Preserving intellectual legacy: generativity themes in the narratives of retired academics

EM Lemmer
College of Education
University of South Africa
lemmeem@unisa.ac.za

Opsomming

Die intellektuele nalatenskap van die professoraat sluit in oorspronklike vakkundigheid, die oordrag van waardes, kennis en vaardighede aan volgende generasies in die akademiese wêreld, en die instandhouding van die wetenskaplike gemeenskap. Die ouer wordende professoraat laat die vraag ontstaan hoe intellektuele nalatenskap ná aftrede in stand gehou kan word tot voordeel van die universiteit en die breër gemeenskap. Die idee van nalatenskap is verweef met Erikson se konsep van generatiwiteit, wat beskryf kan word as die begeerte om die vooruitgang en welstand van die volgende generasie te bevorder deur middel van ouerskap, onderrig, begeleiding, betrokkenheid by die samelewing en nog vele ander ingrypings, om sodoende 'n blywende, positiewe bydrae te lewer wat stand hou lank ná die self. As generatiwiteit nie behaal word nie, veroorsaak dit stagnering; dit bring teleurstelling mee as gevolg van verspeelde geleenthede. Hierdie referaat ondersoek generatiwiteit in die narratiewe van vyf afgetrede professore wat deur middel van doelgerigte steekproefneming gekies is op grond van hul lang, roemryke loopbane in die akademie. Deurtastende onderhoude ondersoek hoe deelnemers gedurende hul professionele loopbane uitdrukking gegee het aan generatiwiteit in hul wetenskaplike en skeppende werk, hoe hulle dit volhou ná aftrede en hoe hulle beplan om generatiwiteit uit te brei in hul laaste jare. Tematiese ontleding van die narratiewe het die volgende temas opgelewer: die totstandbrenging van generatiwiteit gedurende die loop-

baan; die herevaluering van generatiwiteit met aftrede; die voortsetting van generatiwiteit ná aftrede; en die toewyding aan generatiwiteit op die drempel van bejaardheid. Die studie vorm deel van die interdissiplinêre literatuur oor aftrede en doen aan die hand hoe afgetrede akademici ondersteun kan word om 'n intellektuele nalatenskap te bewaar deur betrokke te bly by generatiewe aktiwiteite namate hulle die laaste stadium van die lewensiklus betree.

Abstract

The intellectual legacy of the professoriate is embodied in original scholarship, the transfer of values, knowledge and skills to upcoming generations in academe, and the maintenance of the scholarly community. The ageing of the professoriate raises the question how intellectual legacy may be preserved after retirement to the benefit of the university and wider society. Interwoven with the idea of legacy is Erikson's concept of generativity, which can be described as the desire to promote the advancement and wellbeing of the next generation through parenting, teaching, mentoring, civic engagement and a wide range of other behaviours aimed at producing a positive contribution that survives the self. Failure to achieve generativity leads to stagnation that gives rise to disappointment as a result of missed opportunities. This paper explores generativity in the narratives of five retired professors selected by purposeful sampling on the basis of their illustrious and lengthy careers in academe. In-depth interviews explored how participants expressed generativity in their scientific and creative work during their professional careers, how they sustained generative concerns after retirement and how they plan to extend generativity into old age. Thematic analysis of the narratives produced the following themes: enactment of generativity during the career; re-evaluation of generativity at retirement; continuance of generativity after retirement; generative commitment at the threshold of old age. The study connects with the growing interdisciplinary literature on retirement and suggests how retired academics can be supported to preserve an intellectual legacy by remaining engaged in generative action as they approach the last stage of the life cycle.

1. Introduction

The ageing of the world's population, together with the parallel growth in life expectancy due to positive developments in healthcare (Lunenfeld & Stratton, 2013), creates challenges for the retirement population and for the organizations for which they worked. Organisations face three primary challenges: containment of employee retirement benefit costs, replacement of qualified workers and the transfer of critical knowledge from retirees to others in the organisation to reduce the skills drain (Calo, 2005). On the other hand, retirees increasingly seek to find ways to bolster retirement income and to extend their productivity through a range of diverse strategies, such as alternative employment, job sharing, reduced work hours, self-employment or unpaid voluntary work (Moody, 2006).

Ageing also affects higher education systems worldwide (Lahey, Michelson, Chieffe & Bajtelsmit, 2008). The retirement of the professoriate implies a loss of important knowledge and skills and a shortage of trained and qualified academics, who can speedily and effectively fill the gap left by highly experienced retirees (MacFarlane, 2012). At the end of a lengthy career senior professors have become repositories of rich academic capital. They have accumulated institutional memory, associated with lengthy administrative or governance experience; professional reputation through awards, prestigious teaching positions and discipline-linked community engagement; intellectual renown through publications; and social and political power through membership of public bodies and professional networks (Bourdieu, 1984). Moreover, at the apex of their academic careers senior professors fulfil the role of leadership. They are mentors to less experienced colleagues inside and outside the university; guardians of academic standards and values in their discipline; enablers of younger or less experienced peers by facilitating access into academic and professional networks, funding grants and research contracts; and ambassadors of the university in the public sphere (MacFarlane, 2012). The question is raised as to how this intellectual legacy can be preserved and transmitted, thus leaving behind some mark on the world of academe, which makes "a lasting impression or contribution in a personal way to the future" (Newton, Herr, Pollack & McAdams, 2013:1). Legacy is understood primarily in terms of bequeathing a material inheritance. However, in this paper, the understanding of legacy includes a cultural legacy in terms of knowledge, skills and values, which is an important but little studied component of the ageing and retirement experience (Hunter & Rowles, 2005).

