present ideas we developed about integrating career adaptability into the EMBA program at a conference in Paris.

Action research is appropriate for this study because it is an intervention that addresses a practitioner based problem. This action research study is anchored in a qualitative perspective in

order to develop a deeper understanding of the underlying problem, which, according to Stringer (2007), is the basis of action research. The qualitative data utilized in the study was exploratory. The quantitative data utilized was generated by the work of the action research team for use as a diagnostic to develop the interventions.

Qualitative Research Methods

As Merriam (2009) indicates, qualitative research has been influenced by a variety of philosophical, disciplinary, and historical forces, but it is most often located in interpretive research. The essence of qualitative research according to Merriam is that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p.5). Merriam adds that qualitative research "assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event. Researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it" (p. 9).

Qualitative research includes a variety of approaches. As Patton (2002) states, "qualitative inquiry is no single, monolithic approach to research and evaluation" (p.76). Nevertheless, Merriam (2009) identifies four core elements:

The following four characteristics are identified by most as key to understanding the nature of qualitative research: the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive. (p.14)

Merriam captures the essence of the first characteristic of qualitative research when she says, "Basically, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world" (p.13). Patton further explains

qualitative research can "capture and communicate someone else's experience of the world in his or her own words" (p.47). The second characteristic is explained by Merriam when she says, "the human instrument which is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive, would seem to be the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data" (p. 15).

Third, qualitative research is inductive. As Merriam (2009) says, "Often qualitative researchers undertake a qualitative study because there is a lack of theory or an existing theory fails to adequately explain a phenomenon" (p.15). In fact, this was precisely the case in this study in that existing individual theories of career development, adult learning, and leadership development did not adequately explain the current phenomenon of career adaptability. Merriam describes qualitative researchers as building toward theory based on observations and intuitive understanding gleaned from being in the field. Pieces of data are organized into themes as the researcher moves from the particular to the general.

Fourth, qualitative research produces a rich description of the area of inquiry. As Patton (2002) explains, qualitative research which focuses on smaller samples, selected with purpose and considered information rich can permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in-depth. Merriam (2009) explains, "Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon. . . . There are likely to be descriptions of the context, the participants involved, and the activities of interest" (p. 16).

Research Design Rationale

As a practitioner, in a role which required me to work closely with faculty and senior leaders to address complex and emerging challenges in a results-oriented environment, I found myself searching for new ways to solve problems. Specifically, I wanted to learn how to enhance my understanding of career adaptability and capacity to design interventions that facilitate career

adaptability of early-to-mid career professionals. In addition, I sought to increase the organization's capacity to deliver these interventions to its students because it was clear this was a core, ongoing challenge in my role, and for the college as a whole. Additionally, there was a need to enhance my own capacity in order to lead this organizational change which led me to enroll in a doctoral program. The research site, described in detail in the next section, is a large, public southeastern business school that attracts a significant number of early to mid-career professionals seeking career change.

Holding a leadership role in the college gave me the opportunity to establish a research study and facilitated agreement of project stakeholders to engage in the action research study. Action research was the method selected for this study because it provided a unique opportunity to engage with colleagues, develop a deeper understanding of a common challenge, and work collaboratively to develop and implement interventions, reflect on the outcomes, and refine future interventions in order to help the system achieve better outcomes. As an emerging scholar-practitioner, with an interest in the development of new theory to add to the overall knowledge base, I found AR provided the potential to add to the knowledge base while maintaining an emphasis on action. Stringer (2007) best summarizes this when he says, "If an action research project does not make a difference in a specific way, for practitioners or their clients, then it has failed to achieve its objective" (p. 132).

Action research was the appropriate methodology for the study because as Coghlan and Brannick (2010) state, "As an insider action researcher, you are engaged in first person research, using your pre-understanding of organizational knowledge and organizational studies for your own personal and professional development" (p.112) From an organizational perspective, AR was appropriate because, as Coghlan and Brannick explain, you are engaged in second person

research on issues of concern to your organization and third person research by generating understanding and theory based on the experience. Additional support for this view is provided when Stringer (2007) says, "Researchers seek to empower principal stakeholders by engaging them as active participants in all phases of the research project, including the planning and implementing processes" (p.171). By engaging in AR as an insider within my own organization, I provided myself and the organization with an opportunity to learn more about an existing phenomenon utilizing a methodology with the potential to facilitate the development of myself and the system.

<div align="center">**Sample Selection**</div>

Southeastern Business School (SBS) served as the host for this research study. SBS is a large, public university, with multiple campuses located throughout a major metropolitan area. In addition, at the time of the study, SBS was in the midst of expanding a number of graduate programs. The expansion meant SBS was attracting an increasing number of early to mid-career professionals returning to graduate programs to seek career change and advancement in the midst of a prolonged economic downturn. Three senior SBS faculty who serve in leadership roles provided support and input for the project.

The sample for this study was a purposeful, convenience sample. This site was purposely selected for the study due to our interest in studying the phenomenon of facilitating career adaptability with a very specific group of individuals who were engaged in career exploration. Merriam (2009) says, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 77). Given the time constraints of the action research team, this site was selected because it also provided a convenience sample. Merriam (2009) goes on to explain that

"convenience sampling is just what is implied by the term—you select a sample based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents, and so on" (p. 79). As an insider conducting research in my own organization, the research site was purposeful and convenient in that it allowed us to study a population where the phenomenon was occurring and some level of organization interest already existed.

Study participants for the action research study were recruited from the two cohorts of currently enrolled students in SBS's Executive MBA (EMBA) program. The first cohort graduated in January 2013 and the second will graduate in January 2014. IRB approval for this study was received from the University of Georgia and from the host university. Once the IRB approvals were received, all cohort members were informed of the study through in-person announcements prior to the beginning of class by the researcher. EMBA students were given an overview of the study and an informed consent form that contained a detailed description of the research design and clearly indicated the time commitment required (see Appendix A).

Between the two cohorts, 34 students expressed an interest in participating in the study and returned signed consent forms. In addition, four faculty and staff members, including myself, agreed to form an action research team in order to guide the research study.

The sample of students selected for this research were those who took the two assessments [N = 30]; those who volunteered to attend the workshops [N = 30]; and those from among the previous group who agreed to participate in a critical incident interview [N = 9]. Finally, the sample included the members of the AR team [N = 3].

Data Collection

Throughout the study, data was collected and used to inform the design of the project. Field notes, researcher memos, transcribed action research team meeting notes, data from self-

assessment instruments, and critical incident interviews were utilized to collect data. This section provides a detailed review of the methods used to collect data and explains how each data set informed subsequent cycles of action.

The action research team developed a plan to collect data which would address our research questions. First, study participants completed an initial ACCI assessment as a diagnostic and engaged in a workshop to discuss their results and the underlying theory. Next, participants completed the LDP instrument, and then participated in a workshop to debrief their results and learn about the adult development theory undergirding the instrument in order to enhance their self-awareness. Additional data was also collected through two sets of interviews conducted during the study. The first set was a subset of nine study participants who were interviewed following the completion of the assessments, the workshop, and individual coaching. Each member of this subset engaged in a narrative critical incident interview which was audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed in order to assess the extent to which their engagement in these interventions facilitated their career adaptability. When using the critical incident technique, participants are asked to recall a specific incident and provide the interviewer with a detailed description of the incident, describe the behaviors which occurred during the incident, and the results of the incident. The goal is to capture a detailed description of the behaviors of the participants in a specific situation, rather than generalizations or opinions. Ellinger and Watkins (1998) describe the value of a narrative approach when they state:

> What is significant to the approach we describe here is that one is still able to count behaviors and to detect patterns, but also to develop rich narratives of critical incidents that capture both context and meaning from the perspective of the respondents. (p. 291)

The second set of interviews was conducted with three action research team members at the conclusion of the study. These narrative critical incident interviews were also audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed. Data were gathered in the form of transcripts of AR team meetings, researcher memoranda following meetings, and phone calls with the action research team. Edvardsson (1992) points out that data collection regarding critical incidents can be done in many ways: by personal interviews, focus group interviews, and direct or participatory observation.

Lastly, researcher journal notes captured observations of participants in workshops and individual coaching sessions, as well as reflections from action research team meetings. See Table 5 for an overview of the research plan that guided data collection.

Although not always the case, Merriam (2009) says, "Ideally . . . the design of a qualitative study is emergent and flexible, responsive to changing conditions of the study in progress" (p. 16). This dynamic quality of qualitative research aligns well with the use of action research as the overarching methodology for this study.

Table 5

The Research Plan

Research Question	Data to be Collected	Analysis Approach
(1) In what ways are individuals' capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced through focused interventions?	Transcripts of Critical Interviews of study participants.	Constant comparative analysis; thematic coding
(2) How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced the awareness of the action research team to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability?	Transcripts of Critical Incident Interviews of action research team meetings.	Constant comparative analysis; thematic coding
(3) How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase an individual's capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability impacted the system?	Transcripts of Critical Incident Interviews of action research team members. Transcripts of action research team meetings and researcher journals.	Constant comparative analysis; thematic coding

Data Analysis

This study used an action research case study methodology with qualitative data. Initial data collected included the ACCI which was utilized as a diagnostic tool to help individual participants understand their current stage of career adaptation and provided the action research team with insight into how best to structure interventions. Study participants also completed the LDP assessment, participated in workshops, and engaged in individual career coaching sessions where they reviewed the results of the assessments, reflected on the workshops, and discussed

next steps for engaging in the developmental tasks of greatest concern to them as identified by the ACCI.

The critical incident interviews of participants and action research team members were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed utilizing the constant comparative method in order to identify common themes. Merriam (2009) notes why this inductive approach to data analysis is useful:

> It is my position that all qualitative data analysis is primarily inductive and comparative. I thus draw heavily from the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the means for developing grounded theory. However, constant comparative method is inductive and comparative and so has been widely used throughout qualitative research without building a grounded theory. (p. 175)

This data analysis procedure addressed the research questions by investigating whether the interventions helped to facilitate the career adaptability of the participants and how the perceptions of the action research team regarding facilitating career adaptability might have changed over time. In addition, the study assessed the impact the action research project had upon the client system.

Data Preparation

Interviews and action research team meetings were audiotaped and professionally transcribed. The transcribed documents were identified by date and participant names. In addition, formatting was reviewed and revised for consistency. The electronic files were named in a consistent scheme by date and stored in subfolders for consistency and easy retrieval.

After completing an initial review of the action research team meetings, it became clear that qualitative data analysis software would significantly accelerate the process of organizing

the more than 300 pages of data produced. HyperRESEARCH was selected for use in this study. Using HyperRESEARCH, I was able to highlight a section of text to code, create a code to associate with the text, and move quickly to the next section of text. Codes could be renamed and combined by the click of a button. In addition, the software provided a report writing feature that allowed the user to extract the text associated with specific codes, or groups of codes into a .txt file. HyperRESEARCH made the coding process intuitive and provided robust features that greatly enhanced the data reduction process.

Familiarization

The next step involved reviewing each document by hand in order to familiarize myself with the data. Prior to reviewing the documents, I developed an initial set of codes utilizing the research questions in order to guide the initial review and facilitate identification of key data points. Sections of data were highlighted and codes associated with them. In addition, I made notes in the margins to identify key insights and themes. Each document was reviewed at least twice until I became familiar enough with the data to identify clear themes emerging.

Coding

The third step was to begin segmenting the data. The codes were used to review the documents by hand, and, along with the notes from the familiarization process, informed the development of a master coding scheme which was loaded into HyperRESEARCH. The codes and sub-codes were organized by research question and numbered. This master coding scheme served as a starting point for the process of opening each document, referring to my notes from the initial review of the documents to help code the data, highlighting sections of text to code, creating a code for the text, or associating an existing code with the text.

As the coding evolved, I developed additional codes to reflect the themes emerging from the data. This transition signaled an initial move to begin making meaning of the data. As Merriam (2009) explains, qualitative research explores "emic," or the insider's perspective, versus that of the outsider, known as "etic" (p. 14). This process continued as I coded each document page by page.

Generating Meaning

After coding each document, I used the report writing feature in HyperRESEARCH to create a master document for each code. This process included selecting all of the codes associated with each of the three research questions, exporting the data as .txt file, and then converting it to a Microsoft Word document. Then I removed extraneous formatting and saved the "clean" document. This resulted in three documents organized by research question. Each one included all the related coded text, enabling me to begin the meaning-making process. These documents were printed and reviewed by hand, paying particular attention to identifying redundancy of quotes, combining codes where there was similarity. After reviewing the master document for each code, I was able to use HyperRESEARCH to reduce the data by refining the sections highlighted, and eliminate or combine sub-codes. This process was similar to Ruona's (2005) method and facilitated "group-level" analysis which led to the emergence of overarching themes to inform the research questions and allowed me to begin the data reduction process and make meaning from multiple data sources.

<center>

Trustworthiness of Data

</center>

According to Stringer (2007) trustworthiness of data is established when multiple sources of information are incorporated. As Stringer says:

Rigor in action research is based on checks to ensure that the outcomes of research are

trustworthy—that they do not merely reflect the particular perspectives, biases, or

worldview of the researcher and that they are not based solely on superficial or simplistic

analyses of issues investigated. (p. 57)

This section provides information about the trustworthiness of the action research team process,

details the reliability and validity of instruments, describes steps taken to ensure trustworthiness

of the qualitative methods in the research including an audit trail, and ends with discussion of the

positionality of the researcher.

Action Research Team Process

Transcripts from action research team meetings, researcher notes, and critical incident

interviews, along with member checks form the data to evaluate the work of the AR team's

efforts to address the research questions in the study. According to Merriam (2009), using

multiple data sources allows for triangulation of the data and strengthens internal validity.

Additionally, an audit trail of the process was developed, which according to Stringer (2007)

adds confirmability to the study. An audit trail of steps taken in the research, including sample

selection, data collection, data reduction, and data analysis, along with member checks are

faithfully reported here. In addition, dependability in the study was established by maintaining

regular contact with my advisor, Dr. Karen E. Watkins, through in-person meetings, phone calls,

and emails. Additionally, meetings with trusted advisors were audiotaped for further reflection.

In all, these interactions provide confirmation of the process in the study to establish

dependability and ensure trustworthiness.

Position of Researcher

As the leader of career services within SBS, I was aware new interventions to facilitate career adaptability needed to be developed and additional support from program managers and senior leaders must be secured in order to more fully support students' desires to advance their careers. Graduate schools of business actively promote career advancement in their value proposition to prospective candidates. In addition, the job market is very challenging. As a result, schools have a responsibility to pro-actively offer interventions which facilitate career adaptability. However, questions exist regarding what interventions are most effective. How can these interventions best be integrated into a program? If these questions can be resolved, can the system scale these interventions across multiple programs? These are the questions which led me to engage in action research as an insider within my organization.

I was also mindful of my role in developing and implementing interventions to date which have been modestly successful. As a result, I was cognizant of a potential bias to defend the status quo which did not offer in-depth use of assessments and workshops, or to engage in too much advocacy, as I engaged with the action research team and discussed new interventions. As an insider action researcher, my role in the study helped shape the process, data collection, and findings. As a leader within the organization, I was able to engage colleagues with similar interests and invite them to become part of an action research team to explore the phenomenon of career adaptability. However, the action research team consisted of two colleagues I work with on other projects and a subordinate in my unit. As a result, I was transparent with the action research team regarding the multiple roles at play and made it clear my intention was to separate additional project and work responsibilities.

Ultimately, my role on the action research team influenced the process and outcome of the study. As Stringer (2007) describes, the role of the researcher in action research is of a participant who is actively engaged in directing the inquiry. My insider status required me to pro-actively manage these roles and relationships in order to exercise a high degree of interpersonal communication and political savvy in order to navigate this path successfully when challenges arose. For example, it was important to be aware of how my work role might impact potential study participants' responses to efforts to recruit them. When conducting the critical incident interviews, participants could have been reluctant to provide honest feedback for fear of offending me and thinking I might not be as helpful to them in their future job search. As a result, these potential issues were made explicit on the informed consent form and through my comments that not participating in the study or providing negative feedback about the interventions offered as part of the study would not negatively impact my efforts to help them advance their career.

Beyond the potential impact of my position of authority within the College, and my insider/outsider status, I am also aware of the impact my positionality as a white male in his early 40's pursuing a terminal degree from a prestigious academic institution could have had on the study. In order to ensure trustworthiness, as Coghlan and Brannick (2010) explain, it is important to reflect on my role in the study, to examine and integrate my experiences and understanding of them, in order to inform and improve future actions. For example, many of the study participants could perceive me as biased based on any one of these factors. In order to avoid interpreting data through the lens of my own positionality, I intentionally developed an action research team which included a diversity of age, race, and gender and encouraged them to address any issues of positionality.

Critical Incident Interviews

This study collected a significant amount of data through critical incident interviews with study participants and action research team members. According to Ruona (2005) qualitative research aims to gather participants' perceptions and meanings through and in their own words and by analyzing those words the researcher interprets the participants' meanings. In order to ensure trustworthiness of the data, my focus was on conducting the interviews, managing and analyzing the data in an ethical manner. This approach is supported by Merriam (2009) who states, "Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner" (p. 209).

There are a number of strategies qualitative researchers can utilize to enhance the trustworthiness of the data including triangulation, member checks (described below), adequate engagement in data collection, researcher's position or reflexivity, peer review, audit trail, rich descriptions, and maximum variation. In this study, I utilized all of these, with the exception of maximum variation, to ensure rigor and high ethical standards were maintained. For example, in order to avoid surface level analysis of the data collected, and ensure the findings did not simply reflect the views of the researcher, a combination of checks were put in place, and a combination of pro-active steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of data collected throughout the study. The action research team process included team meetings which were audio taped and transcribed, researcher memos, and member checks. In addition, the researcher's insider status and positionality was pro-actively addressed and multiple roles were discussed openly to prevent bias from impacting the study. I also made journal entries throughout the process and engaged a group of trusted advisors to help me address ethical dilemmas that emerged. Furthermore, the researcher was in regular communication with their advisor, Dr. Karen E. Watkins. Finally, team

members engaged in critical incident interviews that were also transcribed. Together, these components formed an audit trail documenting the process. The reliability and validity of the instruments used was established prior to use in the study.

Member Checks

Merriam (2009) describes member checks as solicitation of feedback on emergent findings from the people who were interviewed. In this study, action research team members provided feedback on the reliability and validity of the ACCI and LDP instruments during a debrief session when we reviewed our results. In addition, all qualitative data was generated from audio taped conversations, transcribed, coded and written up in the findings. In order to avoid misrepresentation of the action research team members I provided each member with a draft of the sections of this document where they were quoted. Team members were given a week to review their quotes and provide any comments or revisions via email to the researcher. Two responded by indicating they received the documents, but did not send any comments or suggested changes. One member responded by refining several of their quotes in order to clarify quotes that lacked clarity and to capture the essence of their spoken thoughts. As Stringer (2007) indicates an advantage of member checking is providing participants with the opportunity to not only review the research but to extend information related to their experience. The action research team members suggested changes have been reviewed and revised by the researcher in the final document.

Instrumentation

The ACCI and LDP assessments were selected by the action research team to use as a diagnostic to create developmentally targeted interventions. The ACCI is a 61-item instrument, which can be completed online in 30-60 minutes, and is designed to assess the level of concern

an individual has for the developmental tasks of the four career stages of exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement (Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988). Each career stage includes three tasks which respondents rate in terms of level of concern using a five point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = no concern to 5 = great concern with the associated task. Validity and reliability of this instrument was established by Halpin, Ralph and Halpin (1990) who conducted a study of 169 graduate nursing students. The reliability measures of the current instrument (i.e., ACCI form) were found to possess "alpha reliability coefficients of .95, .95, .94, .93, and .94 for exploration, establishment, maintenance, disengagement, and career change on the Adult Career Concerns Inventory" (p. 199). Halpin et al. go on to provide support for the internal validity of the ACCI when they state:

> It seems that the ACCI measures what it was designed to measure, that is, it was valid for this group of graduate nursing students. Furthermore, given the ages (M = 37 years) of the participants in this study and the fact that they were returning to college to seek an advanced degree, it might be predicted that these participants had undergone or were undergoing a period of career indecision. Their responses to the vocational development measures in the current study seem to support this postulation. (p. 200)

Additional support for the trustworthiness of data collected through this assessment is found when Niles, Anderson, Hartung, and Staton (1999) indicate, "The validity of the ACCI has also been supported by studies using both corporate and academic employees as participants (Cron & Slocum, 1986; Mahoney, 1986)" (p. 176). In summary, the validity and reliability of the ACCI has been documented through a number of studies over an extended period of time.

