A blend of equal measures of creativity and control in these boomers drives a focus on crafting their personal worlds—and expressing themselves through their crafts.

**The basic conflict:**
Control vs. creativity

The boomers who embody this action type work long and hard to make the world, and all those around them, feel comfortable. They are deeply affected by physical and emotional surroundings. For this reason, they tend to be hyper-sensitive, including allergies and sensitivity to certain foods.

Reconciling the need for creative expression with the need for control is the big challenge these boomers face. At their best, they balance left and right brain activities with acute, analytical skills and well-developed musical, visual, or performance abilities. At their worst, they may act out or rebel against them. At this stage in their lives, they feel of having themselves outside institutional structure, working according to their own schedules as contractors or as independents.

**Lifestyle:**
Beyond the second career

Boomers who have been successful in crafting their most comfortable surroundings, in general, have also succeeded in establishing one or more respected professional identities. In fact, as they enter this phase of their lives, each of these boomers has probably already made at least one significant career shift, and is looking ahead to the next. Having tasted one big change, it’s time to contemplate another.

Some boomers define themselves by an aesthetic drive that has shaped their adult choices. This drive is more than simply a “lifestyle.” It causes them to gravitate toward the creative, demonstrate heightened sensitivity to their environments, and show an overwhelming focus on their surroundings. Clear-headed and quick-thinking, boomers who orient their decision making around personal preference often have stranger-than-average needs to control their environments. Change is an issue for them, but whether they are seeking change or resisting it, they organize their resources to preserve and protect their tastes. In short, they are continuously crafting their environments, seeking to control what is external to them.

**Expectations:**
Friends as family

The sense of crafting extends to the social lives of these boomers. They are quick to tell you that their friends are their families—their chosen families. Just as they create and control their surroundings, they create and control their experiences of “family.” They are completely committed to these important relationships and are even thinking of how they may be called on to be caretakers of friends in much the way many boomers anticipate taking care of parents and relatives.

Although they have family-like expectations of their friends, and have cultivated their networks with care and deliberateness, these boomers do not see family as advisors. They call on these friends to help with the practical details of everyday life but turn to trusted authorities, not friends, when they have important decisions to make.
The Action Ecology illustrates the complexity with which boomers anticipate, plan for, and deal with changes in their lives. The inner portion of the ecology highlights resources, sorted into four categories: people, information, institutions, and capitals. The outer ring, organized around our seven dimensions of decision making, describes practices and strategies through which boomers put their resources into action. Finally, there are the "decisions in suspension," questions that these boomers don't have answers to just yet.
Adapting to self-changing surroundings

Resequencing Life Stages

Enacting the narrative

Authoring one's path

Evolving the smart consumer

Becoming a connected citizen

New Sociability

Building the instrumental network

Expressing relationships

Re-Institutioning

Repurposing the old

Investing in the new

Wealth Generation

Mitigating risk

Cultivating faith

Global Transparency

Focusing on the local

Engaging with the global

Self-Help 2.0

With their sensitivity to their environments, environment-consuming boomers are quite aware of global issues. However, they are more likely to engage with local community issues and responsibilities. Since they lack the personal wealth and influence that some other boomers possess, they are content to watch the world change, but they admit that they themselves will not be visible agents of change.
Sarah Mercer has balanced a career as a scientist with a passion for music and traditional women’s handcraft. A world-renowned expert on the history of the craft, she travels widely, both researching and giving presentations on the subject. Meanwhile, in the wake of a still-undiagnosed illness, her scientific career has shifted to a part-time role as an independent contractor with a major research institution, mentoring young scientists entering the laboratory. After commuting for over a decade between work in Northern California and her home in Southern California, she and her husband have settled into what, for them, is a less-than-satisfactory suburban environment. In the past, they were leaders in their local community, rare, with plans to retire in the next few years, the anonymity and homogeneity of a new environment has left them feeling left out. They hope to be able to find the kind of urban, cosmopolitan atmosphere of their past without depleting their financial resources and limiting their ability to travel. For her, financial planning will make it all happen.

On crafting multiple identities:
"I'm kind of noted for making up a persona in different situations. Sometimes I'll introduce myself as 'Tim Edwards.' I've also been an elected official and a city commissioner for many years, so sometimes I say, 'I'm a city commissioner' and sometimes, I say, 'I'm a scientist.' Sometimes I'll make something up altogether ... to see how far I can take it, just for fun."

On using trusted authorities for decisions:
"I'm very, very picky about my health care. My family physician is a family friend and I've known him for most of his life and I've trusted him completely because of track record, with me in particular. That's how I find trust and value in what I'm hearing."