The notion of legacy evokes strong association with Erikson's (1950) epigenetic theory of human identity development in which the important construct of generativity forms the core of the stage of middle to late adulthood. Generativity can be defined as the mature adult's care for the wellbeing of the next generation, not only through reproducing and caring for children, but also by generating a range of products and outcomes that survive the individual life to continue to benefit individuals, society and culture. Failure to achieve generativity leads to stagnation, which gives rise to resentment and disappointment as a result of missed opportunities. As each new generation of adults has the responsibility to hand on learning and experience, so each professional or occupational grouping has a distinct generative responsibility to transmit their craft to those they teach and guide (Batesman, 2010). From the standpoint of the academic world, generativity implies the endeavour of one generation of scholars to hand down their values, knowledge and skills to the next generation in their community of practice. From the perspective of society and culture, generativity thus demonstrated by scholars ensures that their accrued values, knowledge and skills live on to strengthen social institutions, sustain culture, contribute to civic development and motivate social change in future (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1997).

Only a few studies (Melo, 2008; McAdams & Logan, 2006) have examined how professors who have made significant academic contributions narrate their scholarly lives in terms of generativity theory. To address this gap, this paper explores generativity themes as recounted in the life stories of retired professors. Data was gathered by in-depth interviews and the thematic analysis of the life stories produced four themes which described how participants constructed meanings around generativity during their careers, at and after retirement and in future.

2. Theoretical framework

Erik Erikson's (1950) life cycle model of human development proposes that a developing person passes from infancy to late adulthood through eight stages. In each stage, the person faces, and should master, developmental crises. A crisis does not constitute a catastrophe but a turning point for the person, "a crucial period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential for development" (Erikson, 1978:5). For each crisis successfully resolved, Erikson (1978) postulates that the person acquires a virtue or strength appropriate to that stage which adds to the person's competencies and abilities and makes him/her more able to face the crisis of the following stage

of the life cycle. Failure to resolve the crisis of a life stage successfully results in poor or regressive development. Thus, each stage builds upon the successful completion of earlier stages; crises of stages not successfully completed may be expected to reappear as problems in the future (Slater, 2003).

Erikson's seventh and penultimate stage of adult development is the long stretch of midlife, approximately 35-65 years (Erikson, 1950). The central challenge of midlife is the achievement of generativity versus its opposite pole, stagnation. The primary task of generativity is establishing and guiding future generations through the creation and maintenance of a wide range of institutional, cultural and individual resources that are necessary to sustain intergenerational solidarity (Erikson, 1964). To have and raise children is a typical generative activity but generativity extends beyond a deeply held concern for biological offspring to the next generation to which one's own and/or other children belong (McAdams & Logan, 2004). In juxtaposition, one who is self-centred and unable or unwilling to help society move forward through generative actions is stagnant and feels dissatisfied with one's relative lack of productivity. Holding these poles (generativity and stagnation) in a dynamic and healthy balance is essential to produce the emergent virtue, that is, care, solicitude or concern for persons, products and ideas (Erikson, 1978).

Taken that developmental challenges are not exclusive to a life stage but co-exist to some extent along the entire life cycle (Erikson, 1978), the challenge of generativity stretches well into later adulthood and even into old age, the final stage of human development. While procreativity and child-raising usually fill early middle adulthood; productivity and creativity, that is, "the maintenance of the world" (Erikson, Erikson & Kivnick, 1986:50) are associated with later adulthood. Furthermore, the realisation of generativity (or not) impacts on the adult's final development task, ego-integrity versus its juxtaposition, despair. In old age, previous accomplishments are re-visited and re-evaluated. If the elderly see themselves as having led a successful life, they are able to develop ego-integrity with the emergent virtue of wisdom. Alternatively, if they see their lives as unproductive, or feel that they failed to accomplish their life goals, despair emerges, leading to depression and hopelessness (Erikson, 1950). Thus, Erikson (1964) emphasises that the benefits of generativity are bi-directional: the generative adult creates legacies of self that benefit future generations, while simultaneously reaping meaning which is incorporated into self-identity and which combats despair.

Theorists applying Eriksson's work to the study of lives point out that generativity research should always be grounded in socio-historical context which shapes different experiences of midlife for different birth cohorts (Erikson *et al*., 1986). Increased longevity in the 21st century posits revised definitions of midlife (and old age) which cast new light on the timing of generative concern. Wink and James (2013) argue that today the conception of midlife has been prolonged with the emergence of the 'Third Age', that is the period of the 'young-old' which stretches from retirement up to very old age and the onset of infirmity. During this period older adults may opt to continue their commitment to generativity through sustained engagement with society. In this vein, Bateson (2010) subdivided Erikson's seventh stage of midlife into Adulthood I and Adulthood II; the latter incorporates 70+ years, when adults may choose to remain actively involved in their world and thus, continue generative acts.

Erikson's theory has given rise to a large body of theoretical and empirical research. Consequently, generativity has emerged as a complex multidimensional construct which has much to offer in diverse fields, such as religion, ethics and gerontology (Schoklitsch & Bauman, 2012). A selective overview is given of the most significant of this scholarship. Kotre (1984:112) was the first to redefine generativity as the desire and effort to invest one's life and one's work in that which will "outlive the self". He (1984; 1999) expanded the concept by proposing two modes of generative expression: agency and communion. Agency involves the expansion of the self through creating something that is self-promoting; communion includes giving what one has created to others for their benefit and use (de St Aubin, 2013). Furthermore, according to Kotre (1984), generativity exists in four domains: the biological (as in procreation), the parental (as in raising children), the technical (as in teaching knowledge and skills to others) and the cultural (as in creating and passing down a product in which the self is expressed). In particular, cultural generativity requires comment in the light of the topic of this paper. Generative educators are those who progress from technical transmission to meaning transmission through mentoring and coaching. Further, cultural generativity is strongly linked to the latter part of midlife after the activities of the last three domains lose pre-eminence (Manheimer, 1995).