The second instrument used was the Leadership Development Profile (LDP) available through Harthill. Torbert and Livne-Tarandach (2009) describe the LDP by stating:

The current version of LDP includes thirty-six open-ended sentence stems that, upon

completion by participants into sentences, enable one to measure adult action-logics. The

HLDP evolved out of Loevinger's WUSCT (Loevinger, Wessler, and Redmore, 1970),

and now includes 24 of Loevinger's original items along with 12 new items designed to

improve Loevinger's original test in a number of ways. (p. 134)

The reliability and validity of this instrument has been demonstrated throughout its evolution.

The 2004 Torbert & Associates book, *Action Inquiry: The Secret of Timely and Transforming*

Leadership, has an 18-page appendix on the history of the LDP which contains several

quantitative studies particularly testing the reliability of Loevinger's WUSCT, from which the

LDP has evolved (Torbert and Livne-Tarandach, 2009). It is important to note, additional

research on the reliability of the assessment as it evolves has been conducted. As Torbert and

Livne-Tarandach state:

Moreover, as the LDP includes six new stems, we assessed the extent to which these

stems contribute rather than dilute the LDP assessment. To do so we explored the

correlation between the six new added stems and the final profile scores and found that

these correlations were relatively high (.86-.89), and that these were equal to or higher

than the correlation found in previously used stems. This suggests that the newly

introduced stems have added to the reliability of the measure and therefore seem to be

adding to, not subtracting from the reliability of total profile scores. (p. 136)

One of the unique elements of this instrument is the responses are interpreted by highly trained

raters. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, since 2005 Harthill has conducted a

further series of six reliability tests to date among the LDP's current raters. The results, based on

891 distinct profiles from 2005-2008 generated a Cronbach's alpha of .906 indicating a high

internal consistency (Torbert and Livne-Tarandach, 2009). Perhaps Torbert and Livne-Tarandach best summarize validity and reliability of this instrument by stating:

> Why is the LDP, based on the theory, practice, and method of Developmental Action Inquiry, so powerful in explaining real-life questions like which leaders succeed in supporting organizational transformation of organizations of moderate size? We believe it is in part because of the empirical reliability and validity of the LDP as a metric, a well calibrated measure that is grounded in extensive empirical evidence of its reliability and validity, as gathered together in this article. (p. 148)

Although the LDP has evolved and been modified significantly over time, the research conducted to assess reliability and validity indicates the trustworthiness of the data collected by this instrument remains high.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study was the small sample size of 30 participants. Recruiting participants from one EMBA program at a single business school was also a limitation. Future studies might consider including more participants from a variety of graduate business programs across multiple institutions in order to address regional or institutional biases. Although a number of pro-active steps were taken to ensure the qualitative interview data was collected, analyzed, interpreted and reported in a reliable and valid fashion there are limits to this process. Positionality of the researcher and action research team are also limiting factors of the study. Future studies of this nature might consider utilizing a pre and post assessment of career adaptability in order to further validate qualitative findings.

CHAPTER 4

THE STORY OF THE SBS ACTION RESEARCH TEAM

The story began early in the doctoral program when I realized action research was a vehicle to explore the challenge of facilitating career adaptability. My next step was to engage key stakeholders throughout SBS including the EMBA program director, faculty, career services staff, Assistant Deans, Associate Deans, and the College Dean in this collaborative research process. Engaging in a review of the literature enabled me to develop a deeper understanding of the current research on the constructs of career adaptability and adult development. Although significant work had been done in these areas, it appeared little work had been done to understand how to facilitate career adaptability and to investigate whether there were connections to between career adaptability and adult development. This gap formed the basis to engage in an action research study designed to explore these questions.

The Action Research Team[1]

As an action research project, the design of the study, interventions developed, data gathered, findings, and implications relied on active involvement of the members of the action research team. Additionally, as an insider leading action research in an organization embarking on a strategic planning process, considerable thought was given to the outcomes I hoped to achieve on the individual, unit, and organizational levels as a result of the process.

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[1] All names used in this section are pseudonyms.

After completing the literature review, I engaged in a series of discussions with my trusted advisors for input on who to approach and how best to frame the benefits of engaging in this action research study. Their input helped me clearly identify potential team members who likely shared my research interests and were likely to see their participation benefitting them professionally. In addition, gathering input prior to holding initial meetings helped refine my approach.

The Recruitment Process

Through individual meetings I invited three key organizational members to form the Action Research team. First was the EMBA program director, who had been in her role less than two years. Next was a faculty member who teaches EMBA leadership development courses and also leads the Center for Ethics and Corporate Responsibility. Third was the EMBA career counselor who recently left a privately held executive search and coaching practice to join SBS. In addition to occupying key roles within SBS, the EMBA program director and the faculty member each earned a Ph.D. outside of traditional business disciplines. Furthermore, each individual had significant previous experience in both corporate and higher education settings, which added to the quality of interaction throughout the process.

After meeting individually, additional follow-up via email occurred to secure team member commitments and consent. In August 2011, our four-person action research team was formed; our goal was to increase the organization's awareness to the challenge of facilitating career adaptability by exploring the phenomenon and developing interventions to implement in the study.

The Team Members

The EMBA program director, Leslie, joined SBS in October 2009. After earning her Ph.D., Leslie worked as a journal editor and program manager for a branding consulting firm. In addition, she had also served in leadership roles in education and non-profits. Leslie entered this role following the relocation of the EMBA program to a conveniently located, upscale location which helped revitalize the program. It was during the early stages of this move that I worked with the former EMBA program director to offer additional career services to the EMBA population. The revitalization of the EMBA program, along with others new initiatives within SBS, led to movement of the former EMBA program director into a more senior role and ultimately created the vacancy which Leslie filled. Her relatively new status provided an opportunity to collaborate as she sought to continue to improve the program going forward. At the close of the study, she had three years of experience as EMBA program director, during which she expanded the program by adding a second cohort and made a variety of changes to the program.

The faculty member, Ryan, joined SBS in 2007 through the creation of the Center of Ethics and Corporate Responsibility. Previously, Ryan led a consulting practice which provided training and executive coaching to senior managers for over a decade. In addition, after earning his Ph.D., Ryan was an organization and management instructor for several years at a highly competitive, private business school in the southeast. Ryan and I connected early in his tenure at SBS when he introduced me to the work of Lombardo and Eichinger on competencies and their connection to career development, particularly at the mid-to-senior levels. In fact, Ryan and I collaborated on a workshop for the EMBA students early in his tenure at SBS on the topic of behavioral interviewing and the connection to competencies. Making this connection was one of

the key experiences that ultimately led me to enter a doctoral program. Ryan was well-grounded in the literature and research associated with leadership development, which, combined with his teaching and coaching experience, added significantly to the study. By the conclusion of the study, Ryan had created unique experiential programs in partnership with a branch of the military which many EMBA students participate in. Additionally, he became the academic director of innovation programs for SBS. Ryan's deep background in leadership development and his commitment to innovation contributed to the action research process and created a learning opportunity for him.

The EMBA career counselor, Troy, joined SBS in 2011. He had spent the previous decade as a partner in an executive search and career coaching business that specialized in diversity staffing and mid-to-senior level professionals. Troy earned his undergraduate and master's degrees from highly ranked, private schools in the Midwest and held a series of product manager roles with several of the largest global consumer products firms. As SBS expanded the number of graduate programs targeting mid-career professionals seeking career advancement, a new career counselor role was created. Troy was hired to advise students in the EMBA program along with others based on his executive search, career coaching, and corporate experience. By the end of the action research process, Troy had two years of experience providing career services to hundreds of students in several graduate programs. As a new staff member learning the SBS culture and adapting his previous experience to the EMBA population, participating in the AR process provided a learning opportunity for him as well.

As the fourth member of the team, it is important to describe my role within SBS. I joined SBS in 2005 as Director of Graduate Placement where I was charged with reorganizing career services for SBS at the graduate level. Previously, I helped lead the turnaround of a large

centralized career services unit over a five year period at a large, competitive public university in the southeast. Before that, I started in career services in a centralized career center of a prestigious private university in the southeast. In that school over a five year period, I worked with top students and firms during the peak of college recruiting in the late 1990s. Soon after joining SBS, the scope of my role expanded to include support for undergraduates and alumni and I was promoted to Executive Director of the SBS Career Management Center. By the end of the study significant progress occurred through participation in the SBS strategic planning process and collaboration with action research team.

Finally, it is important to note that team membership remained the same throughout the entire process and senior leadership support was consistent, which enhanced the action research process.

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Action Research Process Timeline

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Once the team members were identified, the next step was scheduling a meeting where I introduced the construct of career adaptability in order to engage the team in an initial discussion about the underlying problem. The team spent the next several meetings discussing the problem, sharing common tension points, and developing trust within the group. This overview of the action research team's efforts aligns with Coghlan and Brannick (2010), who explain that in action research "collaboration between researchers and participants helps determine which methodology will be used" (p. 40).

Constructing: August 2011 – November 2011

Initial team meetings consisted of inquiry and dialogue about the team's understanding of the problem and the development of a common definition of career adaptability. Considerable time was spent inquiring about how to assess, facilitate, and measure career adaptability. The

team was particularly focused on identifying assessments to help understand study participants'

stage of career adaptability. This led to in-depth discussions of ACCI theoretical constructs and

exploration of connections to the LDP, which helped the action research team relate their own

knowledge of theoretical models to the study.

The two assessments the action research team decided to include in the study were the

Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI) and the Leadership Development Profile (LDP).

Although the action research team was confident about the reliability and validity of the ACCI

and LDP, we felt the assessments themselves were not sufficient as an intervention. The team

went on to brainstorm potential interventions to offer study participants and decided to utilize a

combination of assessments, workshops, and individual coaching. Furthermore, based on

feedback from the action research team and faculty advisor, we recruited additional participants

from a new cohort of EMBA students which increased the number of participants and created the

potential to compare and contrast results between the two cohorts.

During the constructing phase, the team was engaged in the literature, established a

shared sense of meaning, and reached consensus on the problem, purpose of the study, and

research questions. In addition, we collaborated to identify two assessments for use in the study,

brainstormed interventions, and saw that a research design was emerging.

Planning Action: December 2011 – April 2012

Initially, the action research team thought about offering the ACCI as a pre-test to

establish each participant's baseline stage of career adaptability. Then we would assign

participants to specific workshops to address the development tasks associated with the stages

participants indicated were of highest concern. The group also planned to have participants

complete the ACCI as a post-test to assess whether their stage of career adaptability changed as a

result of completing the interventions. The action research team believed the results of the ACCI would guide the use of the LDP and initially planned to have a select group of participants take the LDP assessment based on their ACCI results. There was also agreement that study participants and action research team members would also complete a critical incident interview which would be audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed.

Later in the planning action stage, the action research team made a key decision which would inform the process going forward. The team agreed we would each take both the ACCI and LDP ourselves, since we were considering offering them to study participants, and we would review our individual results together in order to better understand the assessments and the phenomenon of career adaptability. This led to two significant changes in the research design and accelerated our efforts to develop a shared understanding of the phenomenon of career adaptability.

The first change we made after reviewing our results was deciding to use the ACCI as a diagnostic, instead of a pre-test and post-test. We envisioned utilizing the data to assign participants to specific workshops targeted at the development tasks associated with their stage of greatest concern. Additionally, we decided to launch the study with an ACCI workshop for participants where we would debrief their results and introduce the theory of career adaptability. Participants would also be required to engage in an initial individual coaching session to review their ACCI results in more detail, in order to clearly identity their primary developmental stage of concern. These adjustments were intended to provide the action research team with additional data to inform our decisions regarding which workshops individual participants would be assigned to.

The second change resulted from looking at our own ACCI and LDP scores. Although the LDP utilizes a cognitive lens, whereas the ACCI utilizes a psycho-social lens, we concluded both share learning as a core construct and add to our understanding of one's career trajectory by providing insight into participants' current stage of adult development and career adaptability. By looking through both lenses in an integrated fashion, we were able to create developmentally targeted interventions. As a result, we decided all participants should take the LDP and engage in a workshop to understand their results. Based on our experience reviewing the ACCI and LDP, we thought participants might make important connections between career adaptability and adult development.

As our understanding of ACCI and LDP assessments increased, we understood how they could best be utilized in the study and made important adjustments. As I reflect on this stage of the study from an action research perspective, it seems after much discussion and several meetings, the group moved rapidly through the planning phase towards taking action once we made the decision to take the assessments ourselves and reviewed our results together. Through taking the instruments, we could see where our own development might be challenged. Stringer (2007) notes that in action research, the scholar-practitioners "seek to empower principal stakeholders by engaging them as active participants in all phases of the research process" (p. 171).

Taking Action: May 2012 – October 2012

Action began as participants completed the ACCI and LDP assessments and accelerated when the action research team met to review the data. Table 6 illustrates the participant data reviewed by the team, sorted by the highest to lowest score in the ACCI exploration stage.

Table 6

ACCI and LDP Participant Data

ACCI Exploration	ACCI Establishment	ACCI Maintenance	ACCI Disengagement	LDP Results Summary
4.93	3.6	4.53	3.87	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert back-up
4.67	4.13	3.33	3.4	3/4-3 Expert-Diplomat backup, moving to Achiever 4
4.47	2.87	3.67	3.53	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert back-up
4.07	3.53	3.93	3.33	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
3.67	2.33	2.07	1.33	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
3.67	1.73	1.6	2.93	3/4 - Diplomat moving to Expert ¾
3.6	3.33	2.87	4.27	4/5-4 Individ - Achiever back-up, moving to Strategist 5
3.47	3.6	3.87	4.07	4/5-4 Indvid., Achiever back-up, moving to Strategist 5
3.47	2.6	2.27	2.93	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
3.4	3.07	2.73	2.47	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
3.4	3.47	2.87	2.8	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
3.4	2.27	2.53	2.67	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
3.27	2.27	2.13	3.07	5-4/5 Strategist-Individ, Achiever backup
3.2	3.2	2.8	2.33	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
3.07	3.8	3.93	2.53	4/5-4 Individ.-Achiever backup, moving to Strategist 5
3.07	2	2.07	1.33	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
3.07	2.93	3.07	3.87	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5

3	2.87	3.13	1.4	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert back-up
2.93	3.73	2.73	2.27	5-4/5 Strategist-Individ. Backup - moving to Magician*AR Team
2.93	1.93	1.47	1.8	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
2.87	2.6	2.53	1.47	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
2.8	2.6	3.47	2.4	4/5-4 Indvid., Achiever back-up, moving to Strategist 5
2.33	2.67	2.47	3.07	3/4-3 Expert-Diplomat backup, moving to Achiever 4
2.27	2.53	1.13	1.4	5-4/5 Strategist-Individ. Backup*AR Team
2.13	2.13	2.07	3.47	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
2.07	2.33	3.47	2.8	3/4 - 3 Expert, Diplomat backup, moving to Achiever 4
1.87	1.13	1.2	1.67	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
1.73	2.2	2.13	2.67	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
1.73	1	1.13	1.2	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert backup
1.67	2.07	2.73	2.47	5-4/5 Strategist-Individ. Backup*AR Team
1.6	1.67	2.73	2.33	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
1.4	1.4	1.6	2.2	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5
1.33	2.67	2.8	3.47	4-3/4 Achiever-Expert moving to Individ 4/5*AR Team

When the action research team reviewed the data, we immediately noted 14 participants showed ACCI results high in disengagement and exploration. This informed the development of the interventions to ensure we provided content to address the developmental task associated with these stages. In addition, we noticed 23 of participants, or 76%, were in the Achiever stage to one degree or another. In comparison, Table 1, which represents LDP scores from a larger sample, indicates only 30% were in the Achiever stage. This resonated with one action research team member in particular who, as we reviewed the data, noted many of the same individuals with ACCI results that were high in exploration and disengagement also had LDP results which indicated they were in the "achiever" stage moving to the "individualist" stage, which is often described as "feeling stuck." In order to address this developmental challenge, we decided to focus our interventions on increasing participants' self-awareness. As we scanned the data, we recognized the ACCI and LDP results did not appear to be correlated because participants with identical LDP results had a wide range of ACCI scores. It is also important to note, later the ACCI and LDP data was analyzed to determine whether a correlation existed between the two instruments. The results indicated there was no correlation, which provides further evidence the instruments are based on different constructs.

After reviewing participants' ACCI and LDP results as a team, we made several important refinements to the research design and quickly took action. Given the trends in data and time constraints of the study, we realized developmental transitions do not occur in this fashion, and on the advice of my committee, we decided not to make the workshops voluntary rather than assigning subsets of study participants to specific workshops. As a result, we decided to use the ACCI and LDP data to help us understand the developmental needs of the group and

think more deeply about how to develop workshops targeted to the core developmental needs of the participants.

As the action research team came to this conclusion, we began to make connections between our growing understanding of the phenomenon of career adaptability and our prior experience developing interventions in other settings. As a result, we decided to offer three workshops designed primarily to address the developmental tasks associated with the exploration and disengagement stages of career adaptability. In addition, we agreed to offer participants the opportunity to engage in additional individual coaching sessions throughout the study. As we came to agreement on these refinements, the team offered to adapt and lead workshops they were familiar with to meet the developmental needs of study participants.

The refinements to the research design, which I validated with my faculty advisor, significantly improved the study itself, and opened the door to future iterative cycles of action research. Action research is *powerful*, says Stringer (2007) "because of its ability to allow researchers to tentatively state the problem, then refine and reframe the study by continuing iterations of the Look-Think-Act research cycle" (p. 239). The combination of developing a deeper understanding of the theory behind the ACCI, deciding to use it as a diagnostic, informed by an initial coaching session, and refining the research design led the action research team to feel empowered to identify workshops they were familiar with and to lead them as interventions in the study.

Evaluating Action: November 2012 – December 2012

As the taking action phase came to close, the group made plans to evaluate the action. The action research team decided to evaluate the action in several ways. The first was interviewing a subset of study participants following the completion of the assessments,

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workshops, and individual coaching. The second was interviewing action research team members at the conclusion of the study. In addition, through our interaction with study participants in workshops and coaching sessions, the action research team also made informal observations which provided additional insight into the impact of the study; these were captured in action research team meetings which were audio taped and transcribed. Evaluating the action led to discussion within the team during our final action research team meetings about how to implement components of the study going forward. We also began to consider how additional research in this area of inquiry might continue. Since the study concluded, commitments have been made to integrate the ACCI and an initial workshop into the EMBA residency beginning August 2013, followed by a series of workshops offered to interested students who will commit to participating in them throughout the program.

As I reflect, reviewing ACCI and LDP results within the AR team led to adjustments to workshop content in order to more closely meet developmental challenges of the group. Perhaps the most significant adjustment was our move to debrief ACCI results at the beginning of the study and introduce the underlying theory, which created deeper understanding and commitment by participants. It seems the evolution of our research design is a classic example of Coghlan and Brannick's (2010) description of action research as "a four-step cyclical process of planning, taking action, evaluating the action, and leading to further planning" (p. 5).