On friends as a critical health support network:
"My friends are my family. If I need help, I'll ask. A lot of people feel funny asking their friends for help. But me ... if I need it, I usually travel with someone who knows my medical condition and knows what to do. That's how I cope with it by knowing my limits, keeping people around me that I can trust to take care of the 'what if you really need to have a support system and to know yourself.'

Lori Zahn is a successful real estate agent in the urban Northwest. Before getting her real estate license, she spent many years working in high-voltage retail supply, but was disillusioned with the computer automation of her job and sought more independence. As a real estate agent, she makes a point of saying that ‘when it’s a young, independent contractor. She keeps a tight reign on her material possessions and has refined each of her homes to perfection, and then sold each one. As a single parent, she has a keen sense for the material and spatial needs of her peers. When she returns home from a sale, she recharges with the home and job, she suspects that both will need to change within the next few years, more than a need to renew her surroundings and tastes but from financial or aging-related demands. She thinks about returning to some artistic interest of her youth, including painting, or, as she has in the past, volunteering with homeless women. She doesn't have a strong sense of what she'll do, but she doesn't intend to stop working. And she is sure that the next phase will be clear when it arrives, and she'll take the necessary steps. She has never been married and has no plans to marry, but does, however, have a boyfriend who loves her so well, and she expects that relationship to continue. Lori makes a point of saying that 'my friends are my family.'

Profiles & Quotations
Each of these profiles describes a person who embodies the Crafting an Environment action type. These three personal stories best illustrate the decision-making lens of the action type but are not the only interviewees who shaped the type. The profiles represent actual people and their words, although their names and some details about their lives have been changed to protect their identities.
On introducing herself at a community event:

"It would be a professional greeting, so I would say, 'Hi, I'm Lori Zahn. I sell condominiums in the downtown market.' And that's how I would introduce myself because my work has a very large defining part to my personality … and wherever I meet people, that's potential business."

On making decisions:

"I'm a good decision maker, and I'm also a fast decision maker. Whether buying a house or changing jobs, I seem to get ready internally somehow … and then I just one day wake up and say, 'This is what I'm doing'… I don't have to ask a million people about their opinions."

On the next career:

"Maybe I come up with another business … if I get tired of doing this. I've been in real estate for a long time now. Maybe it's starting to make sense and discover what it really is that I want to do. Maybe I want to open a wine bar."

On community activism:

"I don't like meetings, I don't like working with organizations. Therefore, I'm not inclined to participate in government or community activities. These just scare me. I'm sort of an introvert. I'm not naturally outgoing, so I might get involved — say issues of some environmental issues — that the whole process of government, I think, is tedious."

On creativity, passion, and purpose:

"I'm doing it [acting] because of the joy of it. I love doing it, and I feel like I have something to contribute to humanity. If I can do something that will help humanity somehow, be a blessing someone to people through my creativity … one way or the other, I will still be doing what I'm doing and involved with a second career … I might be doing something completely different their acting that I fall in love with."

On health, cleanliness, order, and trusted authorities:

"I usually have a rule when I go to a restaurant … I go to the men's room first to see if it's clean. And if it's not that clean, then one can imagine what the kitchen's like … I went to the naturopath because I wasn't going to be put on medication for the rest of my life … I found out about the naturopath from my friend Stella. It was her doctor, and I said, 'A woman doctor, huh? She's not into drugs and all that stuff so I'm going to see her.'"

On the integrity of identity:

"I have issues with people who don't walk their talk. They say one thing and then they're actually saying another. That causes a lot of stress for me. It's probably one of my criteria when I associate with somebody, a friend. I've just got to know they're coming from a place of integrity."

On freedom and location:

"I've lived here for going on 27 years … and I feel like this is my home. It's like cutting your leg off, you know, going to a new unknown place … I might love it out there; I might never return … The ultimate plan would be to get my career moving and then I'm in a situation that I can live anywhere I want to live. I'd probably move back to Northwest, just go down there and work. I would have that liberty."
At a glance

Boomers who craft their environments follow their instincts and avoid agonizing over decisions. They have a few trusted advisors, rely on friends for help but not for their input in the decision-making process. They make decisions quickly, turning to inner, intuitive guidance.

Engaging with trusted authorities

Some boomers define themselves by an aesthetic that has shaped their adult choices. This drive is more than a simple “aesthetic.” It causes them to gravitate toward the natural, demonstrated heightened sensitivity to their environments, and show an overemotional focus on their surroundings. Cheerful, kind, and quick-thinking, boomers who act decisively making prompt decisions often check their emotional-aesthetic motives before deciding on any more forceful actions.

Sacrifices.

Even though some of these boomers have taken the career path most positive manifestation, this sensitivity to their environments, and show an overarching focus on their surroundings. Cheerful, kind, and quick-thinking, boomers who act decisively making prompt decisions often check their emotional-aesthetic motives before deciding on any more forceful actions.

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