Generativity theory has been further stimulated by the individual and the collaborative work of McAdams and de St. Aubin over more than two decades. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) (cf. also McAdams, Hart & Maruna, 1998) produced a seven-dimensional theory of the process of generativity. According to this model, generativity functions in terms of seven interrelated features: i) an inner desire for agentic and communal legacy

combines with ii) cultural demand embodied in age-related social norms for the adult to produce outcomes to benefit the next generation which in turn produces iii) a concern for the next generation. This concern is boosted by iv) a belief in the worthwhile nature of the human endeavour and this leads to v) a commitment which produces vi) generative acts defined as creating, maintaining or offering what has been created or maintained to the community. This may embrace caring for children (one's own and those of others) transmitting traditions, knowledge and skills, investing in one's community as guide, mentor and leader and/or producing creative works that survive the self. Finally, the adult captures his/her generative action by constructing vii) a narration of generativity which is part of the individual's broader life story that makes up a person's identity. The life story may in itself be part of one's legacy offered to others as who may benefit from knowing about one's life (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1997; McAdams, 2001).

Ongoing generativity research focuses on a host of benefits that generativity provides for both the generative individual and his or her community. Generativity is often expressed in community or civic involvement (Hart, McAdams, Hirsch & Bauer, 2001), in volunteering (Kleiber & Nimrod, 2008), and in professional mentorship (Parise & Forret, 2008), all of which build social capital and systems. Generativity is related to increased life satisfaction (Huta & Zuroff, 2007), increased self-esteem (Ackerman, Zuroff & Moscowitz, 2000), positive mental well-being (Melo, 2008), family health (de St Aubin, 2013) and marital happiness (Westermeyer, 2004). In the workplace generativity leads to greater job satisfaction and career success (Clark & Arnold, 2008). Generativity is linked to productive and well-adjusted ageing and enhanced physical health during old age (Batesman, 2010; Reichstadt, Sengupta, Depp, Palinkas & Jeste, 2010). In the light of these benefits, particularly for the older adult, Taylor and Schaffer (2013) argue that 'generativity planning' should be part of retirement planning so that retirees are encouraged to become or remain generative into old age to their own and the benefit of others.

The concept of generativity resonates strongly in studies on religion (Zock, 1990). In a Christian interpretation of generativity, the emergent virtue, unselfish care, is most conspicuous. Erikson (1964) himself was the first to recognise a parallel for care for others in the Christian teachings and argued that care was epitomised by Christ's command to love one's neighbour as oneself. Building on Erikson, Christian ethicist, Don Browning (1970) regarded generative man as the epitome of the good man whose prosocial behaviour is directed at the care of mankind. Browning (2006) detected generativity and care in early Reformation ideas which teach that

the purpose or calling of life is to serve others and he (2004) expanded the notion of generative care to include mutuality: generative acts comprise giving but also receiving care which benefits both giver and receiver. This, Browning (2004) argues, enriches the Christian understanding of neighbour-love. Dillon and Wink (2004) identify intergenerational care in the Old Testament injunction to each generation to transmit the content of the faith to the next, thereby demonstrating a profound care for the spirituality of future generations. In the New Testament the task shared by the church, the family and the individual believer, who should disciple both the young in years and the new in the faith, can be regarded as a generative act (Rukia, 2003). However, the ultimate act of care is demonstrated by the redemptive death of Christ as a selfless sacrifice intended to benefit not a single generation, but all subsequent generations (Dillon & Wink, 2004). The latter point powerfully illustrates how an individual act of generativity may have a lasting legacy of universal proportions. On an individual level, McAdams and Albaugh's (2008) study of the lives of two deeply committed and socially involved Christian women illustrates how their faith motivated their generative acts. Generativity inspired by faith contributes to a person's well-being (Wink & Dillon, 2008), to deepened spirituality (Sandage, Hill & Vaubel, 2011) and increased church involvement (Dillon & Wink, 2004; Hart et al., 2001). Moreover, the generative virtue of care is institutionalised in churches which form generative communities. Churches preserve and communicate scriptural and church-historical narratives of generative acts, which inspire generative concern among their members, and churches provide networks and organised opportunities for their members to act out these concerns (Wood, 2002).

Churches are just one example of how an accumulation of generative desire, commitment and action nourishes and sustains social norms around generativity and eventually may contribute to the establishment of institutions with a generative character and mission, which have the potential to produce a generative society (de St. Aubin, McAdams & Kim, 2004). Similarly, the historical tri-dimensional function of the university as generator, transmitter and curator of knowledge belies a potentially generative role. Teaching and mentoring activities directly address intergenerational cultural transmission and university-community engagement is an opportunity to enact generative care for others as is research in the service of humankind (Musil, 2013). But as McAdams *et al*. (1998) argue, generativity is not automatic; generativity will only be realised when the university's mission is executed out of a deliberate concern for others and not as a series of disinterested acts of self-interest (Melo, 2008). At present economic considerations dominate higher

education worldwide and knowledge produced by teaching and research is regarded as a product to be vended in a competitive marketplace for profit rather than as a cultural legacy for the common good (Nixon, 2008). Ball (2009) argues that academics should engage in a four-stage process of generativity in order to understand the scholarly task in terms of care for the public good and to view the scientific and creative endeavour as building a legacy for others, rather than an exercise in self-promotion.

3. Method

Against the above background, the question posed in this inquiry was: *How do retired academics manifest and sustain generativity in order to make sense of who they have been, who they are today, and who they may be in future*? The question was addressed by an exploration of generativity themes in the life stories of retired professors. The usefulness of life story research in generative theory construction is well-documented (Erikson, 1978; McAdams, 1993; 2001; 2006; 2008; 2012). Life story research may follow two different lines: discovery, in which open-ended narratives accounts are explored for the discovery of broad themes to generate new theories about lives; or justification, whereby hypotheses are tested as they play out in different lives using well-validated coding and statistical techniques (McAdams, 2012). Operating along the line of discovery, I collected data from four men and one woman in the age group 61 to 75 years who had retired after illustrious academic careers. Participants were selected by purposeful sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) according to the following criteria: all had had a lengthy university career (ranging from 32-45 years) in which they had contributed significantly in the areas of academic leadership, teaching, research, postgraduate supervision and public engagement.