Group Dynamics

As a researcher, it is also important to analyze the action research team process from a group dynamics perspective in order to assess the impact of the process on the individuals and begin to consider the impact on the organization. In order to do so, I utilized the Stages of Group Development developed by Tuckman (1965) and Tuckman & Jensen (1977). Tuckman and

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Jensen (1977) describe these stages as (a) *forming*, (b) *storming*, (c) *norming*, and (d) *performing*. Furthermore, these authors added a fifth stage to the original model, *adjourning*, which takes into consideration the overall life cycle of groups as they move towards completing their original task requirements. This fifth stage is becoming increasingly important as this action research team has been very interested in additional opportunities to work together in the future.

With these stages of group development in mind, I analyzed the action research team meeting transcriptions, meeting notes, and journals. The result is an analysis of the action research team group dynamics at each stage

Forming

The stages of group dynamics model by Tuckman & Jensen (1977) indicates the *forming stage* is focused on building the group's structure through testing and dependence, and focusing our energies on our orientation to the task. In this stage, group members may feel a sense of confusion and perhaps anxiety over the group's purpose. At this point the group established rules and norms for interaction and might feel dependent on the team facilitator to provide direction.

Initially the group relied on me to provide direction, but did recognize the potential value in collaborating for the sake of the EMBA program. Early in the process, appreciation for each other's time and interest was expressed, regular meetings occurred, and robust conversation took place on wide variety of topics. In describing the interaction taking place during the forming stage, Anderson (2010) points out that group behavior is characterized by members exploring "initial interactions with one another in an 'orientation' period as they begin to begin relationships" (p. 225).

As information regarding the concept of career adaptability was introduced general agreement about our purpose was reached. In addition, team members made connections to other

experiences and theoretical models which helped develop empathy and cohesiveness within the team. The action research team moved through this stage as an entrepreneurial organization which Stringer (2007) describes as "people who act out of 'enlightened self-interest,' people know where they stand, share information, share control, and are willing to take reasonable risks" (p.148).

Storming

In the storming stage, there is often resistance to group influence. The first intragroup conflicts emerge. There may also be an emotional response to the task demands and requirements. Anderson (2010) notes at this stage, group members may "begin to express disagreements with one another and with the leader as members feel more comfortable and safe with the team" (p. 225). In addition, group members may experience conflicts over their roles or group goals and rules may be broken. Fortunately, group members often negotiate and work through their conflicts so as to move on to the next stage.

While our group seemed to move through this stage fairly quickly, some storming did occur. During this phase of our group development, as I tried to facilitate movement towards identifying topics, dates, and times for upcoming workshops by emphasizing the scheduling challenges our study participants and we as a team faced, some action research team members were still processing the research design and were a bit resistant to setting specific dates for upcoming workshops. In addition, one team member expressed concern about the research design and was also interested in making connections to other theories they were more familiar with in order to more clearly understand the ACCI's theoretical underpinnings.

As facilitator, I decided to slow my desire to focus on scheduling the workshops planned in the research design and instead focused my energy on answering questions about the theory

and research design in hopes this would lead to a higher level of interest and commitment in the long run. On the surface, this meeting did not seem to go very far; in fact, even the transcript of the meeting reads as if the team talked in circles. However, as I looked back at the transcripts of meetings later on, it became evident this was classic storming behavior. As Stringer (2007) indicates, an action researcher must negotiate diverse opinions even though this can be challenging with strong individuals who try to impose their perspective on the group. In hindsight, by slowing down and providing the team with space to explore the theory, research design, and scheduling demands, the team was able to make significant leaps forward in subsequent meetings. This also served to build trust with the group and established an environment where dialogue was encouraged.

Norming

Group *norming*, according to the stages of group development model Tuckman & Jensen (1977) developed is focused on openness to other group members, building a feeling of cohesiveness, with new standards evolving. Anderson (2010) points out that the norming stage is often characterized by "increased cohesion and a return to the harmonious climate of the first stage, but with increased trust, cooperation, and commitment" (p. 225). Interestingly, the group also tends to focus on achieving goals with decreased dependency on the facilitator. Group members feel more relaxed about expressing their opinions and conflict tends to be managed more effectively.

The action research team began moving into this stage once the study participants were recruited and we started making plans to collect data and schedule workshops. This exercise helped us focus the group on key decisions that needed to be made and led to a more focused conversation. Ideas for future research initiatives came up, but were identified as items for future

consideration. In addition, some very candid conversations about how business schools are out of touch with post-modern thinking occurred. This led to discussion about the added value of this qualitative study which moves beyond traditional data collection and looks at the nuances beyond the assessment scores via individual interviews. The level of enthusiasm of the team returned to where it had been in the beginning, but it was more focused and stronger because we were moving towards taking action to examine a complex issue each of us had an interest in learning more about.

Performing

According to Tuckman and Jensen (1977), in the *performing stage*, roles become flexible and functional. The team's structural issues have been resolved so the team can focus on channeling their energy into the task. Anderson (2010) explains that in this stage, group members "find synergy and begin to find repeated and successful ways of interacting to achieve group goals" (p. 226). High productivity and a sense of accomplishing objectives characterize group interaction and team members are much more effective at identifying and discussing problems and finding opportunities for improvement. In addition, due to the increased synergy and cohesion, group facilitators are able to delegate tasks and decision-making more readily.

This group moved rapidly into performing. Upon reflection, it seems clear to me this was the result of establishing group norms of openness and mutual respect, holding steady during the storming phase, and reinforcing norms in the norming stage. Once this group understood the theory and the research design, and had the opportunity to personally take the ACCI and LDP, they seemed energized and offered to conduct workshops as part of the study. As they became increasingly engaged, the team identified opportunities to implement components of the study into the EMBA program going forward. Perhaps the ultimate example of how strongly the team

performed was illustrated when the team worked together to deliver a presentation summarizing our collaborative approach to integrating the EMBA program to maximize student development at the annual Executive MBA Conference in Paris, France in October 2012.

Adjourning

As described by Tuckman and Jensen (1977), the final stage of group development is the *adjourning stage* that takes into consideration the overall life cycle of the group as it terminates after having completed its task requirements. As the study came to a close, team members began to implement a number of system changes and identified future areas for collaboration and research. Additionally, there was a desire to share our findings with a broader audience including corporate contacts and colleagues in the college and at other institutions.

While the team is currently thinking about future possibilities to continue our collaboration, my concern is that as the high level of enthusiasm of the moment wanes, we may drift back into focusing only on completing the study for the purpose of completing my dissertation. Anderson (2010) explains that when "the team's work is completed, the team may disband or members may leave" (p. 226). In order to leverage these opportunities, I proactively facilitated the adjournment of this group by hosting a final action research team meeting to identify next steps. In addition, I followed up by meeting individually to begin follow through on the items of mutual interest.

Lastly, study participants and action research team members have expressed an interest in reviewing the results of the study. In order to continue building support, I plan to share the findings we discovered through this study with action research team members, interested study participants, senior leaders within the college, and colleagues through lunch and learn sessions, conference presentations, and journal articles.

Reflections

As I reflect on my efforts to facilitate this group, several key group dynamics have emerged. The first dynamic observed and analyzed in the tables above was the movement of the group through Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) Stages of Group Development. In the context of action research, where collaboration and reflection are key elements, several conclusions emerged from this analysis. The analysis reveals the importance of the facilitator being in tune with the needs of the group in the early stages when group members are often orienting themselves to the task, asking probing questions, and exhibiting some level of pushback. In order to do this effectively, building self-reflection into the process is a must. As Herr and Anderson indicate, "Self-reflection is the hallmark of good practitioner research" (p. 47).

In reviewing my team notes, it is clear leveraging self-reflection helped me be more effective as I guided the group's movements from one stage to another. I also recognize the value of having a fully engaged my major professor and committee who served as shadow consultants in my efforts to facilitate the action research team. Additionally, it seems another critical insight is the importance of a facilitator's pro-active efforts to establish group norms based on open dialogue, collaboration, and learning, particularly in the forming and storming stages. Interestingly, these practices of collaboration and reflection that helped move the group through each of the stages of group development are also aligned with action research. Coghlan and Brannick (2002) point out that action research is "based on a collaborative problem-solving relationship between researcher and client" (p. 4).

On a deeper level, I learned some important lessons about working with talented colleagues who are highly intelligent and have their own point of view. It is important to initially establish group norms, encouraging dialogue and discussion in order to build trust and respect. It

is also important to provide the group with structure, not be too quick to change direction during the storming phase, and provide opportunities to experience what the study participants will be introduced to in order to make meaning as a team and see how they can contribute. Ultimately, I learned there is an important balance between discussing the theory and research design and engaging the team in the implementation of the design as it emerges. This insight is described by Mink, Mink, and Owen (1987):

> The key outcomes of this (individual differences) component of group development are openness, communications, in depth honesty, harmony, identification of individual talents, and recognition. The key processes are listening, self-disclosing, asserting, and opening. The acceptance and utilization of individual differences enables feedback. (p. 42)

By staying attuned to this delicate balance, I was able to facilitate a commitment to the work which led to the team becoming a flexible and functional team interested in bringing our own expertise to the task.

Conclusion

The action research process led to significant growth for team members and the organization. Through the creation of a research design and interventions new capacities emerged, future collaborations have begun, and system change is underway. Members of the action research team shared our work with colleagues at the International EMBA Conference and, as a result, interest in our efforts was generated throughout SBS. Substantive discussions with senior leadership interested in the possibility of applying what we learned to other programs have begun. The Director of Executive Education invited me to write a white paper which highlighted key insights learned about career adaptability. Furthermore, we recently committed

to develop an innovative executive education offering which includes many of the insights gained through the study.

As I reflect, I realize leading the action research process required me to develop a different approach to leading change and enhanced my capacity to do so. The amount of time and energy invested in the action research process was tremendous. Perhaps my most important insight is how challenging it is to lead organization change. I learned that to effectively lead change of this nature, you have to invest more time thinking and researching the nature of the problem. Additionally, you have to successfully engage others to help you do so. This important shift is a crucial lesson for me, as I know in the past my tendency was to take action quickly, often with mixed results. My lesson is often you have to go slower in the beginning, in order to go faster later.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to explore how to enhance individual's adaptive capacity in order to reach their career objectives. Three primary research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. In what ways are individuals' capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced through focused interventions?

2. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced the awareness of the action research team to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability?

3. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase an individual's capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability impacted the system?

This chapter presents findings from interviews of study participants and college faculty and staff who participated in the action research project at Southeastern Business School. The findings are organized by research question with categories and sub-categories that emerged during data analysis. Table 7 provides an overview of each category and sub-category.

Table 7

Research Findings

Research Question	Findings from Data	Sub-Category Findings
1. In what ways are individuals' capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced through focused interventions?	Focused interventions raised participant's self-awareness.	• ACCI • LDP • Overall Impact of Self-Assessments • Reflections • Behavioral Changes
	Focused interventions led to the emergence of stronger interconnections to the EMBA Program.	• Change and your Career • Values and your Career • Career Game Theory • Personal Branding • Coaching • Courses and Extra-curricular • Overarching purpose of EMBA
	Focused interventions led to increasing levels of Individual Career Adaptability Capacity.	• Ability to Cope • Planful Attitudes
2. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced the awareness of the action research	The Team's initial understanding of the challenge of Career Adaptability was limited.	• Context • Definitions • Fundamental Challenge
	The Team collaborated to develop a shared framework which increased their understanding.	• Theory and Assessments • Courses and Workshops
	The Team collaborated to create developmentally focused interventions which further enhanced their understanding.	• Change and Your Career • Values and Your Career • Additional Workshops

team to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability?	Collaborating to create a shared framework and developmentally targeted interventions deepened the Team's awareness of the Career Adaptability Challenge	• Participant Self-Assessments • Workshops and Coaching • Connections to EMBA • Impact of Study
3. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase an individual's capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability impacted the system?	The Team's efforts to develop and evaluate interventions led to stronger integration of Career Adaptability within EMBA Program in the future	• Shared Program Framework • Residency • Leadership Coaches
	The Team's efforts to develop and evaluate interventions impacted Action Research Team members' individual development, which impacts the system going forward.	• Program Management • Integration and Frameworks • Impact on Future Programs • Lasting Impact on Action Research Team
	Possible future research has on-going potential to impact the system.	• Interest in research • Assessment connections • Longitudinal research

Research Question 1: Individuals' Career Adaptability Capacities Enhanced

The focus of the study was to pro-actively engage participants through assessments, workshops and individual coaching, designed intentionally to enhance their career adaptability. In order to understand in what ways study participants' career adaptability capacities were enhanced a subset of nine participants participated in a critical incident interviews after the study was completed. Interviewees were asked to share an example of a time during the study when they felt their capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability was enhanced. Probe questions included describing the circumstances and nature of this incident, why they consider this incident to be significant, and the outcome(s) of the incident. Appendix B contains a copy of the critical incident interview questions used with student participants. Each respondent provided at least two or three examples of critical incidents which occurred during the study. Five

overarching themes related to increased capacity to move through the stages of career

adaptability emerged. These themes included (a) the impact of self-assessments, (b) workshops

and coaching, (c) enhanced self-awareness, (d) connections between study interventions and

coursework and experiences in the EMBA program, and (e) examples of improved ability to

cope and approaches to career planning. Table 8 shows the findings.

Table 8

Impact on Individuals

Research Question	Findings from Data	Sub-Category Findings
1. In what ways are individuals' capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced through focused interventions?	Focused interventions raised participants self-awareness	- ACCI - LDP - Overall Impact of Self-Assessments - Reflections - Behavioral Changes
	Focused interventions led to the emergence of stronger interconnections to the EMBA Program	- Change and your Career - Values and your Career - Career Game Theory - Personal Branding - Coaching - Courses and Extra-curricular - Overarching purpose of EMBA
	Focused interventions led to increasing levels of Individual Career Adaptability Capacity	- Ability to cope - Planful attitudes

Focused interventions raised participants' self-awareness

The combination of self-assessments, workshops and coaching resulted in significant

increases in self-awareness for participants. The action research team observed this increase in

self-awareness through our numerous interactions with the participants. The participants

themselves expressed their increased self-awareness in the following ways.

Self-Assessments

Each of the study participants initially completed the ACCI assessment and participated in a group debriefing which included an overview of the theoretical framework undergirding the ACCI and an explanation of their individual results, followed by a question and answer period in order to facilitate meaning making. In addition to their ACCI results serving as a self-assessment, we also indicated the ACCI data would be used by the action research team as a diagnostic to help us develop interventions for the group. Participants also completed the LDP assessment and participated in a workshop where the theoretical framework was discussed and their individual results were explained. Initial responses from study participants ranged from deep insight to confirmation of their own existing stages of career adaptability and adult development.

ACCI. A number of study participants found the framework of the ACCI helped place their own career frustrations in context. This was illustrated by Tom[2], who said:

"Well, I think the ACCI, the first weekend of the study really helped focus me into a quantitative number of where I was, or where I am at with my trying to leave a company that I run in order to go pursue other opportunities. I think that what I felt was somewhat of a sense of relief. To say that okay, so there's a reason why this is happening. There's something here that having been looking at a transition or a career change prior to entering your study, and even prior to entering the EMBA, I had come to a point where I knew my current position was not what I was ultimately supposed to be doing."

Other study participants found the ACCI provided a common framework that helped describe where they see their careers currently. Cindy captured this when she said:

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[2] All names used in this section are pseudonyms.

"I realized that I was disengaging, but I knew why I am. I'm maintaining at disengaging.

That didn't surprise me. I would've been amazed if I was anything but that. I know why

that is. I'm literally just trying to keep everything going right now."

For another group of participants, the ACCI served as a reflection point that later in the

study they would revisit. Amir illustrated this when he recalled:

"The very first ACCI I felt like when the result came out and that's exactly came out what

I was thinking in my life that I really don't need to worry about anything in the future.

I'm good at what I'm doing. I'm not looking for any change and things like that. That was

the first thing that it did reflect correctly what I was going through that. I was like, 'Yeah,

you know, I don't have any challenge in the life. I take the challenges on a daily basis at

work,' and that's all pretty much. Other than that, I think I'm all set. I'm going to get

retired probably the next five or ten years."

Some participants recognized their responses did not accurately reflect their true intentions. This

was captured by Courtney who indicated:

"I just think that my answers were so reflective of me not having a real focus. I was like,

'Oh, everything's important.' Really, is my retirement right now the most important

thing? Not really. For the right reason I would blow my 401(k) money tomorrow, all of it,

if it meant putting other things in line."

Cindy provided additional evidence of this when she observed:

"If you asked me a few weeks ago what do you want to do I would say I'm actually very

happy where I am, I'm very happy where I am, I enjoy what I do, I don't really have a

plan right now, but I actually do have a plan, but it was unconscious."

It is also interesting to note, the ACCI framework speaks specifically about how personal growth is the engine that drives growth and movement through the developmental tasks necessary to progress. Several participants indicated this idea of growth as the engine as engaging. Courtney captured this when she stated, "Growth. Okay, now how do I translate that? When I went back to read those things, I really want to get into how."

Perhaps the most important role the ACCI played in the study was to provide a starting point for reflection and a shared framework for discussion. This thought was articulated by Courtney who commented:

> "I think going back and reviewing and trying to remember what the questions were on some of those things, did I really take those things seriously, and I think if I had taken that over again I would probably get more honest answers than what maybe I answered the first time."

LDP. The LDP is an assessment designed to provide individuals with a deeper understanding of their current stage of adult development. This assessment provided participants with an additional framework for self-assessment and a new lens to use as they considered their career progression. For many study participants, the LDP results led to important personal insights. As Courtney said:

> "I think that first a-ha moment in this study was [the speaker] kind of tying together her own stories that sounded so much like my stories, and not like I had gone through them as many times as she had or was as experienced, but I was actually in them, right then. I felt I wanted to crawl out of my skin in some of these scenarios, whether it was at work or whether it was outside of work with my best friend and dealing with their weddings, or dealing with my husband. Everything was just so grossly uncomfortable. I think in the

stories that held the examples of her getting pulled between these diametrically-opposing forces, but the group really drawing her back . . . and when I say the group, it was maybe a group that was more in one of her lower stages that she just couldn't quite get out of and shake."

For others, the LDP spurred deeper personal reflection, as Sharry, who is tired of being everyone's right hand instead of being in a leadership role, indicated:

"When I sat at the first workshop with [the speaker] I remember thinking that, 'Boy, I should have spent more time on that.' I really should have taken the time to answer those because I think I could have developed a better understanding of myself. While her workshop was very good and very enlightening because I felt like I had already reached a level where I knew I just didn't want to go to work for anybody."

In addition, the LDP framework provided participants with an opportunity to view their career adaptability themselves through a new lens. Tom captured this when he said:

"Yeah, I think probably in that area. I think I hung around the achiever more than I did anywhere else. For me, I remember her saying something about learning to pivot and learning to pull from each of those areas as you need it to make things work, which made a lot of sense to me."

Alan, another study participant, expressed this when he said, "I guess, visualizing or being able to visualize that my development is growing into the strategic thinking area. It gave me, I guess, a little bit of motivation or at least to consider some of those."

Perhaps the most significant impact the LDP had on study participants was increasing their appreciation for the value of self-awareness, so that they understand how adult development

occurs and make the connections to career adaptability. Courtney, who was striving to move from being a strong individual contributor into a managerial position, commented:

> "Absolutely, especially the really buried stuff. Even good people who are pretty self-actualized and aware are really good at going 50 percent deep, but not many. Which is, I think, the level that's reflective in all of those levels of leadership and where you are. It's only really the true strategist and the thought leaders that are capable of going that deep and keeping their confidence and their sensibilities about them and their emotions . . . their emotional maturity intact to be able to wrestle with those things. That's why there's only four percent or three percent or two percent that end up at that."

Sharry echoed the need to focus on self-development when she concluded:

> "Right. This was the first time that I think I've really been able to step back and say, 'No, I'm doing something for myself. I want to do what I love to do.' For [the speaker]'s workshop what really drove home to me was that I was right in the way I was feeling and that the level of where you are, so to speak. . . . To me, I had never heard of that before and I found that interesting but at the same time I wondered how you would get that. I guess that comes to that pivot because in most careers you can't ever find that one spot all the time. You're always going to have to be doing something for somebody. Whether you're helping a client or whether you're helping the community, you're going to be pivoting throughout all three of those. I found that that kind of overlapped in some of the stuff that [the speaker] had done but at the same time, it was more of a focus on you as an individual. That was the takeaway that I got from it."

Perhaps Tom, a CEO of a small company, captured it best as he reflected on his own career trajectory:

"That sinking in and saying 'Well, oh heck.' Now I see I'm the farthest on this arc in my company. I can't get past where I'm at in my company because of the whole dynamic of you can only get to an individual, as yourself. Everything above an individualist, a strategist, guru, all those. You can't get there by yourself."

Overall Impact of Assessments. It appears there was significant value in utilizing two distinct assessments, both developmental in nature, but each providing a different lens for participants to view themselves and their careers. Several participants shared comments that indicated their understanding of self and motivation to move forward was enhanced. For example, Amir, who after taking the ACCI initially thought he was content to stay in the maintenance stage and retire in five to ten years, said, "I came to know a lot about myself which I was trying to avoid, rather neglecting it, and just looking at one side of the coin and never realized what would be the other side of the coin." Another participant, Alan, who is looking for a managerial role after a long military career followed by a series of private sector jobs in construction, observed:

"I think it just let me believe or gave me some belief, some faith in that I could move to that area of living, if you will, and being, I guess it just opened up a door. It gave me a feeling that I am good enough, if you will, for those kinds of opportunities versus just being some day-to-day technical operations person."

Cindy, who was from Europe and struggling with whether to stay in the U.S. and continue working in sales, concluded:

"It has made me a lot more in tune with where I want to go and why I want to take a certain path and why I'm not considering, why I haven't really been questioning myself too much."

John, who recently decided to leave his current employer to become an independent contractor, articulated the value of using the ACCI and LDP in concert when he shared:

"I think there are things that I connected to my development from the first meeting with [the speaker] in terms of my personal development in that I really took my own inventory of where my development process of how I look internally at the things that make me into who I am in terms of my business process, my outlook, and where I came from to where I am now and then tying into ACCI. It all was almost a connect the dots piece that you had to go a little bit back and forth to connect them, but finally the picture started to appear."

Reflection on past experiences. The interventions study participants engaged in led to important reflections on their past experiences, which increased their self-awareness as it relates to future career decisions. Sharry, whose self-awareness was rapidly increasing, commented:

"I think it probably did before I started this program. It was very difficult for me to determine whether I was doing something for somebody, for them or for myself. I think it's a little clearer now. I think it's hard for women, number one, because women generally are not selfish, especially when they're mothers, there's always something to do for somebody else."

Courtney, who was also rapidly becoming more self-aware, spoke to this as well:

"Because I think that's one of the things I struggle with the most is at the end of the day, when I look back at my couple years of work and what it is that's made me frustrated and pretty miserable has a lot to do with I'm not being true to who I am. I'm not in an arena that supports who I am or celebrates who I am. I'm not getting any value."

Jennifer, who was gaining perspective on her culture of origin, stated:

"The message was, back in the 80s, if you want to get a third-level education, you have a

better chance going into teaching or nursing. It wasn't because I wanted to be a nurse that

I ended up in nursing; it was because in my country that was what you could get."

Self-awareness was also facilitated via peer feedback which was incorporated into several

exercises offered in workshops. Amir illustrated this when he said:

"He responded pretty well and he told me that, 'I know you're good at it and you don't

realize that. You're good at innovation. Make that idea and implement into real life

basically. That's what you're good at it.' That's where I recollect that I've done multiple

things like that in last four or five years. It's not just one thing, but it has been

implemented into real life and you and I have been using it as a citizen or a human, a lot

of those things."

Increased levels of self-awareness appear to clarify motivators and lead to higher levels of

ownership over future career moves. For example, Tom, who was getting in touch with what

really motivated him, observed:

"I no longer need that self-worth . . . not self-worth, but I no longer need to go into

somewhere and people are, oh, he's the president. Whatever, I'm beyond that and it's

become more. That's extrinsic. It's become more intrinsic and I think the study helped. I

was teetering there, but I think it's really just kind of like the guy with the bungee cord

around his feet that won't jump and he just needs somebody to push him."

In addition, Cindy spoke to this by saying:

"That was really scary. Sometimes you think you're a victim, but you realize you're an

active volunteer. That really was an a-ha moment for me. It was, it was uncomfortable

because you realize that you're . . . sometimes you think, oh poor me, but really, no.

You're the maker of your own destiny."

John appeared to be integrating a number of components of the study and the EMBA program which resulted in increased self-awareness when he indicated:

"It's more a matter of, not that anyone wants to label themselves a visionary, but being able to go from that expert technician to being able to see the chess board three or four moves ahead and looking at that inventory and comparing where I am now, where I've been in the last let's say 18 months and where I want to go for the reason that I've been getting this executive MBA to be able to take those or internalize those values and look at what I need to do to go forward and I hadn't done anything like that in 20 years."

Pro-active behavior changes. Increased self-awareness as a result of participating in study interventions led to the identification of career limiting behaviors that need to be changed. Jennifer said it simply, but powerfully, "I'll not just expect that I'll be taken care of." Sharry went on to say:

"I used to think that it didn't matter what you said as long as you were truthful. Now I kind of feel that you have to be truthful in what you say but you have to be careful when you say what you say."

Jennifer echoed the need to modify behavior when she said:

"Sometimes I feel that I'm a victim where I work, but I truly believe there are no victims, there are just volunteers. By not standing my ground I become a victim, and then I blame myself for not standing my ground. In future, whenever I see someone using some tactics, whether it's to raise their voice or to look angry or to bang their fist on the table, it's a time to disengage and to suggest we bring in HR or someone else to get involved in

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the conversation. Goodness. That has its own negativity as well. Once you start talking

about HR, you're going nowhere further. I think it's a tactic that's used to manipulate and

bully women in business."

Courtney continued in this vein by observing:

> **"**Yes. It requires a lot more silent thought of just . . . I've kind of transformed a little bit
>
> from being this very out-loud thinker . . . I process out here, listening to myself and
>
> bouncing it off of anyone, someone, anyone, or the dog. (laughs) I've changed and tried
>
> to temper that over the past year of just really making sure that I'm letting others speak
>
> first, because I know when I speak sometimes it does have a tendency to speak over
>
> everybody else."

Katie also had a similar insight about how past behaviors might be limiting when she indicated:

> "Depending on where I'm going to be working, I need to be more professional, seem
>
> more professional. I may undermine myself trying to be friendly and nice to everybody,
>
> and I need to be more direct . . . and I think, because I have a lot of information and
>
> capabilities to give people, that I want to make sure that I don't undermine what I'm
>
> trying to do. Having that pause. A pause could be thinking. Do not be afraid of pausing. I
>
> think it's an important thing that people should do. Giving an appearance of being more
>
> organized in a one-on-one presentation. I give presentations all the time. I'm very
>
> organized. But when you're just one-on-one in a casual situation, you still need to
>
> organize your thoughts there."

In addition to specific changes in behavior, as self-awareness increased, a number of

participants indicated important shifts in their approach to handling challenging situations they

have encountered in the past. Jennifer shared the following example: "When someone's wearing

the suit you give them the deference and respect." Amir shared another interesting shift resulting from increased self-awareness when he said:

> "I thought I'm always good at controlling the stuff, but the other side of that is the creativity, I always kill my creativity. I cannot bring that creativity to myself and to the rest of the world. If I stop controlling and becoming more creative, then it's going to be helpful for me and the others too. That is a whole new side for me to explore rather than just one thing."

Jennifer further emphasized how she plans to alter her behavior, based on her increased self-awareness, sharing:

> "I would be in the office much more. I would be building relationships there. I would be meeting with my boss. I'd be meeting with the leader of the business unit whoever my boss reports to, whether that's a CEO or whether it's a business unit vice president. I would be networking a lot more, and making people a lot more aware of who I am and getting to know who they are. I would be playing in the politics, things that Americans know to do, but I had no clue about, I will be doing that."

Focused interventions led to the emergence of stronger interconnections to the EMBA Program

Study participants identified a number of interconnections between the interventions engaged in as part of the study and elements of the EMBA program. These connections appear to have increased participants' career adaptability and enhanced the impact of the study and their experience in the program as a whole.

Workshops and Coaching

Study participants engaged in a series of workshops which were designed by the action research team to facilitate their career adaptability by addressing key development tasks including: Change and Your Career, Values and Your Career, Career Game Theory, Reflection, Personal Branding and Career Marketing Plan. In addition, each participant took part in at least one individual coaching session to further understand their self-assessments and to make meaning of the workshop content.

Change and your career. This workshop was designed to help participants understand how our own immunity to change often inhibits career adaptability. The concepts and exercises introduced in this workshop helped increase participants' awareness of this challenge. Katie, who has a non-technical background, but works in a highly technical environment and is often passed over for promotions, observed:

> "I was even more motivated to set up a plan to make the changes I want to do in my career, and it seemed something that was doable, and it showed me things I, maybe, was doing incorrectly that I needed to change and behaviors."

Jennifer, who was from Europe and has experienced challenges adapting to the U.S. work environment, expressed it this way:

> "Also, in [the speaker]'s workshop . . . obviously I need to change. I know that I'm the common denominator, and the only power I have is over myself. I can't change the others, so I need to change. I guess those would be the two times I felt that, 'Wow, this is something I can do' and it's empowering because these are both things that I can see that I can do. I can make changes rather than hoping the system will change."

In addition to changing specific behaviors, there was also an increased awareness that human nature is to maintain the status quo. Amir, whose initial ACCI results indicated he was happy in his current role, commented:

"When the [the speaker's] study came I, at that time I realized that I need to put myself a notch ahead where I am today. I've got a lot to offer and probably that's what I need to come out of that comfort zone where I'm happy and I don't want to make a change, but I think I need to come out and have something to offer and let me do that. His last workshop also got me. . . . It was a moment that I realized that why am I not coming out of that comfort zone? It's not somebody else or other system. It's me. It's me, myself that I'm holding up and I'm not coming out of that."

Values and your career. This workshop was designed to help participants understand how your own values evolve as development occurs and how this re-prioritization impacts career decisions. An example of this was given by Courtney:

"Yes, the values framework one. Coming back to it, because what I really want to get into . . . . I spent some time in the past week revisiting that because all of these results really helped me frame what I was going to write about in my performance review, 'What have I achieved?' I think a lot of that comes back to the comments that [the speaker] makes that resonate with me to which are always a-ha moments, that all value creation is inherently wrought with conflict, doesn't happen without conflict. I totally agree with that."

Cindy, who has struggled with not being recognized for outstanding performance, said:

"I did, in [the speaker]'s last presentation when we were identifying what we're committed to and why we're conducting ourselves in a certain way. That was very

awakening for me and I realized that I over commit myself and I always work to get the job done even at my own personal expense because of who I want to be and who I want to be perceived as being."

Perhaps the strongest illustration of the connections between values and career was illustrated by John, who indicated:

"I think I had that aha moment during the last Ryan presentation that really tied everything together for me. In terms of my career development and my leadership development because that's what it's all about for me at this stage of life; wanting to lead change in the market place, wanting to move the needle in the experiential business world that I'm in. The idea that I had to look deeper into my core value set and how I want to apply the last personal assessment that we did to go from where I am right now at this moment as it relates to a personal dilemma and take the steps that go downstream to really identify what the underlining action steps are for how I go from point A to point B. I think it was great in that I could share with other executives, with other members of the study and not so much from a 'Hey, here's the cure for what you're trying to do' but make me think about the steps that I need to take and 'If this, then that' mentality."

Career game theory. This workshop applied the principles of game theory to career in order to help participants view their careers from a strategy perspective. This was an important new lens for participants to view their career and one which most had not considered. A number of valuable insights arose for many participants. Cindy, who is learning to embrace her heritage and inherent strengths to work for her, recalled:

"It was the third piece that I spoke about, what are you, what is your unfair advantage compared to everybody else. It really made me stand back and look at myself and I

realized that actually being Russian and having my own culture and having my own methodology of doing things is an unfair advantage because it's so different and because I'm so different I need to embrace that as opposed to hiding that."

In addition, Jennifer, who is a junior executive striving for a CEO level role in a global organization, indicated:

"[The speaker] gave a presentation, and that was profound for me. He talked about rules and company culture and playing by the rules and knowing when you're doing it and when you're not. I realized that I don't know the rules, and it's because I come from a different culture. I have a very different set of values and criteria that I apply when I go to work that is not serving me well in this country, and the fact that I thought I had a good set of rules that are applicable everywhere, but that's not how it works."

The application of game theory continued to resonate with Courtney who said of the experience:

"Timing of your decisions. You can have the right decision, you know what your right moves are, but a lot of it too I think is just really understanding the board and who your players are, who your competitors are and what that whole landscape looks like to make sure that when you make your moves that they're recognizable by the people that you want and hidden in front of others that otherwise might be watching you and keeping up."

The importance of having a strategy-based framework as a reference point throughout your career was highlighted by Cindy who reflected:

"I think if I'm unhappy in a role in the future I'm always going to go back to what [the speaker] said. Do something that you would do if money wasn't an issue. Do something that you're good at. Obviously consider what you have an unfair advantage at, but down the line I'm always going to dial it back to that. Am I good at this? Do I like this? Would

I do this if money wasn't an issue? If it gets to the stage where I'm no, no and no, that

answers a lot of questions for me."

The importance of having a sense of what the rules of the game are was reinforced by Courtney

who said:

"I think I shared some of that about I used to not care about labels and what my job title

is, but now I'm starting to see how the bigger machine works. As you want to get up in

the ranks, you have to care about it and you have to understand what makes HR move.

Because if you don't, you can't go in with a solid argument about why you should be over

in this position and not the position where you are. You have to play that game a little bit,

and it is a game. It's all a game. If anybody thinks for a minute that your supporter out

there isn't looking out for himself first, you're sadly naïve."

Personal branding. The final workshop offered in the study introduced the concept of

personal branding and engaged the participants in a reflection exercise designed to help them tie

together all of their experiences in the study. The session concluded by providing participants

with a career marketing plan template which began with a summary of their assessments and

personal reflections, and moved them into thinking about how to re-position themselves for their

next career move. Participants found this effort to tie all the pieces together helpful. Katie, who

is challenged with how to communicate her value in order to be promoted, stated it in this

manner:

"I really thought that it was impactful. It really said a lot about what you could do about

using your strengths and branding and how to sell yourself better, that I never had

thought of before. I thought it was very good."

Another participant, Sharry, indicated:

"Well, it really continued with the brand type of thoughts from Leslie, in that you want to look at what . . . you're the product. It talks about you as a product and you being something that you market. I never really thought of it that way. So I think that that was pretty important and putting them in that order, I think, was pretty good. I don't think it's a gimmick. I think it's something that can really work. I mean, it's definitely . . . some of it is common sense, but it's another organized way of putting yourself forward. So it's also marketing. Marketing and branding are all the same family of where we're looking at, as opposed to more psychological sides of it, because a lot of people have the ability to do these things. But to get themselves out there where they can do it, it takes more than just being smart. You've got to know what to do with it."

Action research team participants also noted that the personal reflection exercise in this workshop was powerful. The following exchange occurred in an action research team meeting following this session:

Jason: After we introduced the branding concept, and I led the personal reflection exercise, it seemed to me the participants were really engaged. It seemed like during those 5-10 minutes you could hear a pin drop and I recall the students asking for more time.

Ryan: I agree, you had them, they had all the pieces and it was starting to sink in.

The impact of the workshops as a whole was best captured by Courtney who said:

"I think part of that comes from that whole . . . in the beginning of the study I wasn't really digging deep about a whole lot of stuff either, until the workshops forced me into . . . not forced, but definitely influenced a deeper look into those things to come back to

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and really help put my priorities into a frame of reference that is much more tangible to me now."

Coaching. Individual coaching sessions were offered by two action research team members with career counseling backgrounds. Each participant took part in an initial coaching session after they completed the ACCI to ensure they understood their results and the framework. In addition, a number of participants engaged in additional coaching sessions. The primary focus of the coaching sessions was to ensure participants understood the self-assessments and the workshop content and made connections between the individual feedback and concepts presented in order to facilitate their career adaptability. Several participants indicated the coaching helped in this respect. Katie, who is much further into her career and striving for a promotion, observed:

"On the phone interview, you talked about a lot of things that I could do, in a way, I mean, things to be looking for. But one of the things that you mentioned that really hit me was the short runway, because I don't think of myself as older, but I am. And for me to be able . . . what I want to do with my new degree and what I want to do in my business and my career is to have more of an impact with the company. And to be able to do that and to move up in the company, I have to start doing it now. And that gave me, like, another little twist to going to really start thinking about what I want to do."

Sharry, who was struggling to identify her own career interests, offered:

"Troy had helped me to struggle through that. I've done that too many times. I've always been the person that went out to help somebody else do their job rather than helping myself do what I want to do. A friend is opening a daycare center, 'Oh, I'll go help you. I'll help you get started.'"

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The coaching also helped several participants identify what their individual next steps are to move forward. Alan, who found networking to be critical to his next move, but very challenging, shared:

"Since I'm very introverted and I don't really aggressively seek out network contacts generally to be put in a position where you can have an opportunity to get to know other people would be helpful. As far as any specific workshop or moment, I found my sitting down with Troy very helpful. We were able to review my resume and he took me through some key ways of rewording things based on his experience and doing this book I found the resources with the university very helpful so far."

Tom, who was rapidly adopting a number of concepts in the study to make his next career move, indicated the developmental progression of the interventions when he commented:

"That was almost what that first weekend was and then it progressed to the conversations with Troy and the one-on-ones. That really helped to start putting some structure to ultimately what ended up with a career marketing plan, but also just to weed out some of the things and try to put into place some of the floating ideas or thoughts."

Coursework and extra-curricular activities. Tom indicated the connections between classes and the study provided new resources and enhanced his career adaptability when he concluded:

"It really played well with actually being in Ryan's class at the same time to some degree, and having been in Bill's class. For me personally, it helped. The classes and the study gave me some tools to add to the toolbox to be able to figure out what I need to do, or what I want to try to do."

Tom went on to make a connection between the coursework, the study and a unique extra-curricular activity when he said:

> "I think the study, especially in relation to the 8800 class, has allowed me to realize that whole dynamic of, for me to become the individualist, the strategist, I've got to relinquish and I've got to rely on others. I've got to be willing to fail. Throwing the Marine Corps experience at Quantico in that Ryan led, that was an epiphany moment. I wouldn't suggest that as part of your study, but that allowed. . . . We've been taught all of our lives that failing is not what we want. Failing is not only not good, it's just not what we do. Realizing that you're going to have to fail. You're going to have to rely on others and they may fail, but that's what you've got to do to get to those next levels on that arc. That was like, hmm. It was really kind of a very sobering moment. To realize, we live in a society that has said that you can be anything you want to be. You can only reach to a certain point yourself, beyond that. . . . That's not what we've been taught our whole lives."

John, who recently decided to leave a traditional role and become an independent contractor, illustrated how the coursework and study combined in helpful ways when he noted:

> "One of the things that for me personally as a member of the 2014 cohort is I'm going through the study while I'm taking courses in org behavior while I'm taking. . . I just wrapped up an org behavior course right when the study started. Then I have executive leadership now and being able to tie those things together where I'm actually writing a paper on my personal dilemma, my leadership dilemma for adaptive leadership in the actions and reactions that come from that, I'm able to look at the dilemma itself from the business standpoint, from the organizational standpoint but this career adaptability study

has also helped me look at myself internally; my role in the dilemma and I think that's

helped me at least address where I want to go downstream. It's been great."