In-depth lifestory interviews were conducted in participants' homes or my own home according to preference, and recorded and transcribed. Participants were asked to reflect on their extensive academic careers, transition to retirement, their post-retirement experiences and future expectations. Email correspondence and documents, such as memoirs, creative writing and academic publications offered by participants as examples of their generative work, complemented the interview data as did field notes of conversations held off tape, impressions of the participant and the participant's home office or work space. Ethical requirements were met by informing participants of the research aim, obtaining voluntary participation and ensuring participant confidentiality through pseudonyms and the removal of any specific information that could lead to identification.

Analysis of the narratives took place during and after the interviews. My first approach to the stories was a holistic-content one, in which each story was taken as a whole and ample room was given to appreciate the uniqueness of each participant's experience (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). Thereafter, I used an inductive thematic approach (Maitlis, 2012), also referred to as a categorical-content approach (Lieblich *et al*., 1998), whereby I sought to identify interpretative themes which were common to all the stories within the set (Watson, 2012). Transcripts were read several times; extended segments of the stories were coded by specific categories and then integrated into the more general themes (Maitlis, 2012). This process was loosely guided by McAdams, de St Aubin and Logan's (1993) framework for generative life story analysis: conscious generativity concerns; generative commitments in the adult's daily tasks; continued generativity in later midlife; and generative self-representation in autobiographical recollection. However, I modified this framework (McAdams et al., 1993) according to context of the post-retirement experience and as a result of in-depth reflection on passages from the interviews which vividly described participants' experiences and feelings in relation to the conceptual literature (cf par. 4 below). In my analysis I primarily understood generativity in terms of activities, attitudes and values manifested in teaching, postgraduate supervision, mentoring and coaching, research, discipline-related creative pursuits and community engagement. Parenting (and grandparenting) as an integral part of generativity was only noted where it featured strongly in the narrative, given my focus on intellectual rather than biological legacy and the association with parenting with the earlier rather than the later phase of midlife (Erikson, 1950). Cross-checking information and conclusions with participants for additional information, verification and insight was done where necessary. As the inquiry aimed at an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences from their own frame of reference, no attempt was made to generalise findings.

4. Findings

Thematic analysis of the narratives produced the following themes: enactment of generativity during the career; re-evaluation of generativity at retirement; continuance of generativity after retirement; and generative commitment at the threshold of old age.

4.1 Enactment of generativity during the career

Highly generative adults often trace a lifetime of generative commitment and action to the early discovery of a special gift or talent which guides their

intellectual pursuits or an early and unpredicted advantage, which prompts a sense of vocation. This 'blessedness' (McAdams *et al*., 1998), creates an acute awareness in the person that the undeserved advantage should not be confined to self-promotion but should also be employed to benefit others (McAdams, 2012).

References to either a gifting or a serendipitous event which paved the way to a significant academic career spontaneously opened each interview. Geoffrey, a former professor of musicology, was acutely conscious that his career was rooted in his giftedness in voice and instrumental playing. His exceptional talent created opportunities to achieve as a performer in his childhood and youth and as performer and an academic during adulthood. His illustrious career in South Africa together with stints in the United Kingdom as a result of prestigious fellowships ran on parallel tracks: the worlds of performing arts and of musicology. Jake traced the genesis of his eminent career in social psychology to his strikingly original doctoral research which drew the attention of his superiors to his academic potential. Jake ascribed this to his opportune choice of a research topic which was both relevant and controversial and which inspired his later intellectual curiosity in his field. Leslie began his narrative by recalling the "*fortunate*" event which "*landed*" him in a career in economic and management sciences. After his adolescent ambition to study medicine on an Army bursary floundered just a week before matriculation, a sympathetic teacher directed the disappointed youngster to other sources of funding. Leslie elected for and was awarded the most substantial bursary available, conditional on the pursuit of BCom followed by public service. In his public sector work he was soon singled out for his aptitude for research and his earnest commitment to the improvement of the safety of transport systems. Subsequently he was spotted by the Dean at a nearby university and invited to join the ranks. George and Rosemary's early potential as postgraduate students was also recognised by superiors who assisted in their recruitment into academe: Rosemary in the field of early childhood education (ECD) and George in history. In all cases the acknowledgement received from specialists who 'spotted' their promise enthused the participants, inspired a positive self-image and the conviction that academe was the space where they could make a meaningful contribution to society. According to McAdams (2012), intellectual or creative interests with generative potential gain impetus when they are recognised by others in the social system; this creates the cultural demand which encourages the transformation of generative concerns into commitment and action.

All participants described the most productive and expansive stages of their working lives with satisfaction and joy (Urrutia, Cornachione, De Espanes,

Ferragut & Guzman, 2009). Accounts of the participants' academic careers demonstrated a conscious preoccupation with making a contribution to their students' lives and careers, their colleagues' academic development, their chosen discipline and to the university as organisation. Rosemary's chosen discipline, early childhood education, is intergenerational by nature and gave her an ideal channel to express her passion for the welfare of the young. Her career of 32 years was devoted to achievements with a strong generative character: writing books for ECD practitioners with a national and international circulation, the design of programmes to train ECD teachers, membership of professional bodies, advocacy in the field, contributions to national policy-making and professional assistance given to countless community organisations. Rosemary's story displays a strong communal motivation for generativity (Kotre, 1984): the self-abnegating desire to care for children by educating their caregivers until both groups are ready to take over and do the same for themselves. George, the historian, also expressed an intergenerational commitment through his choice of research field, the documentation of the socio-political contribution of English-speaking South Africans. With quiet modesty he described the activities of a solid career of 43 years' loyal service to the university enacted in teaching, postgraduate supervision, a strong publications list and university administration. His last years spent in college management at a crucial time in the university's development implied the sacrifice of time which he could have devoted to his own research. However, in the latter position George discovered a new forte: his gift for mentoring the upcoming generation of academics. He "*loved*" guiding select groups of promising novices engaged in applications for research rating, promotions and grants. With some contrast, Jake described a colourful 45-yearlong career punctuated at times by personal setbacks and collegial tensions which he dealt with by good-humouredly applying his knowledge of clinical psychology to himself. Although Jake is an outspoken individualist, the overriding and sustained passion of his career has been a generative commitment to developing the scholarship and the careers of his many students through outstanding and prolific postgraduate supervision. In the academic passions of both George and Jake the communal dimension of generativity is most strongly demonstrated. The motivation for generativity is also explained by agency, the desire for self-assertion, individuality and mastery whereby the generative adult seeks to expand the self infinitely in time through his/her achievements (Kotre, 1984). In Leslie's story, the agentic mode is striking. Leslie had a prominent career highlighted by acclaimed public achievement, strong instructional leadership and bullish participation in university governance at a time when the institution's future was at a crossroad. He rose rapidly in the academic ranks to become

dean of the largest faculty in his discipline in the country: "*It was a huge, huge faculty. Man, we built that faculty! First it was 34 000 students and we ended at 360 000 something.*" He held external consultancies which produced over 400 written reports, served on key ministerial commissions and made a vocal and definitive contribution to university transformation. He remarked, "*I worked my butt off. I have produced more than the work of two or three other men.*" From the outset he was committed to finding solutions that would benefit system functioning in future. "*Practical research that is implementable, solutions, you seek for solutions to real world problems. I have written solutions for problems in movement and they are still using them at the big harbours and airports in the world.*" He published prolifically, collaborated with international scholars and spent short fellowships at renowned research institutions in the US and Europe. He spearheaded key curriculum development, headed the overhaul of courses that led to international accreditation and national honours for his faculty and supervised a large number of postgraduate students "*because of the fact that there were very limited qualified people in that area*". In Geoffrey's narrative, agentic and communal motives combine equally. Geoffrey conducted orchestras and directed national and university-based choirs at home and overseas, adjudicated music competitions established a national, accredited journal of music and led departments of musicology at local universities. His public role in the performing arts gave Geoffrey ample scope to expand the self through personal artistic achievement. But his musical engagement was primarily focused on communal activities which created an incubator for the nurture of upcoming cohorts of musicians and students of music. His description of his role in departmental and college management was couched in terms of care. He saw himself taking "*the Department under my wing and … in which time we were able to put things on the right road again*". His leadership was always fulfilled with the eye to effective succession after his departure, to identifying fresh talent, someone he "*had confidence in and who would be able to continue with the job … an opportunity for someone else to run with*".

4.2 Re-evaluation of generativity at retirement

Generative concerns expressed in work tend to peak in midlife, approximately between 45 and 55 years (Stewart & Vandewater, 1998). At retirement age, usually pegged at the mid- 60s, highly productive adults are forced to re-evaluate a life of active involvement (Erikson *et al*., 1986) and consider how and to what extent they will sustain generative concerns in late midlife and the early phase of old age (Batesman, 2010). All participants agreed that retirement was a turning point at which they had to weigh their past achieve-

ments and consider how they would shape generativity commitments in this new chapter of their lives.

Leslie, Geoffrey and Rosemary elected to retire before they had reached the institution's mandatory retirement age. In the cases of the two men, the decision was calculated in every way and financial considerations were carefully appraised. Leslie said: "*Look, whole life I have planned ahead. I know where I am going. I know what I have achieved with my team because I don't take all the glory for these things.*" Ensuring effective intergenerational succession is a strongly generative task to which both men had been committed and both had groomed competent successors to fill their leadership positions in the event of retirement. Leslie remarked: "*I realised earlier that in a few years it was time for somebody else so I coached the people who would survive me. I gave them the opportunity, the space to do their own thing but day and night I was there with an open door to give them advice and help.*" Similarly, Geoffrey described retirement as "*an opportunity for someone else to run with and that also brought it to a very nice conclusion. So I had finished something very significant. It was the end of a process that I felt that I had completed.*" His transition to retirement was managed by taking a short-term contract to coordinate the smooth succession in his department and to complete supervision of two doctoral students. Thereafter, Geoffrey's break with the university was clean and deliberate, "*I did not hanker after the department. I did not do what I have seen others do – wander the corridors of the university day after day, totally lost, making a nuisance of themselves*". Further, in both cases, the decision to retire came hard on the heels of the successful completion of mammoth university-wide projects and was facilitated by the intense satisfaction with which they looked back on the fulfilment of their responsibilities. Both had just completed ambitious re-curriculation of the courses in their colleges. Leslie had spearheaded a comprehensive and ambitious re-design of the entire curriculum offered by his faculty "*from A to Z*". However, the implementation process was estimated at five to seven years, beyond the three years left to him before statutory retirement. Moreover, amidst political transformation, Leslie recognised the need for a black dean to take his place and wished the position to go to a mentee who would be further guided by his experienced and loyal deputy-dean. Most striking was that both men saw retirement as the culmination of their life story, a moment in which they had an intense experience that their lives had been meaningful. Leslie concluded: "*It was really at the crest of the wave and that was beautiful for me. I did have a fantastic career. I left at a height and the college was blossoming. It really was tops. I had done it with no regrets. Really I was happy to go.*" Geoffrey weighed self-fulfilment