Overarching purpose of EMBA program connected to career adaptability. A

number of study participants directly linked the overarching purpose of the EMBA program to

facilitating career adaptability. Alan, who was in the midst of a career transition, shared:

"Everyone that's coming into the MBA program have found themselves at a crossroads

in their career and trying to figure out what they can do to move on to that, I don't know,

I don't want to call it the glass ceiling because that's used in something but to move to

that next level in their career that's being hindered. I think a lot of people that join the

MBA program are looking to make that transition. I think something of this type of

opportunity or program would be very helpful. I found it very helpful and I'm glad that

the timing was such that it was available to me."

Courtney, who was seeking career advancement following a long tenure in the same role, made

an interesting point about the potential of this study to help identify those who are seeking career

change when she said:

"I think just having a program that is much more active in seeking out those who benefit

from the kinds of dialog, like the type of dialog about career change. I think in the

forefront of the program is really getting and understanding of, 'What's everybody in here

for?' I don't know that that was really asked and answered. It might have come out in

some conversations, but I don't think it gets formally logged so that the administration

and the staff knows who is in here to move up where they are, where is everybody

working."

When asked whether she thought elements of the study should become part of the program on an on-going basis Jennifer, who was seeking to move into the executive ranks of her current employer, said:

> "I definitely think it should be. People my age who are doing an EMBA are doing it for a reason, and it's because what they're doing in their career, they need something to help them change their path or to move forward. We're doing it for that reason. We need this. We need this. When we come into this EMBA, everybody's . . . the thing about waiting until a little bit later, you start to . . . when people first come in, they're with a large group of people, and sometimes they don't always feel that they belong here, that they fit in, but they're desperately trying to show that they do."

Tom summarized many of the participants' comments regarding the embedded nature of career adaptability to their fundamental interest in the EMBA program when he commented:

> "That, the LDP in correlation with what was taught on values, that's really been my shift and epiphany. In a way, why I came to the program and was able to participate in your study to begin with was, I'm looking for that professional deep growth in my life."

Focused interventions led to increasing levels of Individual Career Adaptability Capacity

A number of the participants demonstrated an overall increased capacity for career adaptability through better coping and approaches to career planning. Of the nine participants who were interviewed, several shared examples which support this conclusion. The following comments are organized in sub-categories which align with the core definition of career adaptability developed by Super and Savickas.

Ability to cope. Savickas (1997) defined Career Adaptability as the ability to cope with the predictable tasks of career development such as preparing for and finding a job, as well as a

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future orientation that allows individuals to improve the match between their internal job description and the external world on a continuing basis. The capacity for career adaptability was illustrated by Jennifer, who was planning to move up within her own organization to a senior executive role. She reflected:

"Now I feel, even though I've probably left it rather late, that I'm going to have a plan next time I go somewhere, even if it's just that I take a job. . . . I've always taken jobs where I'm learning something. That's why I like software, because it's constantly changing. I have to be intellectually challenged."

Courtney indicated her ability to cope was increasing when she commented:

"Getting to the root of really understanding what makes me tick and stay and just finding ways to get that out and communicate better on the platform faster, and making decisions about that faster instead of just letting other people make those decisions for me and being driven by that."

Jennifer provided us with insight into how her future approach to career advancement had changed when she observed:

"That's easy. I'm going to take responsibility for where I'm going as opposed to that being a reward for what I do. It's not always the best or most capable people that do get promoted or get the opportunities. I see that."

Tom illustrated how his ability to cope had been enhanced when he noted:

"I realized I want to be in a room surrounded by a bunch of people who are smarter and better than me so I can learn from these people. My potential for growth increases significantly being surrounded by great people."

Planful attitudes. Savickas (1997) defined career adaptability as individuals who possess planful attitudes, self- and environmental exploration, and informed decision-making. The emphasis on planfulness, exploration, and decision-making appeared in a number of comments from study participants. Katie stated directly, "I think it was really important that I have some sort of plan. And this program helps us with a plan of trying to put together what we really want to do." This theme was supported by Sharry, who described how her decision-making had changed when she observed:

"I think one of the biggest things that I started doing as opposed to looking for a specific position, I started looking for companies that I would like to work for, companies that have the same kind of ideals and ideas, values. Where I was doing that before, do I want to work for this company? Does it look like a good company that I would fit in with? Now, I think it's more does the company have a position that will help me fulfill my needs."

Cindy described how her capacity had changed in this manner:

"It has completely relaxed me. I feel as if actually you're not doing too bad, you have a plan, you know what you want, you know what you don't want. You're maintaining right now or you're disengaging right now because you actually know that there isn't much more you can take on. You're unconsciously reacting to your circumstances without really thinking that you're proactively reacting to your circumstances."

Courtney, who had struggled with how to move her career forward after a long tenure at the same firm, indicated increased career adaptability when she expressed:

"The assessments say I'm ready and I gave it a lot of thought, but I've a lot of sensibility and focus around what I need to do and where to go, but not I've got to execute. Now I've

got to do the real scary stuff. That's doing it and building it. I feel more ready than I did before though, to do that. I know that I've got at least a small handful of people that I could turn to and lean on if, my God, my little world ends tomorrow because the most embarrassing thing happened, and I don't want to show my face for the next two months."

The assessments, workshops, and coaching offered in the study enhanced participants' capacity to intentionally move through the stages for career adaptability based on the comments from participants regarding their self-reflection, pro-active behavior changes, and identification of connections between the concepts presented and EMBA coursework. Additionally, participants perceived the need to enhance their career adaptability as embedded in the overarching mission of the EMBA program. Overall, participant's career adaptive capacity was enhanced. This was demonstrated by their increased ability to cope and the pro-active, planful attitudes articulated at the conclusion of the study. Jennifer highlighted the increased sense of confidence that comes with increased capacity for career adaptability when she commented, "Now it comes from more a sense of being smarter rather than working harder, and networking with the right people. A shift to power within me."

Summary of RQ1 Findings. The findings associated with the first research question indicate that participants were able to see themselves differently through taking self-assessments which provided new cognitive and psycho-social lenses through which to view themselves. In addition, developmentally focused interventions including workshops and coaching further enhanced participants self-awareness, introduced additional frameworks, and led to deeper interconnections to the EMBA program. As a result, participants' self-awareness was enhanced, they began to make deeper meaning of their experience in the EMBA program, and identified

connections to career adaptability. As participants enhanced their self-awareness and made deeper connections to the EMBA program as a whole, they were empowered to start making the behavior changes necessary to move from being "stuck" developmentally towards increasing their career adaptability which was demonstrated by their enhanced ability to cope and planful attitudes.

Research Question 2: Action Research Team's Awareness of the Challenge of Facilitating Career Adaptability

Action research team members participated in meetings over a two-year period of time to develop and evaluate the interventions designed to facilitate the career adaptability of study participants. These meetings were audiotaped and transcribed. In addition, researcher memos and journals were kept. Action research team members were interviewed individually at the conclusion of the study to capture critical incidents in the process when team members' awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability was enhanced. Probe questions included describing the circumstances and nature of these incidents, why they considered an incident to be significant, and the outcome(s) of the incident. Appendix C contains a copy of the interview questions used with action research team members. Interviewees provided [N=3] examples of how their participation in the action research team enhanced their awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability. Four overarching themes emerged, including (a) the baseline awareness of the action research team of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability, (b) creating shared frameworks, (c) developing interventions, and (d) an increased awareness among the action research team of the challenge of career adaptability. (See Table 9 for a summary.) These four themes align directly with the four phases of action research developed by

Coghlan and Brannick (2010): constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating

action, and have been included in this section.

Table 9

Impact on the Action Research Team

2. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced the awareness of the action research team to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability?	Constructing – The Team's initial understanding of the challenge of Career Adaptability was limited.	• Context • Definitions
	Constructing – The Team collaborated to develop a shared framework which increased their understanding.	• Theory and Assessments • Courses and Workshops
	Planning and Taking Action – The Team collaborated to create developmentally targeted interventions which further enhanced their understanding.	• Change and Your Career • Values and Your Career • Additional Workshops
	Evaluating Action – Collaborating to create a shared framework and developmentally focused interventions deepened the Team's awareness to the Career Adaptability Challenge	• Participant Self-Assessments • Workshops and Coaching • Connections to EMBA • Impact of Study

Constructing— The Team's initial understanding of the challenge of Career Adaptability

was limited

Much of the work engaged in by the action research team during our initial meetings

centered on assessing our individual and collective baseline awareness of the challenge of

facilitating career adaptability. Analyzing the transcripts of team meetings and individual

interviews revealed the following sub-categories.

Context. Initially the action research team discussed our various perspectives regarding

the challenge of career adaptability. However, when you examine our perspectives collectively,

they illustrate our team's baseline awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability.

Many of these concerns centered on why the team thought students might resist becoming more adept at managing their careers. Troy, the EMBA career counselor, said:

"I think it is tougher for the individual right now to make that, particularly for people at the EMBA level, most of whom have families, and big time mortgages, and boats, and all these other things that they're trying to deal with. It's a challenge for some of them to say, 'I'm going to toss some of this off and really get a clean sheet of paper and decide what to do.'"

Troy also indicated the dilemma mid-career professionals face when he noted:

"It's not surprising. It's just that the older they are, the more restrictions they see on what they can do based on the career that they have had in the past leading up to this point, their personal situation. . . . and I guess what I'm thinking is, you can't not do this because you have a family. You can't not do this; you've got to do this. They see it as I can't afford to do this because if this study suggests that I make a radical change, how can I do that and still keep the $110,000 a year falling into the household and that's what handcuffs a lot of people. I'm a little surprised that people can't come to that conclusion, that you've got to do something. You can't. . . . You're 35 and you're already burning out. You can't not do this."

Leslie, the EMBA program manager, who had significant contact with students throughout the program, talked about one student in particular:

"It touched a nerve for one prospective study in her particular experience as a black woman in a heavily white male dominated industry and what she was dealing with is exactly this question. 'What do I tell myself?' An incredibly successful woman, I mean, oh my God, when she was telling us about what she does every day and the access that

she has to the leaders of CNX Communications, 17 of the top 25 VPs she has first name basis access to their offices at all times. But she does not experience that as being at the pinnacle of her career. She experiences that as 17 more opportunities for failure."

Ryan, a faculty member who taught leadership development, assessed the current status of how we currently engage students in career adaptability by stating, "I think the way to do that, right now it sounds like so much of what you experience is reactive. They have to reach a crisis moment before they come to you."

Another concern at the outset of the team's work was whether students would accept a strongly theory-grounded approach to this topic. Troy indicated after the study in his final interview that upon reflection he was a bit skeptical about taking a theoretical approach to this challenge:

"For me, a couple of things sort of stand out because I also had been a little apprehensive about the students' willingness to dive into some of the theories and applications of career development, because in my experience in coaching in the past I don't want to hear all that—I need a job, I need a better job and that would again be transactional."

In her final interview Leslie, the EMBA program director, reflected on her initial understanding of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability when she commented:

"Right. I'm not a big believer in happy accidents. Every once in a while that's true, but mostly I see as I saw when I came into this, so many students achieving so much success after they graduate and not being able to understand how that happened, or thinking that it's because they came in primed to that, they were the right person. Being able to see ways of adapting to the students that we have who are right for the program but may not have come in with the skill set. There are a lot of very successful people in the world who

have zero self-awareness or no adaptability or no openness to something beyond simply,

give me the rules and I'll follow them."

Ryan, in his final interview, reflected on how little we really understood about how to facilitate

career adaptability when he said:

"Their actual developmental needs are very different, very precisely different, and I was

really here when you and Candice would tell stories, and after Leslie and I started telling

stories and Ken has started telling stories about what our scores meant to us, that you

could see how rich this really was going to be, and how little sense we had at the

beginning."

Definitions of career adaptability. The action research team moved from sharing our

individual perspectives on the challenge of facilitating career adaptability to gradually

identifying definitions and creating shared frameworks for career adaptability in order to move

forward. In an early action research team meeting, I introduced the definitions and framework

developed by Super and Savickas by indicating:

"These are the stages: exploration, establish, maintenance, and disengagement. The thing

that my dissertation committee, it took them a minute to wrap their head around was that,

okay I get those stages but, Jason, people don't go through these in lock step. I said, right

this theory says that you can do many cycles; you could be in establishment while you are

thinking about exploring the next thing. You can mini-cycle back through this over and

over throughout your career.

What the ACCI will tell us is where you are now and here is the work of this

group that is going to happen over the next couple of weeks. When we get the results by

person we are going to have some sense of where they are in these specific tasks. Then

what we have to do is say, okay I think this person ought to go to this workshop. We have

to design workshops and in those workshops specific exercises that try to help raise their

self-awareness around, based on what you told us you're actually in crystallization. You

are trying to figure out or you are trying to crystalize what is that next job.

The challenge for the action research team is to think of, well, if I had a group of

ten people in a workshop, what I am going to do with them. What do the exercise and the

activity look like, because it can't just be here is what the test results said. One of the cool

new products, if you will, that should come out of this, and this is where we can all pull

from, you can pull activities and exercises from wherever you think would help facilitate

people's awareness of developmental movement."

In an effort to relate this theory to other constructs the action research team is more familiar with

I added:

"And the process of career adaptability, for somebody who is highly adaptive, theorize

learning agile, would look a lot faster than somebody else who really doesn't understand

what those steps are. Part of what I think we are doing here is taking a very different

approach from the very beginning with a group of students and talking about this theory

and using this assessment and trying to draw them in to a very different way of

approaching their own career adaptation. We will see if it works."

The following dialogue ensued:

Ryan: "The crystallization and the specification is then, tell me because I don't know the

             activities that one does in those moments. They are trying to jump over what kind

             of activities?"

Jason: "Individuals typically resist the self-assessment phase and want to move directly

into job search mode."

Ryan: "Yeah, I get that. What they are resisting there, one of the activities in exploration

crystallization is assessment. . . . But if you just keep coming back to

specification, but the person is stronger. They have learned something through the

process, and then they might have an opportunity to get over here to

maintenance."

Troy: "If you were highly career adaptive and you got fired tomorrow, you wouldn't

panic and you wouldn't freak out."

Leslie: "I am going to be very interested in the impact. I think part of what, because we

have certainly been learning it over the last couple of years is that setting

expectations before the question is raised is hugely important. I think one of the

great benefits to this project is going to be learning how to set expectations before

they come and see the career counselor. By the time they come and see you, who

knows what stress is out there."

At this stage the action research team appeared to understand the theory of career adaptability

and began to make connections to other theories. I made an effort to move us forward by saying:

"The key thing that is cool about this research study is we're not really arguing the

theory, what we are dialing in on is, how do we facilitate career adaptability. There has

been little to no research done on the how."

Action research team member Ryan, in an effort to understand Super and Savickas' definition of

career adaptability, asked:

"Question on that. The commonality is this readiness to cope. Is the readiness to cope

more of the person's abilities, what enables them, because they have the predictable tasks

and I get that, and then you have the unpredictable adjustments?"

Leslie, who had private sector experience, shared the following thoughts in an attempt to make

meaning of the use of Super and Savickas definitions and the ACCI:

"What we used to do is, we used to think about that in consulting with clients, you want

to link arms with your client. You are not actually across the table delivering something;

you are on the side of the table with that person, experiencing it with them, you are just

bringing a certain level of expertise to it that they don't have. We would talk about when

you are selling something to someone, you are not actually selling something to them,

what you are doing is removing barriers so that they sell themselves. You are not actually

talking about what it is that you do or can do or can't do. What you are doing is removing

the barrier so that they discover that for themselves. . . . If we think about that in terms of

context as well as personal development, we could have much more of the reality that

people face in career development. It's not an individual journey. It's not a self-discovery.

Career development is contextualized."

Ryan continued to grapple with the project approach. He commented:

"Thoughts are all these arrogant things like, well how can an instrument really capture

me, and what are they going to do with it. It is all these fears, right? As opposed to, you

don't know yet what you don't know, and you don't know that the idea that there is

actually a process. There are stages of death and dying and we can't even help you die

peacefully. You are looking at, don't tell me there is a way to die peacefully, I am

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perfectly upset and I want the right to be upset. I want to be in a tizzy about my career. I

don't actually want to help."

Ryan's effort to further understand and internalize how we planned to utilize the theory behind

the ACCI assessment was evident when he said:

"I was trying to think about this notion of learning early to the process, diagnostics, of

career development. Career development, if you alert them really early that there is a

process to this and these are the diagnostics that you need to take in order for us to be

able to do our job with you to sign off with you. It is almost like a doctor saying, well I

could just send you out but I really don't know; I can't give a good diagnosis until we run

these tests. If you want to work with me we are running these tests."

Thus the team evolved both in its understanding of the nature and fundamental challenge of

facilitating career adaptability and the how it might be implemented in this study.

Constructing— The Team collaborated to develop a shared framework which increased

their understanding

Once the action research team developed a shared definition of career adaptability we

then began to take a closer look at the theoretical framework behind the ACCI. As we did,

individuals initially made connections to other theories and assessments they were familiar with

in order to understand the theoretical concept of career adaptability and make meaning of it. In

addition, connections between the courses and workshops the group was familiar emerged. This

process allowed the group to create a shared framework that provided the basis for developing

the interventions that would drive the study.

Connections to related theories and assessments. Ryan helped the action research team

make meaning of the career adaptability theory by identifying theories and assessments we were

familiar with, making connections to the career adaptability theory I introduced to the group. This was illustrated when he said:

"When I look down at that second to last bullet point, the Savickas' one, it made me think of Robert Sternberg from Yale; I don't know where he is now. He is the guy that is famous for the notion of successful intelligence, that learning agility rips off to a great degree. . . . When you really look underneath it the psychological mechanisms, as we think about how we help people in their career adaptability develop this."

In an effort to help the group build connections I responded by referencing the theory and definition of career adaptability by stating:

"A little bit further down the page, you may have picked up on this, it says, it involves the ability to cope with the predictable tasks of career development, such as preparing and finding a job, as well as the future orientation that allows individuals to improve the match between their internal job description and the external world on a continuing basis. I think that really speaks to what you are highlighting, which is adaptation, right?"

I responded, "Does that answer your question?" Ryan responded by stating, "Yes, yes it does." Potential connections between a competency assessment and the ACCI also arose when I stated, "I think the ACCI might bring to participants' attention that disengagement may be tied to the overload they experience as they approach the executive level." Ryan referenced a competency assessment developed by Lominger, and said:

"To back you up on the data on the competencies, the only competency that actually drops as you move up from individual contributor to manager to the executive and upper-level executive, the only one that goes backwards, everything else people get better at. The only one that goes backward is life-work balance."

This back and forth helped the group develop a deeper understanding of the theory and move into identifying connections between the ACCI assessment and other assessment tools familiar to the group.

   Connections to courses and workshops. As shared frameworks were created the conversation within the action research team began to identify connections between the theory of career adaptability and courses currently taught in the EMBA program. In addition, workshops that we offer or have been a part of in other settings were also identified. Ryan made an initial connection between the values management inventory and the concept of adaptive leadership he used in his executive leadership course when he said:

   "What they're coming in with is a set of beliefs and values that they already adhere to.

   It's public to the people they know. They want to kick ass and want people to be proud of

   them, their organization and their families to be proud of them. What they want that to

   bring them is realistic and objective confidence that I have the skills and capabilities to

   build my life in the world and to feel that I can make a positive contribution. So, on the

   one hand, they don't want to be messed with. They just want you to come in and make

   them feel better about who they want to be, are; on the other hand, they want to come in

   and actually be transformed and want to be transformed in their presences in their

   organization. That is why we teach at the executive level the adaptive leadership."

Leslie, who had sat in on a number of Ryan's executive leadership classes, picked up on this connection and added, "What I think is great, I remember from your class last year—that I was so excited to sit in on because I learned so much from you—I love it when you said, 'You know, my job here is to make you dislike me'"

Ryan: "At a rate you can tolerate."

Jason: "I'm trying to push you out of your comfort zone just enough."

Leslie: "You're not going to thank me for it."

Jason: "You'll start to see there's some wisdom in what I'm telling you and you'll actually

                change your behavior a little bit."