against stagnation, the other side of Erikson's generativity dialectic: "I*f you are going to retire happily, you must know that you have achieved well before you retired because those who haven't realised their vision or done well or wasted it are never happy.*" The danger of stagnation precipitated Rosemary's election of an early retirement date. University restructuring since the mid-90's had placed many new demands on Rosemary, including the training and constant supervision of novice staff. Rosemary, as one of the most experienced members of her department, was overwhelmed by ever-increasing responsibilities. Her perennial enthusiasm for her work became jaded: "*I was burnt out.*" When a family member worried about her exhausted appearance, Rosemary explained: "*I said to her, 'I am under extreme stress and I don't know what to do!' Then she said to me, 'Why don't you resign?' And I said to her, 'Well, I don't know.' And then I decided I am going to. It was an early retirement. I got pensioned.*" Although her decision was instantaneous, Rosemary did not abandon her responsibilities forthwith and completed the academic year to ensure that "*everything was perfect*". She left behind a comprehensive legacy for others to build on: textbooks and instructional material, curricula and accredited multi-level courses for the training of ECD practitioners, which she alone or she and her team had designed over three decades.

George and Jake both fulfilled their tenure before retirement. During George's last three years in the hurly-burly of management pressures and turbulent relationships, which were the outflow of incisive organisational restructuring, he had shelved writing a book designed to be the culminating project of his career. He remarked "*I was excited about retirement. I could not wait for it as I was not happy in management*." He saw in retirement the chance to consolidate his intellectual legacy through his book, a contribution to South African history, which he intended to write according to his own pace and agenda. A suggestion made by his immediate superior to accept a short-term contract in management was turned down without hesitation. On the contrary, Jake retired at mandatory age with great reluctance. The last decade of his career had been "*fantastic*". He had always thrived on the academic debate engendered by his participation in an informal group of peers who met regularly at work to bounce ideas. Moreover, the university was his '*place*', an intellectual space in which he was intellectually and emotionally fulfilled. Retirement brought an abrupt end to this sense of belonging and with it a loss of meaning. Initially he visited the campus two or three days a week, randomly seeking the company he had so cherished. Adjustment to his new routine at home was difficult. Retirement seemed to bring with it the threat of stagnation with scant opportunity to find new generativity commitments.

4.3 Continuance of generativity after retirement

Formal employment offers adults the benefit of a structured environment and daily tasks and goals to pursue generative actions. Retirement means the loss of this environment and poses a greater challenge to fuel generativity by intrinsic motivation (Moody, 2006). Solutions to this dilemma may take a variety of forms: remunerated part-time employment, such as contract work related to one's academic experience; self-motivated engagement in creative pursuits or voluntary community work. Contract work has the advantage of the external motivation imposed by a formal obligation; the latter options require larger amounts of energy and drive.

Only George and Rosemary have participated in long-term contract work since retirement. Unexpectedly and contrary to university practice at the time which disallowed contracts for retirees, George was made a second offer of contract work shortly after retirement. This time his assignment appealed to his generative sensitivity: he was required to mentor and coach a wide pool of emerging academics who were in the process of applying for national research rating. George said, "*I accepted it as that was something that I was very interested in. So I said yes. I would love to do it. It has fitted me like a glove. It is wonderful.*" This contract has been renewed several times and as he approaches his seventieth year, George still holds this contract position. To describe his task, George repeatedly refers to it in terms of care:"*I am working with people from every college. Suddenly I was thrown in the deep and I was helping academics in Law, I was helping those in the natural sciences. I was helping educationists in the Education Faculty. And it is great and it has expanded. So my work today is helping younger academics get grants, helping people with any grants. When I started this job the university had one [formal] sponsored project. It now has 21.*" George's generativity is seen in his nurture of the careers of others, thus making the "'strategic knowledge' of a wise adult" (de St Aubin, 1998:406) unconditionally available to new academic cohorts.

Rosemary started retired life by structuring a weekly programme devoted to hobbies. But soon her attention was returned to her passion, early childhood education. Approached by two private organisations, she began a part-time consultancy. Her engagement increased when a small, private Christian-based teacher training institution which planned to offer degree programmes invited her full-time professional help. Her experience in course accreditation acquired through years of working with the national accreditation body stood her in good stead: "*So I helped them and we got the degree accredited so we started writing study material.*" Rosemary's renewed joy and zest for her "*retirement job*" is tangible. She heads a small academic department of eight

young lecturers. Her aim is to "*bring the college onto the map*" by training novice lecturers and advising them on their postgraduate research in early childhood education "*so that they can make the journey*" in accordance with academic standards and the institution's explicit Reformed Christian mission. Rosemary herself is again engaged in research on teaching practice which connects directly to the transmission of professional skills to student teachers and has presented several papers since the advent of her 'retirement career' phase.

Geoffrey fulfilled a short contract immediately after retirement; since then his ongoing creation of a substantial intellectual and creative legacy has been intrinsically motivated. In retirement Geoffrey has produced a formal generative narrative: a two-volume memoir recounting his forebears' European roots, their immigration to South Africa, details of his childhood, schooling, membership of church and youth groups, student days, family formation and career. This is complemented by three anthologies of poetry and short stories interspersed with his musical compositions. Only a few of his writings have been published; but many have been shared or performed at social gatherings. A poem written in honour of the university where Geoffrey spent so many years, poetry which reveals profound religious and philosophical musings and musical compositions commemorate special events or honour friends. Virtually all his compositions and writings are dedicated as a personal legacy to his adult children and his grandchildren. His nurture of the performing arts is also expressed in his ongoing adjudication of music competitions, external examination of music students at various institutions and as occasional choir director. Geoffrey concludes he has met the goal he envisaged when he took retirement a few years before age 65: the release of time and energy from tight institutional strictures for his creative endeavours. He surmised: "*So many people in the academic world are single-minded … other people are multifaceted; they can turn their talents to many different directions and have many strings to their bow. I am the second kind, particularly because I am in music and music offers avenues outside of the university to continue after retirement.*"

The threat of post-retirement stagnation Jake feared has been countered by his continued engagement in postgraduate supervision. Postgraduate supervision, undertaken effectively and empathetically, has much in common with the prototypical generative act of parenting: the nurture of a protégé's latent abilities, emotional encouragement and the correction of weaknesses, all aimed at the attainment of the charge's eventual independence. Jake carries out all these functions, challenging and moulding his students' intellect with the eventual aim of their attainment of autonomy as scholars: many of

Jakes' students have gone on to achieve significant careers in psychology. Jake relies on *ad hoc* appointments as supervisor; however, his academic reputation among his former colleagues and students has ensured a steady flow of protégés. This supervision reaps only modest financial returns but like all authentic generative action, which promotes the development of others, it is rewarded by experiencing another's development as if it were one's own (Urrutia *et al*., 2009).

Leslie's post-retirement experience differs significantly from that of the other participants. The legacy built over four decades of service to his institution was a powerful testament to his productivity and creativity. Unsurprisingly, he received several post-retirement offers both from his own institution and others. A proposal from a top research institute in the US was reluctantly but firmly refused. Like Geoffrey, he wished his retirement to signify a final break with his former life: "*Officially I told the Faculty, I said don't phone me for at least the next three years. They did phone me and I helped them but I said, 'I have told you this is the last time'.*" Leslie's retirement has been accompanied by a thoughtful re-evaluation of his priorities. He concluded that midlife had been dominated by an all-engrossing career and that the primary generative pursuit vested in family relationships had come second. Retirement was now the time "*to bring balance back into your life if you were all work and no play.*" Leslie, a widower, re-married a retired academic who shared his many non-academic interests and deliberately switched his focus to self-enrichment, practised not in isolation but in conjunction with his wife, grandchildren and a close circle of like-minded friends with few connections to academe. Rigorous and extended travel consumes most of the couple's time: they have undertaken several overland trips in Africa and extensive camping and hiking trips in Europe and parts of Asia. Further, Leslie is engaged in a programme of non-academic reading and basks in the time he can devote to the nurture of his spiritual life. He contrasts his current daily devotions to the mad routine of the career academic: "*Then I just spent five minutes with God. I didn't have the time. What, you work all day long! Tonight you go to an Inaugeral lecture, a graduation, to whatever, another meeting, a function.*" Leslie still plans for academic pursuits, "*I want to write an article. I want to write a book on the true reality of losing a life companion. In a couple of years I want to do something for the seniors.*" But these aspirations are vague and lie at an undefined point in the future. Leslie feels his obligation is now to himself, "*To plough back into your life, what you neglected over the years. You need to plough into yourself, to get back to yourself, like reading time, religious time, music time, leisure time.*" Thus, Leslie has voluntarily and consciously disassociated himself from his previous single-minded en-

gagement in the "maintenance of the world" of academe (Erikson, 1978:11). His attention has partly turned another aspect of generativity, the relational care induced by a new marriage and an enlarged extended family. But his main concern appears to be "transcend his over-defined professional existence" (Erikson, 1978:2) through the nurture of neglected facets of identity. His passion for travel embodies a pilgrimage to reunify himself with himself. In fact, an important journey made with his wife shortly after retirement was a well-known annual pilgrimage made by devotees in Spain. Although an outlier in this regard among the participants, Leslie's experience fits Erikson's (1950) notion of epigenetic development which maintains that although generativity (vs. stagnation) is most salient to midlife, all developmental issues are present at all times. Thus, the generative adult, such as Leslie, situated in the latter part of midlife may, at some level, still be working on identity tasks associated with earlier stages of the life cycle. In retirement Leslie remains a vitally engaged and productive man. If his retirement narrative suggests narcissism, that is, a preoccupation with self, it could be seen "enlightened self-interest" (Frimer, Walker, Dunlop, Lee & Riches, 2012:149) whereby Leslie is strategically seeking to compensate for a life previously dominated by work.

4.4 Generative commitments at the threshold of old age

The realisation of the reality of death associated with ageing is a generativity-threatening experience which may often re-energise generative commitment as one attempts to reduce death anxiety by creating and re-appraising one's legacy (De St Aubin, 1998). Erikson (1950) maintains that the ageing adult may successfully counter feelings of hopelessness and despair evoked by life's finiteness by accepting his/her life as something good and worthwhile. In so doing ego integrity is achieved, which in turn produces wisdom which enables the ageing adult "to live out the future, to place him- or herself in perspective among the generations now living" (Erikson *et al*., 1986:56). Ego integrity depends largely on a life of active generativity and the integration of earlier experiences of caring into the life story (Jones & McAdams, 2013). As the participants in this study related their stories, they all demonstrated awareness of the importance of having lived life well in the face of approaching old age and the limitations it brings. Their narratives were frequently illustrated by anecdotes which revealed that they recognised their most productive years were more nearly completed than yet to be lived. They also acknowledged that knowing that they had lived lives meaningful to others helped to counter the apprehension associated with diminishing physical and intellectual powers.