This exchange led Ryan to make a connection to a workshop that would ultimately become one

of our interventions on change and your career when he said:

> "You know, we have presumed people aren't bad because, if they're bad, there's nothing
>
> we can do for them, but you're like us, it's you're either adequate or you're inadequate to
>
> the complexity. That's Kegan's basic point. That's why the LDP is so powerful. We're in
>
> over our heads by at least a factor of one maybe two."

Ryan began to see how to apply these ideas to career adaptability went he added:

> "What I have historically done is, I've done the Kegan workshop, diagnosing people's
>
> immunity to change, which is . . . I've actually done that workshop in class to help the
>
> students get out their own individual issues around their leadership, exercising leadership,
>
> but you can just . . . you can change the content."

Planning and Taking Action – The Team collaborated to create developmentally targeted

interventions which further enhanced their understanding

The connections identified between the theory of career adaptability, courses and

workshops, and reviewing our own ACCI results led the action research team to develop

interventions to facilitate career adaptability focused on raising self-awareness and engaging

participants in the underlying challenges of adult development. Initially, my sense was the group

was a bit hesitant to see themselves leading workshops as a part of the study due to time

pressures and lack of direct experience with this topic. This exchange illustrates where we started when I commented:

> "Okay. The other thing I was going to say is as we think about Ryan leading the life-
> balance thing, I would love if this group delivered workshops, but it's okay to bring
> somebody in. If we think of somebody who you think can come in and do this piece, we
> can do that."

Leslie responded:

> "I can pay for a facilitator. . . . All the workshops that I have run have been around skill
> development. . . . It's like communicating across the generational differences within an
> organization. That's really not applicable. I haven't done workshops in this field. So I can
> run a workshop but I have to have some guidance on what to do."

In subsequent meetings Ryan offered to lead workshops on immunity to change and competing values. One of the interesting things about the action research process was the level of innovation and volume of ideas that were generated. For example, a number of workshop ideas were generated that we did not have time to fully develop and implement. Although we did ultimately offer participants workshops on Game Theory and Personal Branding, it is important to note additional workshops were identified. The following highlights a couple of ideas for possible future development. Ryan discovered another theoretical connection and suggested:

> "People in the positive organizational scholarship's side of things, there's a whole group
> of people who study this and I was like, 'Whoa this is Jason's stuff.' There's one
> [workshop] that's really powerful called Reflective Best Self and you basically get 20
> people who know you well from all areas of life and work to write three short little
> paragraphs stories about basically you at your best."

Leslie suggested we consider a workshop on the importance of work-life balance and career. She gave voice to this indicating:

"So one of the workshop ideas we might think about is around balance. We've tossed their entire life out of balance, and family creates a lot of conflict within teams. There's a lot of—'She's missing a team meeting for a family dinner. I have a family, too. We like dinner. I should be at the family dinner. Screw this team meeting.' So, that happens on a weekly basis."

These suggestions illustrate the connections the team was making regarding how to intervene to enhance career adaptability, and also their awareness of the need to tie these interventions to theory.

Evaluating Action – Collaborating to create a shared framework and developmentally focused interventions deepened the Team's awareness to the Career Adaptability Challenge

The action research team developed an increased awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability in alignment with adult development through our efforts to share our baseline awareness, develop definitions and frameworks, and create interventions. In reviewing the transcripts from team meetings and individual interviews, our increased awareness emerged in the following sub-categories.

Reviewing participants' self-assessments. As the action research team reviewed participants' self-assessment results, our own awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability increased. Troy, who coached individual students after they took the ACCI, indicated many participants said the assessment provided a framework for discussion and reassurance. He said, "Exactly. There's nothing wrong with me. There are a bunch of other

people out here who are also disengaged." Troy went on to express how the theory and the assessment helped change the way participants approached their next career move:

> "I think one of the things we learned is that there's a lot of power in working on the why and working on the engagement piece and not just delivering the how, which is a lot of what we've done in the past."

Ryan identified the impact of the ACCI in combination with individual coaching when he said:

> "The first was when we all took the ACCI, the Adult Career Concerns Inventory, and started talking through our results, and how helpful it was to understand the nature of where the different people were going to be with regard to the development of their career concerns. That people were going to be all over the place, and a lot of different places for a lot of different reasons. That inventory doesn't . . . tell you a whole lot just on its face until you get people telling stories about what these scores mean in the context of their life right now, and then the thing just like pops in 3D."

To this point, Troy, who did the majority of the coaching added:

> "I know the people we talked about, they felt that they were in disengagement in their current role, felt a little guilty about even thinking disengagement because of where they were life-wise. I got a family, I got all these things, I can't possibly be disengaged. Then this came along and particularly ACCI gave them, 'I can't be disengaged, how about that other people are disengaged, so it's okay.'"

As the team began to share stories from working with participants and reviewing ACCI results, Leslie commented on what she felt people were learning about the challenge of career adaptation:

> "I am going to throw a few things out because where I am hitting at is for me where the penny drops is when you see those words that say allow individuals to improve the match between their internal job description and the external world. Part of what we are talking about there, I believe having talked to these people, is we are talking about what are the mythologies in which we are operating. What are the stories I have told myself, or I have been told for my whole life about what a 'career' is. I think what we have the opportunity here to do is in an interesting way [is to] uncover that mythology of career. The people that we are working with are, societally and in terms of how they think, these are the people who are on a career path. What we are finding out is that there is no path. There is just a bunch of stories that you tell yourself over and over again."

The value of using the ACCI to work with individuals was first articulated by Ryan and led to an interesting conversation among the team members:

Ryan: "I would not even put it on them. I can't help. It is almost like I am a blind, dumb man until you take this instrument and then I can start to locate you. I wish I could do other things and locate you, but this tool will help me get alongside you and for my sake, take this instrument so I can be of assistance to you. I was noticing my own resistance to career things. It is funny, I was sitting here thinking I am going to take a career thing and I remember I am feeling resistant to it."

Leslie: "That's where that frustration comes from. A lot of our students have already

             started down that road before they even come here into the MBA program.

             They're coming in as a result of that process taking place, that disengagement."

Ryan: "So I was thinking like in the exploration stage that somebody that's high in

             disengagement and then, you saw that, a lot of the high disengagements were also

             high in explorations. It's almost like, I'm always thinking about getting out, I'm

             thinking about what's next."

Jason: "Putting that in context, not just the score, but . . . where you started to sort of

             make meaning of it and make connections between your own experience and your

             own knowledge."

Ryan: "Yes. That was a big aha, a really big aha."

Ryan: "I had prior to just the nature of the various places people are, those are almost

             before it was like you just painted them all with one brush. That was a big "aha"

             for me. In order to help build the career adaptability and their resilience, what

             they need is going to be very different depending on which of those four stages

             and where they are, and more importantly, what that specifically means for them."

As the action research team evaluated the results of the LDP, our awareness to the challenge of

facilitating career adaptability was increased further:

Ryan: "That in itself was really interesting, and they're noting that none of them were

             being helped with any of the personal step in between so that no one . . . they

             didn't know how to move into that individualist phase. They're like stuck between

             aspiring to strategist, and they're stuck at expert and achiever, but there's nobody

             to help them do the individualist territory."

Leslie: "They're stuck and that's why they're here."

Ryan: "They are here to reinforce what they already know. Now there are vague

intermissions in the group and it's unevenly distributed that they want to go for

more, but the center of gravity of the group is going to be reinforce what I

already know and make me more efficient at doing it."

Leslie: "There's your frustration right there. They resist learning new things. They resist

new experiences sometimes quite vehemently. . . . These particular students are

stuck based upon their success. They've had a lot of success doing what they have

always done. How is it you can be the seven, eight, nine on one score, and on

another score be very—in terms of analytical skills—be very high? They have a

functional area of expertise and they are also probably pretty good at knowing

how to manipulate a situation. Manipulate is not the right word, manage, manage

expectations, manage responses, manage people."

This back and forth was clearly deepening their understanding of the challenge of facilitating

career adaptability in alignment with adult development. It led to further assessment of the

group:

Ryan: "This is the development skills. The grand transition from being an achiever to an

individualist which is the threshold to moving onto strategist. . . . They're

motivated by increased intuition and unconsciously gained understanding of the

wholeness of reality. This is the capacities that an LDP strategist requires."

Leslie: "So that's what they require. That's what they're ultimately here for, but they can't

articulate that."

Ryan: "They can't say . . . they only vaguely know that this is true about them. By my

           forcing them to take the behavioral things that we know correlate with that. Now

           how do they expect to get that, and you'll see that that's a stage six value."

Ryan: "So, you may find this interesting, but just scanning this group, not a surprise to

           me, look how many people are in what's called 'achiever'. Achiever's their primary

           place, experts are their backdrop, and they are moving towards individualists.

           Well, individualists is that stage where you're going through this tension that

           Ryan just described, this tension of, 'I want to be transformational, but I got to go

           back and look at my values and yada.' It's right there."

Evaluating workshops and coaching. The action research team also evaluated the

impact of the workshops and recommended improvements to make in the future. Troy noted:

           "Yes, personal branding that was they take it from this high level theory to okay, here's

           what you need to do. Here's what you need to do, and I think . . . that had been something

           that had not been done with this group before. I think the EMBAs were hungry for it

           because they had seen we've all got 10 and 20 years of out here working. I've tried all

           these other things so here's something very, very pragmatic. . . . Yes, I think that's

           something that we really hit on in this study was how to engage people, how to get them

           to a point where they want to do a career marketing plan. They see the value in it."

Troy, in his final interview, offered some interesting insights regarding a shift in the coaching

that occurred during the study and his enhanced awareness of increasing career adaptability:

           "What I would do in my one-on-one sessions with the students is I'd say,

           'Okay, what did you learn from the adult career assessment? What did you

           learn?' What I started to hear was, I didn't really learn this, I had actually seen

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it in my career. This just gave it, 'Oh, okay. This is what I've been

experiencing.' This is what . . . the theory is now supporting what I had actually

experienced and that gave a whole thing a lot more credibility with the students.

Now I understand this. For me, once that happened then they were . . . it's

easier to coach them. It's easier to work with them. It's easier to talk about let's

do this or you need to develop a list of companies that you're really interested

in. It needs to be more than five companies. You really do need to get down

here, and dig, and do the work, and come up with a target list. You need to do

that. In the past I've been begging and screaming but with this group it was

like, 'Okay, yes, I can see, I do need to do that.'"

Connections to the EMBA program and overall systemic impact. The action research

team's awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability was highlighted as they

began to make connections between the study and the EMBA program as a whole. As Leslie

noted:

"Now I see how productive it can be to integrate their academic experience. So

much of what they're learning is not happening in a classroom. Integrating the

work that I do in managing a certain student experience around student

development with what you do in career management and career development

is so productive for the students, and also for the program. Provided our

processes are obviously in line with each other, we're both focused on an

increased self-awareness. Not only just knowing yourself better, but knowing

how to be, based on that growing self-awareness. If what I'm doing in the

program side can integrate with what you're doing on career management and

career development, it can only be good for [our programs] and for the students."

Ryan identified the connections between the study and program through a different lens, describing how Leslie, Ryan and I worked together to present a summary of our study at the Global EMBA conference in Paris:

"We've got to work three layers. We're working competencies and behaviors. That's what we've got to be because that's public and you can do something about it. It can be observed and described, and we've got huge resources to do that. Then you've got the second layer, which we presented, it was in that diagram in Paris, the part of the processes around self-development: personal awareness, identity, values. That's undergirded by the processes of adult development. Andragogy—how you teach adults, that's what andragogy is— requires you do all three things. Really, what we're talking about is andragogy of the business school."

He continued:

"The thing that makes this kind of integration work, and why it doesn't happen elsewhere, is people don't share common frames that they can then do this work in. They either don't share them or they dispute them or, what's even worse for most of these folks, they can't make double and triple descriptions. They can't say, 'My frame is a partial description of the territory. That frame is a complementary and different description of the frame.'"

The action research team offered several comments which highlighted the overall impact of the study. These formed the basis for later conversations about how to integrate components

of the study into the EMBA program going forward. These comments demonstrated an increased

awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability in the complex context of the

EMBA program. Ryan offered the following:

> "I realized that if we don't have things that attend to them personally, and help them
>
> begin to live out their ideals and aspirations, and to clarify those, and to keep those alive
>
> in the different spheres of their life, then they're never going to make that jump to what
>
> I'm trying to teach them in leadership, and they're not going to know what to pursue that's
>
> going to make them really happy and make them resilient."

Troy's overall assessment highlighted a balance between theory and pragmatic advice in the

study:

> "I think it was a perfect balance between the theory and the pragmatic from my
>
> standpoint. I think a lot of it was we didn't just get bogged down in the theory. We just
>
> didn't do that, nowhere. I mean you didn't do it, Ryan didn't do it, Leslie and I in our
>
> conversations, nowhere do we just give them theory. We gave them pragmatic things all
>
> the way down to, you might want to put this on your resume and not this. You might
>
> want to do this with linking; you might want to join this organization; you might want to
>
> network with these people."

Ryan highlighted his increased awareness of the systemic challenge in the following comment

regarding how long the action research team has been working together:

> "There's a real shared meaning to this, and it comes around having these useful
>
> frameworks, so the ACCI, the LDP, the Values Management Inventory, and then the
>
> framework we created about a lot of the transformational areas that we dug into in the

end. I think that was all, all those shared frameworks were really important, but just the

appreciation, how long it takes."

I responded with, "This is almost two years . . . we've been meeting." This exchange underscored

how long it took for the action research team to develop a shared framework and begin to work

together. An incidental outcome of this study was a clearer understanding of how challenging it

is to get any group to develop a shared framework and work together to implement change. By

the end of the study, the action research team had significantly increased its awareness of the

challenge of facilitating career adaptability in alignment with adult development.

Summary of RQ2 Findings. The findings associated with the second research question

indicate the Action Research team's initial understanding of the challenge of facilitating career

adaptability during the construction phase was limited. However, as the team collaborated to

develop a shared framework, our understanding increased. As the team moved into the planning

and taking action phase of the action research process, our understanding of the challenge was

further enhanced. As the action research team evaluated the action which took place, it became

apparent our collaboration to create shared frameworks and developmentally focused

interventions deepened the team's awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability.

Research Question 3: How Has the Action Research Team's Increased Awareness of Career Adaptability Impacted the System?

As action research team members engaged in facilitating career adaptability through

developing and implementing interventions and evaluating their actions, a number of changes

beyond the scope of the study were identified for potential implementation in the EMBA

program going forward. Additionally, the final interviews with action research team members

indicated individual development occurred. Finally, the action research team identified a number

of opportunities to continue our collaboration through future research. In all, these three themes illustrate how the increased awareness to career adaptability impacted the system as whole. (See Table 10.)

Table 10

Impact on the System

3. How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase individuals capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability impacted the system?	The Team's efforts to develop and evaluate interventions led to stronger integration of Career Adaptability within EMBA Program in the future.	• Shared Program Framework • Residency • Leadership Coaches
	The Team's efforts to develop and evaluate interventions impacted Action Research Team members' individual development, which impacts the system going forward.	• Program Management • Integration and Frameworks • Impact on Future Programs • Lasting Impact On Action Research Team
	Possible future research has on-going potential to impact the system.	• Interest in Research • Assessment Connections • Longitudinal Research

The Team's efforts to develop and evaluate interventions led to stronger integration of Career Adaptability within EMBA

The action research team's efforts to develop and evaluate interventions designed to increase an individual's career adaptability led to the identification of a number of potential changes that would integrate career adaptability more fully into the EMBA program. I would describe these ideas as the beginning of innovation and these efforts are identified in the following sub-categories.

Create a shared framework for the program. The action research team discussed the potential of creating a shared framework that would serve as a guide to everyone involved in the EMBA program. Ryan provided this suggestion:

"To get the faculty involved, I would like to take that matrix we created for the Paris

conference, and maybe we do it at one of the faculty meetings [and] enlist other faculty to

say, 'Where do you fall in this matrix in your course work on these areas of teaching and

developmental impact and do you want to become part of this?' I think that then allows

you to sync up these other courses."

Troy also indicated there is significant potential in creating a shared framework that faculty and
staff could leverage:

"That's it, that's it, because look, I've tried to bring in the career marketing plan and put

it down and say, 'This is just like marketing a brand that you just learned about last

semester.' We led up to that in everything that we did so that when we got around to

branding and the career marketing plan, it was the next logical step. Therefore the

acceptance and the credibility was a lot higher."

Lastly, Ryan highlights how powerful a shared framework could become for EMBA students:

"We have an opportunity, it seems to me, to do that with this program in a way that

creates almost like a community of practice about, 'This is what we do in the executive

MBA, is you come through and you get this and we track you out and we actually talk

about it and develop these things.' I can see potentially that that might even be part of

what helps create that kind of ongoing developmental communities when people leave. It

might be forcing it a bit, but it's not a stretch to imagine that it could be used in these

ways."

Residency. As the idea of a shared framework began to evolve during action research

team meetings, additional ideas about how to leverage the three-day residency at the beginning

of the EMBA program emerged. In the final action research team meeting, Leslie opened the

door to reimagining the residency when she indicated, "I'm ready to blow it up."

Leslie and I had been discussing how to integrate components of the study into the

EMBA program going forward and I thought residency would be the most logical place to

introduce it. As a result of this discussion, Leslie has since asked for a proposal that spells out

our thoughts in detail and has committed to implement the change this summer.

Leadership coaching. Another area where Leslie and I discussed how to integrate what

we learned about career adaptability into the program was with the leadership coaching provided

to students in the EMBA program. Our discussion began early in our action research meetings:

Jason: "To me, leadership coaching—somebody like Ryan would be a better resource on

                this. To me, the more I learn about leadership development and leadership

                coaching, it's more about competencies and capabilities."

Leslie: "And confidence."

Jason: "Confidence is in there. Right. What I think we are trying to do is come up with a

                model that helps students get all those pieces. The challenge is that they are very

                intertwined."

Later during the study Leslie indicated she changed the way leadership coaching was

organized as a result of her interaction with the action research team. In the past coaches had

been assigned to individual students. However, since the students are part of a team throughout

the program and this is where much of their development occurs, it would be best to assign the

coaches to teams. Leslie described this change:

"So our coaching is now team based…After listening for years to our leadership coaches

saying, "Well they're confused about what coaching is for and I spend so much time

explaining." I said, "Well why don't you guys get together and create. . . . "

I responded, "Put it in writing." And Leslie said:

"Put it in writing so that we have shared expectations and understanding. Oh, that's a

great idea. So they've done that, which is really helpful. So the students have this model

now that's team based in addition to individual, and that's a whole series of meetings."

Since then, Leslie has indicated the leadership coaches are getting a lot of questions from

students about their career development and we have discussed how to create a shared

framework for them to leverage. Potential next steps include a meeting with the leadership

coaches to discuss a shared framework and explore how they can work closely with Troy to

better support students. In Leslie's final interview, when asked to identify a significant moment

in the study, she indicated:

"A particular moment . . . I really think it was for me, because there were so many . . .

we've been at this for a while and there have been many opportunities to apply it in very

productive ways. Probably the revamping of the coaching model for the program is going

to have the greatest lasting impact on the program itself."

The Team's efforts to develop and evaluate interventions impacted Action Research Team

members' individual development, which impacts the system going forward

Perhaps the most significant impact on the system was the development of the action

research team members themselves. As a result of working together to develop and evaluate

interventions designed to increase individuals' career adaptability their own adaptability and

development was enhanced. This process which took place over a two-year time frame has been summarized in the following sub-categories.

Program management. Early in the action research process, it became apparent the EMBA program admissions process was starting to be influenced. As Leslie shared with the group, her approach to recruiting was evolving:

"Having just come off of three interviews a day every day for the last two weeks with our best fit students, we have interviewed about 100 people total, but it has really picked up. The thing that keeps happening over and over again, and we talked about this a bit yesterday, about what is it that we look for in this particular program. We look for people who are right for this research, frankly."