Leslie opened his story by referring to the cyclical nature of life whereby the quality of life in retirement is determined by one's earlier years: "*You cast your bread on the waters* [and it will return to you] *after many days because during your life, you are actually working towards what is coming to you later in retirement.*" Not only did Leslie's fruitful professional career represent a legacy which outlasted his departure from the university, but the financial rewards have also enabled his choice of a lifestyle after retirement that is out of the reach of the average retiree. Further, the production of this legacy undergirds his justification of a retirement now spent on the actualisation of his own dreams rather than those of others. His post-retirement project of self-development, which is largely expressed through travel, is driven not only by pleasure but a sense of urgency brought on by the sudden deaths of two siblings and the sober insight that travel in one's late 60s and 70s is dependent on physical vigour and good health: "*There are still so many places we want to visit and time is running out.*" Geoffrey, the oldest participant at age 75, is already some way to achieving ego integrity. His recall of a career of caring for the musical community mingled with the gratification he finds in his continued creativity has produced tranquillity, visible in both his demeanour and his words. His artistic creations are a rich legacy for his family and the community and this has helped to create a sense of permanence in old age. Geoffrey repeatedly described his life, past and present, as a "*joy*"; inevitable crises (a spouse's serious illness, concerns about adult children and occasional financial pressures) have not been eluded but have been faced, resolved and integrated into a meaningful whole in which his future, albeit one of already lessening physical vigour, is filled with hope. George, at nearly 70, good-humouredly recognised the inevitability of slowing down in the next decade of his life and is looking forward to time to write his book. This cherished project ground to a standstill amid the demands of his post-retirement contracts: "*The book is no further. The book does not get written which is a big sadness. I do manage to write chapters [in other books] or articles, but not nearly as many as I thought I was going to do.*" George's mentoring job, which he found so satisfying, exacted a toll of time-consuming paperwork which has landed him in the dilemma of the full-time academic: active research is circumscribed by arduous administrative tasks. Notwithstanding, George is satisfied that, when the last contract ends, his knowledge and skills will be carried forward in the careers of his mentees. With gratitude, Rosemary acknowledges that her exciting 'second career' phase allowed her to reverse the stagnation, "t*hreatening, negative, dragging you down*", which darkened her last years at the university. At retirement she eschewed a leisure lifestyle devoted to her many hobbies, which she could have supported with "*my nice pension, 32 years' service, and I also bought*

back pension over the years, quite a nice pension". Instead she prolonged generative commitment enthusiastically and has ploughed back the experience gained in her 'first career' into a developing institution. However, Rosemary knows that this intense activity must end within a few years and she is already positioning herself for a less active period of 'second' retirement. She has enrolled for her third master's degree in psychotherapy and plans a practice as life-coach to help struggling postgraduate students, a plan which is consistent with her commitment to generative care.

Part of the process of life review is coming to terms with perceived mistakes, failures and omissions (Erikson *et al*., 1986). Of the participants, Jake's narrative showed the most conscious introspection concerning the achievements of previous life stages. Jake endeavours to integrate, rather than deny, low points in his career; the rather unwelcome adjustment to a more isolated life in retirement shared predominantly with his spouse also a retired academic; his brush with death during a recent armed robbery at his home; and his unorthodox religious sentiments. Jake has undertaken the integration of his past with his present with resolution and humour and so combats feelings of despair. As a qualified but non-practising clinical psychologist, he laughingly recounts how he applies counselling principles to his battle to accept the downside of retirement. His primary source of intellectual satisfaction lies in generativity expressed in his ongoing postgraduate supervision: "*I will continue supervision till I am senile.*" In his garden which has become his domestic responsibility and which he cares for good-naturedly, he has built a path of stepping stones to a bench among the shrubbery. He explains the underlying symbolism: "*I have measured the path carefully – nine tenths of my life is over. There is that last stone in the path just before the bench and I sit and contemplate it. You will never get your youth back again, you can still at times taste a little of what was good in your young days but the real challenge is what you will do with this last step.*" This garden feature suggests an unconsciously created picture of the life cycle which does more than extend into the next generation but "curves back on the life of the individual, allowing … a re-experiencing of earlier stages in a new form" (Erikson *et al*., 1986:327).

5. Conclusion

Healthy adult development in midlife is dependent on generativity and generative adults benefit society in a number of ways (Erikson, 1950). Through thematic analysis of the life stories of retired academics this study explored how an intellectual legacy may be generated, transmitted and preserved

through the career and after retirement, although the latter is not the prototypical generative stage of life (Batesman, 2010). Consistent with past research, generativity in the participants' lives was positively associated with recalling professional experiences in which care for others and for the university as valued social institution was shown through teaching, mentoring, supervising, creative endeavours and academic leadership. These generative tasks organised the narratives and their significance was integral to the life satisfaction of the participants. Generative tasks were seen as pleasant and as opportunities to continue personal growth; threats to continued professional generativity were seen very negatively.

However, generativity is not an automatic function of adult behaviour but a conscious choice which leads to commitment and action. Major life changes such as retirement may cause a disruption to generative commitment and pose the choice if and how generativity will be continued after retirement. The prolongation of generative action is encouraged when social institutions recruit retirees for new forms of service (McAdams *et al*., 1998); to continue intellectual and creative endeavours without some form of formal engagement requires greater perseverance and motivation. On the other hand, individuals may also choose to exchange generative action related to their former academic lives with self-development and/or investment in personal relationships, which were overlooked during a frenetic career (Erikson, 1978).

Given a Christian understanding of the concept of generativity, Browning (2006) stresses the mutuality of generativity, which signifies benefits both for giver and for receiver. Erikson (1978) points out that generativity fulfils the adult's need to be needed and argues that it is as essential for the renewal of the individual's own life as it is for that of the next generation. Similarly, the study confirmed that highly generative academics who created an intellectual and creative legacy of self to benefit future generations during their working lives reap the fruit thereof through meaning and purpose in their own lives after retirement. Indeed, the mutual benefits of generative commitment become even more crucial in the post-retirement phase, when the adult increasingly is faced with his/her finiteness and the need to integrate all life's experiences, both positive and negative, into the ego with a sense of hope. If the generative adult at the threshold of old age expresses fulfilment by being able to say, 'I am what survives me' (Erikson, 1950), the academic may echo, 'I am what I have been able to pass on to others in my community of practice and far beyond it'. Thus, although generativity is not typically associated with studies of older adults (Schoklitsch & Bauman, 2012), the findings of this inquiry have the potential to inform future studies on generativity and its

importance for successful ageing in the post-retirement period with particular reference to the academic profession.

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