In fact, during another action research team meeting, Leslie noted:

"We are not looking for people who are getting ready for just one or two clicks of change. We are not looking for people who are going to stay exactly where they are and are frankly looking for more business opportunities for their current place. That is why they want to broaden their network; they are broadening their business opportunity. We are not looking in those categories. We are looking for people who are, even if they plan to stay in their industry, even stay in their company, are looking for new ways of understanding what opportunity is."

In summarizing the impact of the action research process, Leslie indicated how her message in recruiting has changed when she stated:

"I think so, because . . . it has changed the way we recruit students. Now in recruitment sessions I say, I would always say, this is a demanding program. Now I say very specifically, our job here is to disabuse you of the notion that everything you've known

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and done up to this point is all you need to prepare you to transform yourself and your

career. What we will do in this program is push you off a cliff and then catch you at the

bottom and help you rebuild yourself, help you climb back up, outside of your

professional context. You're not going to lose your job here. You're not going to lose your

professional reputation. It's a safe place to undergo that kind of an experience, but it is

very challenging. I feel I'm being more clear in recruitment sessions and in interviews."

Integration and shared frameworks. A critical component of the action research team's

development was recognizing a need for integration of academic and extra-curricular activities

in order to improve the program as a whole. The potential need for integration and shared

frameworks in order to tie curricular and extracurricular components together was illustrated

during Leslie's final interview, when she was asked to reflect on critical incidents during the

study:

> "When I came in, when you asked me to work with you, I accepted honestly because I
>
> was curious and wanted to try something new and was open to whatever it might mean in
>
> terms of the program itself, but pretty quickly, especially working with you and with
>
> Ryan, I began to see obvious ways that the research could have an impact on everything
>
> from recruitment to team development and team dynamics within the program to
>
> curriculum, both in terms of coursework but extracurricular activities with the workshops
>
> that we did."

In his final interview, Ryan picked up on the need to integrate as well. Initially, he said:

> **"**They show up wanting it, but then it helped me understand why they struggle so much
>
> with it. What we can do to help them start making the transition is, they don't know how
>
> to explore their own individual, personal development, so they're getting all this

professional stuff, but that's actually not what they need. What they need is to nurture and

grow their personal side of things, their own vocation, their own volunteering, their own

interests—to bring that alive and to have that supported and all the practices and

competencies that support it in order to help begin them bridging it over. It's as if the

class as a whole is trying to climb a ladder not one rung at a time, but three rungs at a

time, and they're going to fail and they're going to find themselves frustrated."

When asked to explain how this was connected to career adaptability, Ryan added:

"That was a big 'aha' for me. In order to help build the career adaptability and their

resilience, what they need is going to be very different depending on which of those four

stages and where they are, and more importantly, what that specifically means for them."

Impact on future programs. An important factor to consider is how the action research

team's development may impact other programs in the system and beyond. This notion came up

in several action research team meetings and final interviews. In an early action research team

meeting, in reference to a new program we were considering, Ryan said to me:

"Now I want you just to think for one minute, what if you had leadership fellows and

each leadership fellow had anywhere from two to four learning groups. What you did

with your leadership fellows at orientation was everybody has to take their ACCI. One of

the things you get in orientation is it helps you understand if we do part of that workshop

at orientation is to understand your career, your career development, and where you

currently are in it. How do you view business school to help advance your career

understanding?"

In a subsequent action research team meeting, Leslie pointed out how our efforts might be

viewed by the college when she commented:

"Well, if I'm the dean, I look at this, and I say: Okay, you convinced me. We do need to integrate this into the program in a formal sense. Now the ART team needs to continue to meet, because you need to now tell me how you are going to integrate this [into other programs]. At what level? What frequency? Do we need to do more tests before we roll it out?"

An important measure of the action research team's development was recognizing that not everything we developed in the study could be applied to other programs. This growth was highlighted by Troy:

"We're not just going to shotgun all the stuff. You've got five plus years of experience, you're showing some signs of disengagement. You know what; let's use the ACCI . . . . One of the things that I realized was, you can't paint graduate students with the same brush."

Perhaps the best example of how the action research team's development evolved was illustrated in an exchange between Troy and me during his final interview. I began by saying:

"I'm more of the mind of how do we take what we learned about action research and apply it . . . and there may be pieces that we pull out of this stuff but I think we've got to be really cautious about just saying, Oh, we've had this work over here, let's apply it. . . . I think we've got to go deeper into what are the developmental challenges facing the other MBA population with three or five years of work experience. That was one of the big learnings for me, because I made the same mistake year for years too. I was taking what worked at other schools, and other times, and other contacts, and I kept trying to apply it here, and it didn't work. Frankly this whole study has been about . . . sort of

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swallowing that pride and that ego and saying, 'I don't know how to fix this' so that

means we're going to have to try some different things."

Troy inquired:

"Might you be saying that we need to apply an action research methodology to the other

populations and then figure out what the interventions are going to be for that group

because we know what the interventions were for the EMBAs but not sure for other

graduate programs?"

Lasting impact for the action research team. The action research team gained

experiences and new perspectives that will have a lasting impact on their development. The first

example I will highlight is the participation in the annual global EMBA conference held in Paris,

France. Leslie, Ryan, and I summarized our learning by presenting an integrated model for

student development. This was expressed by Leslie:

"'Transforming Leaders: Integrating the EMBA for Student Development.' So we're

talking about integrating coursework, self-assessment, team development and career

management. Here's another little insight into our audience at this conference. The fact

that we are faculty, researchers, career management, and program development staff

working together is a model that they'll want to hear about. It'll be very interesting to

them."

Leslie's prediction was accurate. I was surprised to learn during the conference just how unique

not only our model was, but also our integrated team of faculty and staff. Leslie also commented

on how our interdisciplinary team had the potential to impact our own organization further:

"The impact this had at that conference, the MBA conference, was to broaden the idea of

an interdisciplinary team. It's not just for scholars anymore. We are an interdisciplinary

team focused on this challenge of career development.

Ryan echoed this enhanced appreciation for the limitations working professional program

managers' face when he said:

"It just struck me that so many other structures they're set up, especially at the MBA . . .

At an MBA, they're taught that standard to your program where people leave their jobs

and come to work, come to school full-time and there's a lot more time . . . a lot of that

happens more organically. I won't say it happens with any intentionality, any more

intentionality than we do. At least it has an opportunity to unfold organically as we don't

have those organic moments."

The action research team's direct participation through taking the assessments and delivering

interventions will have a lasting impact. Not only did we learn by doing, but we had the

opportunity to share feedback and assess how these interventions might be utilized in other

settings.

Finally, the overall development and deeper appreciation for the challenge of facilitating

career adaptability realized by the action research team will have the most lasting impact.

Troy shared his most lasting insight when he indicated:

"This is now, okay, I'm ready. These two are ready to be players. They're ready to go out

on the court, on the field, in the community, in the workforce and do it themselves and

not depend on me to tell them the next step. . . . For Troy that was an 'aha' moment

because I hadn't seen that level of commitment and enthusiasm before. These folks are

busy. They've got some things to do. For me, honestly it was no more than their

excitement, interest, enthusiasm all of those things because again, I hadn't seen that in the past."

Leslie, during her final interview, indicated the lasting impact for her when she stated:

"If I had to pinpoint the thing that was the greatest revelation for me in doing this project, it would be the understanding that the frustration that our students often experience has a very clear reference point and some very clear intervention points."

Possible future research has on-going potential to impact the system

Throughout the study, the action research team discussed the possibility of engaging in future research as a follow-up to the study. As the study evolved, connections between assessments emerged as an area of interest, and the possibility of conducting longitudinal research was discussed. These areas of interest are identified in the following sub-categories.

Interest in research. The potential for additional research beyond the scope of the study emerged fairly early in action research team meetings. One exchange between Ryan and Troy illustrated this point. Ryan began:

"Does the experience of the EMBA have any effect on people's logic without any developmental interventions and precise career developmental interventions? Then we have two data sets if we wanted to then write more papers on. Let's think about whether you and I just want to set up a separate research project on that and run it. All we have to do is collect it before people start the program."

Troy responded, "I would encourage us to think beyond the EMBA program. You could even do it with some other programs and cohorts."

Another area of research interest emerged when Leslie noted:

"It would be interesting to see if there was a way of mapping the quantity of time spent during and time spent after each individual coaching session and the quality of that session. Does the time decrease and quality go up over time? In other words, does this thing have a redounding impact on your daily practice so that, when they do come to me, we are much more efficient, and the work we accomplish is of a much higher quality. I am guessing that is going to occur."

These comments illustrate the potential value creation and on-going interest in research generated by the action research process.

At various points during the action research process, team members identified what they perceived as connections between the assessments used in the study. Other research ideas involved using the assessments with other groups, as pre- and post-tests, and using the ACCI with all students. These ideas spawned additional ideas including a need for longitudinal research.

Longitudinal research. One idea that surfaced in the last action research team meeting was the possibility of setting up a longitudinal research design to capture data from each cohort that moves through the EMBA program. I asked others on the team if there was interest in thinking about this further:

"If we go down the path of doing additional research . . . once you have this commitment at the program level, I think what it does, is it frees us up to not only think about how you keep researching or doing a longitudinal study, but even looking for some level of sponsorship or support from people because we can say we've got a commitment to have this in the program for people who are interested. Does that sound [good]?"

Leslie replied, "Yes. We can do that now. I've got calendars out . . . . Do you know what Fridays we're meeting in 2015? I'll be happy to tell you." Troy commented, "It sounds like what we're going to do for this next cohort, is first workshop would be the ACCI." It seems clear our collective interest in additional research speaks to the sense that while the study has provided us with useful insights, there is much more we could do.

Summary of RQ3 Findings. What began as a reaction to the significant increase in the percentage of EMBA students who were not being fully or partially funded by their current employers has led to the integration of career adaptability into the fabric of the EMBA program experience, from recruiting to residency, into curricular and co-curricular experiences, and beyond. The findings associated with the third research question indicate the action research team's efforts to develop and evaluate interventions led to the possibility of a stronger integration of career adaptability within the EMBA program in the future. In addition, the action research team's collaboration to develop and evaluate interventions impacted individual team members' development, which may impact the system in the future. Finally, the possibility of future research has an on-going potential to impact the system.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the study was to identify an individual's current stage of career adaptability and assess whether their capacity to move through the developmental tasks associated with career adaptability is enhanced by participating in interventions designed to increase their self-awareness and in alignment with adult developmental challenges. The three research questions guiding this study are (a) in what ways are individuals' capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced through focused interventions?, (b) how has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced the awareness of the action research team to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability?, and (c) how has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase an individual's capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability impacted the system? This chapter draws from the findings presented previously from the action research study of the SBS EMBA program. A summary of these findings are followed by four major conclusions and implications for individuals, career services organizations, and schools of business. The conclusions are discussed in further detail and implications explored. Finally, recommendations for future research are presented.

Summary of Findings

This is an action research study in a large, public, ranked Southeastern Business School (SBS). The action research team was a multi-disciplinary group of faculty and staff within SBS

exploring how to facilitate the career adaptability of students in the EMBA program. The action research process led to the creation of an innovative framework based on cognitive and psycho-social developmental theoretical lenses which created a supra-structure that led to the development of interventions including assessments, workshops, and individual coaching designed to address the developmental tasks associated with facilitating career adaptability of mid-career professionals. Data was collected from nine study participants and three action research team members through critical incident interviews conducted at the conclusion of the study. Significant insight was gained as a result of this study regarding the challenge of facilitating career adaptability for individuals, the career services unit, and the organization. Findings have been organized in alignment with the three research areas: in what ways are individuals' career adaptability capacity enhanced, how has the action research team's awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability been increased, and how has the action research teams increased awareness of career adaptability impacted the system?

Participants' individual career adaptability capacity began to increase as they engaged in developmentally focused interventions based on a cognitive and psycho-social framework. Individuals were empowered to see themselves differently, develop deeper connections to the EMBA program, and make behavioral changes. When asked how it was enhanced, several participants indicated their increased self-awareness and understanding of career adaptability theory led to pro-active behavior changes. Participants also made deep connections between the concepts presented in the study and their EMBA coursework. Additionally, participants viewed enhancing their career adaptability as embedded in the overarching mission of the EMBA program. Ultimately, enhanced career adaptability was demonstrated by their increasing ability to cope and more pro-active, planful attitudes articulated in their interviews.

The action research team's awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability increased. Team members indicated their awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability evolved through our efforts to define the problem, develop shared frameworks, and create, implement, and evaluate interventions. Interviews revealed deeper insights occurred as connections were made between career adaptability theory and similar theories. Additionally, the group made connections between the theory of career adaptability and courses currently taught in the EMBA program. They noted how powerful it was when we reviewed our own ACCI and LDP assessment results together and reflected on our own careers. Later, as we reviewed study participants' self-assessment results, our own awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability increased. Action research team comments indicated their increased awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability formed the basis for conversations about integrating components of the study into the EMBA program going forward. In the end, the action research team's immersion in developing, implementing, and evaluating interventions increased their awareness of the challenge of facilitating career adaptability.

The action research team's increased awareness has impacted the organization. Interviews indicated the action research process influenced changes in EMBA admissions practices and how leadership coaching is structured. In addition, team members were interested in integrating elements of the study in the EMBA residency. Potentially the most significant impact on the system was the development of the action research team as individuals. Responses indicated working together to develop and evaluate interventions designed to increase EMBA student's career adaptability increased their own adaptive capacity. For example, the action research team discussed the potential of creating a shared framework that would serve as a guide to everyone involved in the EMBA program including faculty, staff and students. In addition, the

group recognized the potential of leveraging shared frameworks to integrate curricular and extracurricular components. Furthermore, the data points to recognition that cross functional teams can be useful in other settings to address complex challenges. Lastly, another comment from a team member identified the power of action research to create systemic change.

<div align="center">**Conclusions**</div>

Conclusion 1: Introducing an innovative framework which integrated cognitive and psycho-social developmental theory and offering developmentally focused interventions enhanced self-awareness and empowered participants to start making the behavior changes necessary to move from being "stuck" developmentally towards increasing their career adaptability.

A narrative study by Mahler (2008) revealed six conclusions. First, adult development is a lifelong process that consists of both change and stability. Second, work plays a central role in the evolution of identity in adulthood. Third, the contemporary career context is a critical element in understanding the relationship between identity and careers. Fourth, the alignment of personal ideologies with the work role promotes positive self-perception. Fifth, learning promotes adult development, perhaps particularly in times of change. Sixth, both subjective and objective knowledge contribute to a holistic understanding of adult identity development, transitions, and careers. The first, third, and fifth conclusion is very similar to the findings of this study. The direct connection between learning and adult development, as it relates to career change, identified by Mahler (2008) is virtually identical to the results of this study.

A recent qualitative study by Brown, Bimrose, Barnes, and Hughes (2012), conducted as part of the International Career Adaptability initiative, targeted mid-career adults and sought to represent the wide range of goals, aspirations, achievements and identities that shape the way

that adults interact with, and move through, labor markets. The results highlighted the dynamic ways in which adults engage with learning and development pathways, sometimes with transformational shifts in perspective as their careers unfold, often involving periods of up-skilling and/or re-skilling. The study indicated four key dimensions emerged relating to the role of learning in developing career adapt-abilities at work: learning through challenging work (including mastering the practical, cognitive, and communicative demands linked with particular work roles and work processes); updating a substantive knowledge base (or mastering a new additional substantive knowledge base); learning through (and beyond) interactions at work; and being self-directed and self-reflexive. It appears the dimensions of learning, updating one's knowledge base, and being self-directed and self-reflexive are in alignment with the findings in this study. The notion that sometimes transformational shifts in perspective occur as careers unfold is echoed in the findings.

It is important to note, increasing career adaptability is not a lock-step, linear process whereby individuals can simply take an assessment or engage in a workshop and immediately move to the next stage of development. In fact, individuals need to pro-actively build adaptive capacities throughout adulthood for the fluid process of career adaptability to occur. In fact, the common thread between Career Adaptability and Adult Development is development is ongoing learning and growth in order to build the adaptive capacity necessary to meet challenges. For example, Super (1980) originally described the adult career development process as growth; Super and Savickas (1997) redefined the process as adaptability. In the adult development literature, Kegan and Lahey (2002) make the connection explicit by saying, "Working adaptively on adaptive challenges means helping to bring about—even in adulthood—the ongoing growth

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of the mind. It means building increasingly complex capabilities, individually and collectively which are portable to all regions of one's living" (p. 305).

MBA programs which are viewed as vehicles to accelerate career progression are structured to challenge students to work adaptively in order to facilitate development. As Rooke & Torbert (2005) state in business education, MBA programs encourage the development of the more pragmatic Achievers by frustrating the perfectionist Experts. The heavy workloads, use of multidisciplinary and ambiguous case studies, and teamwork requirements all promote the development of Achievers. This dynamic was echoed in the action research team's early observations of what is occurring with EMBA students from a developmental perspective in the following exchange.

Leslie: "They want to change and remain the same. They want to change by remaining the same."

Ryan: Now what's really interesting, so they're coming in and they basically are going to resist everything we teach them that challenges their beliefs. They're stuck and that's why they're here."

For the action research team, the connection between career adaptability and adult development became evident when we looked at the ACCI and LDP data. As we realized the majority of study participants revealed they were actively in transition from one stage to another on both assessments, the connection between career development and leadership development was summarized by Leslie who said, "just a cursory look at the data, what does it really reveal right now? They're stuck on a leadership development basis and a career development basis. . . . Yes." This led us to begin identifying developmentally focused interventions which is illustrated by Ryan who said:

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"You had your ACCI and you have your LDP, and then you. . . . What I'm thinking of is if you had your ACCI scores, so say if you're exploration, you have a series of workshops to address those developmental tasks. What I'm thinking about is, well what have we done around this in the past and what kind of workshops around career stuff can be applied. So you've got, because the competing commitments, the Kegan workshop was set up to do developmental dynamics and to promote exactly this movement from within levels of development so it's aimed at LDP type development".

Recognizing continuous development of adaptive capacity as the common thread in Career Adaptability and Adult Development led the action research team to create an integrated theoretical framework. This innovation led to the creation of interventions which enhanced participants' self-awareness and empowered them to begin making the behavioral changes necessary to move from being "stuck" developmentally towards increasing their career adaptability. The impact on participants' individual career adaptability is illustrated by Tom when he indicates:

"Your career is really just a series of jobs, and so at the end of the day it's up to you to chart the course. One of the things I've learned over the years is that most people just don't do that. They don't really connect the dots between moves. Not everything can be managed, but some of that can be managed and you need to be proactive."

Cindy demonstrated how her career adaptability capacity changed when she said:

"Yes, I have completely stepped up. I normally have not really put my ideas out there. I'm doing that more now because I have a different way of thinking on a lot of things, and I'm interjecting them into the conversation. I always dumbed that down because I didn't feel like I fit in in a lot of ways, but it's working very well for me. I've surprised a

lot of people in the last few months. I'm certainly enjoying it. I'm emphasizing my brand, and I think it's a good brand so I don't need to hide it."

Conclusion 2: The action research process created a holding environment which allowed the team to see across the levels in our organization and the boundaries of our own system which increased the capacity of the individual team members to address complex challenges.

For the action research team, working together to understand the challenge of facilitating career adaptability, developing shared frameworks to create a research design, and collaborating to offer developmentally targeted interventions led to significant growth at the individual, team and organizational level.

On an individual, taking the ACCI as a team had a galvanizing effect. As we reviewed our results, the theory of career adaptability started to resonate for the team and we became excited about using the assessment with study participants. Another high point was the innovation that occurred when the team started to make connections between career adaptability and adult development. This connection led us to identify interventions from past experiences which could be adapted for the purpose of the study. During her final interview, Leslie shared several examples of how her response to student issues has evolved. She began by indicating:

"Before I was participating in this study, I would have looked at that as a customer service challenge. How do I facilitate this move? How do I help to smooth this over so everybody has a good experience? I'm no longer as invested in that kind of a good experience. I recognize it as a developmental challenge. When a student comes to me as one did last week and said, a couple of weeks ago, my team's asked me to leave - what do

I do? I'm able to walk him through the steps of that process being very upfront about the challenges that he's facing developmentally."

On the team level, an example of how the action research team capacity was increased is responding to students who experience a job loss during the program. This is often a common tension point for program managers and career services staff. Initially, Leslie described how she would respond by saying:

"In the past, I would have been inclined to say . . . this is a career services issue, but now the intervention is to be very out front and say, this job loss is something that happened outside the university. As a university, we can do what we can to assist you, but we only have so many tools available to us. In other words, it's your problem to solve. The fact that you happen to be here is an accident of circumstance, not a causal factor."

Although these may appear to be subtle adjustments, given the expectations of EMBA students and the need for tight integration between program managers and career management staff, they represent significant changes to the system going forward.

On the organizational level, the introduction of the career adaptability construct helped action research team members make important connections to the curricular and co-curricular components of the experience. These insights were shared in the EMBA conference presentation we collaborated on entitled "Transforming Leaders: Integrating the EMBA for Student Development" which described how we were integrating coursework, self-assessment, team development and career management which received overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees. Perhaps most importantly, study participants recognized that at the end of the day, their purpose for returning to school was to advance their careers. By integrating career adaptability into the program experience, the action research team recognized this fundamental

purpose and provided them with an anchor that allowed them to make deeper meaning of the experience.

However, it is important to note, insider action research does not always lead to change at all three levels. In fact, as Coghlan (2007) explains, there are a number of significant challenges for those who conduct action research in their own organization which he describes under the headings of *preunderstanding, role duality*, and *organizational politics*.

Preunderstanding. According to Coghlan (2007), insider action researchers have some advantages including their knowledge of the organization's everyday life, the jargon, informal organizational politics, and what is considered legitimate and taboo to talk about. Disadvantages include being too close to the data, not probing deep enough, assuming too much, and not being open to re-framing their current thinking. They may also find it hard to cross hierarchical boundaries or gain access to important data. As a result, rigorous introspection and reflection is required in working with one's preunderstanding of one's own organization.

Role Duality. As Coghlan (2007) indicates, adding the role of researcher to an existing organizational role often leads to the insider feeling loyalty tugs, behavioral claims and identification dilemmas which are awkward and confusing. Friendships and research ties can vary from openness to restrictiveness. This new dimension to their relationship to fellow organization members sets them apart. As a result, the most important issue for insider action researchers is managing organizational politics, particularly when they want to remain and progress within the organization.

Organizational Politics. Coghlan (2007) notes undertaking insider action research might be considered subversive because it examines everything. By listening, questioning, and fostering participation, reflection, and action, an insider action researcher could be perceived as

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threatening organizational norms because what constitutes valid inquiry, data and action is often intensely political. As a result, insider action researchers need to be politically astute. One approach is to leverage their preunderstanding of the organization to work in ways that are in alignment with the political conditions without compromising their project or career. The key to success is assessing the power and interests of relevant stakeholders in relation to aspects of the project.

As I became increasingly aware of the challenges associated with conducting insider action research, I took a number of proactive steps to leverage my preunderstanding to manage the organizational politics by identifying and leading a project which aligned with the political conditions of the organization at the time in order to complete the study and move forward professionally. In addition, I also regularly engaged in introspection and reflection in order to effectively manage the challenges associated with role duality. As a result, I was able to overcome the inherent challenges associated with conducting insider action research and change occurred at the individual, team and organizational level.

As the study progressed, it became apparent the introduction of new frameworks provided new avenues for dialogue and further reflection yielded deeper personal insights. Action research team growth is also reflected in Ryan's final interview when he said, "I think what came out of the study for me was having more frameworks and developmental frameworks and to understand the richness of developmental diversity that's involved here." Troy also illustrated his growth when he stated, "I used to just focus on their resumes and job search strategy, but introducing them to the ACCI completely changed the conversation. Now we are talking about where they are from a developmental perspective." Introducing theoretical

constructs and assessments helped break through what Kegan describes as adults' "immunity to change." By providing individuals with data about themselves, we raised their self-awareness.

A lasting impact on my growth through participating in the action research process was developing a great appreciation for the challenges program managers face when asked to implement new initiatives. I realized one of the paradoxes that emerged is we all agree that we needed more time in the EMBA program for interventions focused on facilitating career adaptability, but I could see it was a real challenge for Leslie. As a result, I am more likely to collaborate and be innovative.

As I reflect on the work of the action research team, I see a connection between the study, and the literature on collaborative inquiry. For example, while action research certainly adds to the knowledge base, and helps researchers understand and develop theory, at its core action research is about solving problems. As the action research team worked together to address the challenge of facilitating career adaptability they also facilitated their own growth and development. As Coghlan and Brannick (2002) point out, action research is "based on a collaborative problem-solving relationship between researcher and client" (p. 4). Additionally, as an insider doing research on my own organization, this linkage is critical because as Herr and Anderson (2005) indicate, "Each of us as researchers occupies multiple positions that intersect and may bring us into conflicting allegiances or alliances within our research sites" (p. 44). As a result, it is important for researchers to make explicit in the dissertation our presence in the study. As Herr and Anderson (2005) indicate we are obligated to "interrogate our multiple positionalities in relationship to the questions under study" (p. 44). Keeping in mind my own positionality and biases, my views on how to facilitate career adaptability became increasingly informed by theory, adult development frameworks, previous studies, and data from this study.

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<center>**Implications**</center>

The implications are organized in a progressive fashion starting with the insights gained by participants and action research team members. The recommendations expand in scope from the individual level to impact upon units, organizations, and theory.

For Individuals

The implication of this study for individuals is clear; career adaptability is all about continually learning throughout adulthood. No matter what the unemployment rate is, or status of your current role, individuals should proactively be asking themselves, "What stage of development am I in? Am I adaptable? Am I flexible? What I am proactively doing to continue moving forward?" Individuals who take ownership of their careers and identify the resources necessary to facilitate their career adaptability will enhance their opportunities.

For Career Services Units

This study provides a new way to look at providing career services for mid-career professionals. In addition, this study demonstrates the centrality of "adaptability" to these stages of adult development. As a result, interventions should emphasize the development of adaptability as a core competency as it relates to ongoing career progression while also acknowledging the developmental nature of how the construct is experienced.

Unit leaders should consider taking a more theoretically grounded approach to engaging with program directors, faculty, and staff in shaping interventions and transforming how career services engages in the challenge of facilitating career adaptability. Effective unit leaders need a method for leading change across the organization as it relates to facilitating career adaptability. This study indicates leading change through action research has the potential to move individual, group and system transformation – simultaneously moving at all three levels.

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Recommendations include considering using the ACCI as a diagnostic to assess the current stage of career development and plan developmentally targeted interventions. In addition, utilizing the CAAS Inventory as a pre and post assessment in order to assess whether the interventions enhance career adaptability would provide measureable outcomes.

Furthermore, interventions which successfully facilitate career adaptability in adults may lie outside traditional career and job search skill building activities. As a result, practitioners should consider identifying interventions traditionally associated with adult development which can be modified and applied to facilitate career adaptability. This may be particularly useful when working with individuals seeking to reach higher levels of leadership in organizations where the capacities and competencies required for success are very different than those required in individual contributor roles where deep knowledge, skills, and expertise are valued.

Career services units that serve mid-career professionals seeking career change who develop the capacity to effectively facilitate career adaptability will also enhance their value to their clients and organizations.

For Organizations

The results of this study indicate educational institutions, government agencies, career transition firms, and employers can proactively help individuals they serve or employ by providing assessments and interventions which facilitate career adaptability. For institutions of higher education which are seeking to provide participants with a differentiated program experience, integrating career adaptability into the experience is powerful. By embedding career adaptability into curricular and co-curricular activities, assessing and developing career adaptability, and introducing career and adult development theory, program leaders have the opportunity to significantly increase the overall impact of the experience for participants.

Theory

This study contributes to the theoretical work of Super and Savickas on career adaptability by identifying continuous learning as a common thread between adult development and career adaptability. This innovation led to the creation of an integrated framework which included adult development theory, which views development through a cognitive lens, along with career adaptability theory, which views development through a psycho-social lens. The findings of the study indicate the creation of developmentally focused interventions based on this integrated theoretical framework led to increasing levels of self-awareness and career adaptability. This study may lead to future research in this area and inform the development of future theoretical connections between career adaptability and adult development.

Future Research

Recommendations for future research reflect the progression of the study itself and follow the iterative nature of action research. Given the limitations of the short time span which this study covered, the next logical step would be to modify the research design in order to move to a longitudinal model. By continuing the collaborative approach to inquiry which utilized an iterative approach which Coghlan and Brannick (2002) describe as diagnosing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action, each cycle of inquiry will build upon the insights gained in this study and lead to ongoing inquiry.

Longitudinal Study

In the initial study, the qualitative findings indicated a hint of movement was occurring based on Super's theory of career adaptability. However, given the short time line of the study, we were unable to determine whether any movement occurred in relation to Torbert's theory of adult development. In order to fully assess the impact of the interventions, the next logical step

would be to transition to a longitudinal research model which requires participants to complete follow-up ACCI and LDP assessments at the beginning and end of their program. Rooke and Torbert (2005) support the use of the LDP in this manner by stating, "Leaders can move through these categories as their abilities grow, so taking the Leadership Development Profile again several years later can reveal whether a leader's action has changed" (p. 46).

Replication of the Study and Focus on Interventions

After a longitudinal model was created, running the study in multiple settings with similar participants with an emphasis on the effectiveness of specific interventions would provide additional data and yield greater insight regarding the challenge of facilitating career adaptability. Given the findings in this study which indicated targeting specific interventions to developmental stages was somewhat effective, after moving to a longitudinal model and running the study in multiple settings, it would make sense to offer a variety of interventions targeted by developmental stage in order to compare and contrast their effectiveness. This emphasis would be of particular interest to practitioners in the career services space and provide significant value to individuals and organizations.

Measure Outcomes with the CAAS Inventory

Future research studies should consider utilizing the new CAAS inventory to measure career adaptability. As Savickas and Porfeli (2012) indicate:

> Overall, we conclude that the CAAS that appears in Appendix 2 is ready for further testing and development, especially elaboration of career adaptability's nomological network and validity evidence for CAAS scores. The measure appears to have strong potential to be useful in the internationalization of career development research and intervention in the global economy of the 21st century. (p.670)

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Iterative cycles of research based on this study should utilize the CAAS as a pre and post assessment to measure whether interventions increased career adaptability.

Integration between Career Adaptability and Adult Development Theory

Future iterations of this study also have an opportunity to look more closely at connections between career adaptability and adult development from a theoretical and conceptual perspective. Exploration of connections between cognitive and psycho-social theoretical models of adult development may lead to further innovation. For instance, the findings in this study indicate participants made cognitive connections between their current stage of adult development and career adaptability which facilitated their efforts to move through the associated developmental tasks.

Additionally the action research team identified parallels between the challenges associated with career adaptability and adult development and movement through the developmental tasks associated with career adaptability. This is further supported in the literature when Kegan and Lahey (2001) state, "An employee has the skills and smarts to make a change with ease, has shown a deep commitment to the company, genuinely supports the change-and yet, inexplicably, does nothing" (p.85). What their research has revealed is that resistance to change does not reflect opposition, nor is it merely a result of inertia. Instead, even as they hold a sincere commitment to change, many people are unwittingly applying productive energy toward a hidden competing commitment. As a result, what looks like resistance is in fact a kind of personal immunity to change (Kegan & Lahey, 2001).

Connections to Program Interventions

Future research might also include examination of changes to how career adaptability interventions were integrated into the program as whole. Although there was evidence in the

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small number of interviews conducted in this study that some personal transformation was occurring, some of which can be attributable to the interventions, many other things were going on simultaneously. Additional iterations of this nature might include assessing the impact of modifications to other related interventions such as leadership development assessment and coaching.

Connections to Program Outcomes

Finally, future research along these lines has the potential to assess whether changes to program interventions impact traditional outcomes measures. For example, in the current EMBA market, an increased level of interest has been placed on employment outcomes. Highlighted data points often include average salaries, percentage of salary increase, and the percentage of graduates who earn a promotion during or after the program; these are reported to rankings organizations and utilized in marketing efforts. A longitudinal study might produce data which could be linked to longer term outcomes. For example, data that indicates the integration of career adaptability interventions into the curriculum has contributed to significant long term success of program graduates would be a compelling program outcome.

<div align="center">

Summary

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This study is unique for two reasons. First, it utilized the action research methodology to develop, implement, and evaluate the research. Second, this is an intervention study which tried to change participant behavior. In the end, the study created change at the individual level with participants and within the action research team. Additionally, organizational changes occurred and system change appears to be underway as well.

A team of faculty, staff, and administrators fully engaged in the action research process and moved outside our own comfort zones to address the challenge of facilitating career

adaptability in an interdisciplinary fashion. Our collaboration, over an extended period of time, led to the creation of new and innovative approaches to addressing the research questions we identified. I have never been a part of something as collaborative or innovative over an extended period of time. The highlight of the experience was sharing our efforts to integrate career adaptability into the EMBA program at the annual EMBA conference in Paris. However, what surprised all of the action research team members was how much the experience helped us grow as individuals.

Ultimately, the action research process to create a holding environment which allowed the team to see across the levels in our organization and the boundaries in our own system and led to an increased capacity of the action research team is evident when Ryan notes:

"I think the organizational side, the organizational impact of action research has been the biggest sort of learning curve for me as well. Understanding . . . the power of it, but also the investment that it takes—I mean the investment that I really took to do it and do it well is significant. We couldn't do this in six weeks or six months. I mean we just couldn't have done it. . . .Yes, I think just . . . the principle that you don't innovate anything until you cross boundaries and connect dots you weren't connecting before. That's the easiest and best first place to start when you're trying to innovate—just seeing that. Then that it takes frameworks to be able to . . . share. You had to learn the framework so that . . . you can give shorthand that communicates complexity simply to your colleagues, and they understand what you're talking about. That takes time."

The impact of these teams increased capacity on the system going forward is illustrated by Leslie when she states:

"I presented at the end of the Executive Leadership Academy for Women yesterday. I was on a team that worked on a plan for communicating the strategic plan to the staff. It sounds very dry. I asked, why don't we have cross-functional staff teams dedicated to meeting the goals of the strategic plan? For example, academic advisement, career management, and alumni relations could come together around the issue of the six-year graduation rate, developing plans for advisement that's connected to alumni mentors, that connects to career management and improves the graduation rate, that creates career mentorship and more polished graduates, and finally creates enhanced alumni relationships for the University and meets one of our goals."

Leslie's realization that cross functional teams can be useful in other settings struck me as having lasting impact. In fact, during her final interview, I inquired along these lines when I asked, "I think you just said something that's really important and that is this idea that maybe we've become more adaptable." And she responded, "Yes, absolutely."

As I reflect on my own beliefs about career adaptability, the literature, findings from other empirical studies and conclusions from this study I can see how my own theory of career adaptability has evolved. The insight I gained as a result of this study was how tightly career adaptability is tied to the longer adult development time horizons. The learning and development which must take place in order to increase individuals' adaptability often takes years and limits do exist.

Ultimately, the results of the study answered the question which originally led me in this direction. Why is it so challenging to facilitate career adaptability with this population? The paradox of career adaptability is overcoming our own "immunity to change'." Nevertheless career adaptability is a competency adults must develop in order to successfully manage the

inevitable career changes which occur in our increasingly fast paced, complex world. This study

provided valuable insights into how to facilitate this process. As Savickas and Porfeli (2012)

state, "Increasing a client's career adaptability resources or career adapt-abilities is a central goal

in career education and counseling" (p. 663).

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "Career Adaptability of EMBA Graduate Business Students" conducted by Mr. Jason Aldrich, Co-Principal Investigator from the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, University of Georgia, (770-826-9411) under the direction of Dr. Karen E. Watkins Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, University of Georgia, (706-542-4355). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to assess whether the interventions offered as part of the EMBA program impact the career adaptability of graduate students enrolled in the EMBA program at SBS. This study is expected to take place between October 2011 and December 2012.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following assessment:
1)   Complete the LDP-Leadership Development Profile, a 36 item sentence completion questionnaire which may take an hour to complete. Completion of this instrument indicates my consent that the data may be used both for feedback regarding my career, and for research into the nature of career adaptability.
2)   Complete the ACCI-Adult Career Concerns Inventory, a 61 item self- assessment which may take 30 minutes to complete. Completion of the instrument indicates my consent that the data may be used both for feedback regarding my career, and for research into the nature of career adaptability.

The benefits for me are helping increase my career adaptability in an effort to identify new career opportunities and help institutions better understand how career adaptability is facilitated. No risk is expected but I may experience some psychological discomfort or stress when I review the results of the LDP-Leadership Development Profile. However, these risks will be reduced by having a certified professional discuss the results with me individually.

Any individually identifiable information I provide will remain confidential. It will not be shared with others without my written permission. The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Signature   Date

Telephone: _____   Email: _____

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

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Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.
Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

PARTICIPANT CRITICAL INCIDENT INTERVIEWS

RQ1 – In what ways are individuals' capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced through focused interventions?

CIT Interview Preparation
1. Discuss general plan for interview.
2. Explain confidentiality, sign consent forms, and answer questions about forms.
3. Ask participant if they agree to be audio-recorded.
4. Begin interview.

Initial Question: I'm here today to collect stories that describe in what ways your capacities to intentionally move through the stages of career adaptability were enhanced through your participation in the focused interventions offered through the study?

As you tell me the story, think about a play. Please describe:
- The setting, context, and any background I should know
- The characters involved
- The "crisis"
- What happened, how things turned out

To begin, please tell me a little bit of background about your career prior to starting the EMBA program and this study.

CIT Questions
- Share an example of a time during the study when you felt your capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability was enhanced?
- Share an example of a time during the study when it wasn't effective?
- Describe the circumstances and nature of this incident
  Explain why you consider this incident to be significant
- Describe the outcome(s) or result of the incident

CIT Probing questions

Could you say more about this?   How would you illustrate this?
Who did you speak to?   Was there a climax?
What was the focus of the discussion?   How did it end?
What was your role?   Why was this a critical incident for you?
What did it mean to you?   Is there anything else about the study
Where did it occur?   you think is significant?

ACTION RESEARCH TEAM CRITICAL INCIDENT INTERVIEWS

RQ2 – How has developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability enhanced the awareness of the action research team to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability?

CIT Interview Preparation
1. Discuss general plan for interview.
2. Explain confidentiality, sign consent forms, and answer questions about forms.
3. Ask participant if they agree to be audio-recorded.
4. Begin interview.

Initial Question: I'm here today to collect stories that describe how developing and evaluating interventions designed to increase the capacities of individuals to move through the stages of career adaptability has <u>enhanced the awareness of the action research team</u> to the challenge of facilitating adult career adaptability in alignment with adult developmental challenges?

As you tell me the story, think about a play. Please describe:
- The setting, context, and any background I should know
- The characters involved
- The "crisis"
- What happened, how things turned out

To begin, please tell me a little bit of background about your career prior to starting the EMBA program and this study.

CIT Questions
- Share an example of a time during the study when you felt your capacity to move through the stages of career adaptability was enhanced?
- Share an example of a time during the study when it wasn't effective?
- Describe the circumstances and nature of this incident
  Explain why you consider this incident to be significant
- Describe the outcome(s) or result of the incident

CIT Probing questions

Could you say more about this?	How would you illustrate this?
Who did you speak to?	Was there a climax?
What was the focus of the discussion?	How did it end?
What was your role?	Why was this a critical incident for you?
What did it mean to you?	Is there anything else about the study
Where did it occur?	you think is significant?