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Factors Which Contribute to Successful Job Change for Women Aged in Their Fifties

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Pamela Finnie

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Abstract

Demographics show that older New Zealanders are in better health and living for longer. Women aged in their 50s in paid employment make up ten percent of the New Zealand population in paid work (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). As there is no compulsory retirement age and the government superannuation entitlement age may increase, these women may not want to, or perhaps financially cannot, stop work.

Privileging of youth and negative stereotypes of older workers combine to further position women aged in their 50s on the margins within the paid workforce. This has significant implications for women in this age group who, for whatever reason, seek to change their employment. The question addressed in this research was what factors contribute to successful job change for women aged in their 50s.

Five main themes were identified in the literature review: the workforce is ageing; people are remaining actively involved in the world of work for longer; the world of work is constantly changing; the meaning of career success has changed; and traditional career planning is no longer relevant. Underpinned by a feminist framework, this research used semi-structured interviews with six women who had made a self-defined successful job change.

Rather than a one-size-fits-all model for effective job change for women in this age group, the study revealed the participants used a range of effective job-change strategies. The identified strategies include ensuring that their skills were updated and relevant and the participants not necessarily seeing their age as a barrier. However contradictory subjectivities were evidenced through some participants being influenced by ageist stereotypes. As well as displaying career resilience, through exercising some degree of agency, participants also looked for and had developed the skills to take advantage of opportunities.

This research has confirmed that further study into the embedded nature of ageism by employers and older female workers themselves is needed and that the issues around age, agency and ageism is an area for further feminist theorisation.

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Introduction

Overview of the Thesis

New Zealand is increasingly becoming an ageing society. Statistics New Zealand (2009) predicts that by 2016 the New Zealand population will be 4,630,800, of which 313,000 (6.76%) will be women aged in their 50s and 294,200 (6.35%) will be men aged in their 50s. With no legal retirement age, either by necessity or desire, people can choose to remain in the workforce for longer. Employment figures for March 2010 show 209,100 (96%) of women and a similar 225,100 (97%) men of aged in their 50s were employed (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

Given that this is a significant percentage of the workforce and that the New Zealand Human Rights Act ("Human Rights Act, No. 82," 1993) stipulates that employers should not discriminate on the basis of age or gender, and the needs and concerns of workers over 50 should be considered. However, this is not the case. Employers, colleagues and indeed older workers themselves buy into stereotypical views of older workers and perpetuate these stereotypes, causing barriers to the employment of older workers (Riach, 2007). This discrimination is evident in employment discourses such as job advertisements targeted using youthful attributes, for example, 'be part of our youthful team', or older workers believing they need to 'wind down' career-wise because of their chronological age (Riach, 2007; Wilson & Kan, 2006).

Calasanti (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001), a feminist gerontologist, neatly encapsulated the effect of this ageist view when she suggested that telling an older person they look younger than their chronological age (and thinking such a comment is a compliment) is just as bad as telling a woman she has done a job as well as a man and expecting her to think it is a compliment. This example of an unacknowledged negative attitude towards ageing puts the spotlight on the emerging battle against ageist attitudes.

Clearly, then, youth is favoured over age in age and career discourses within New Zealand. In the case of women, not only do they have the gender issue to deal with but also age, and this places them firmly on the margins. The

marginalisation of older women has been reinforced in career theories and models through their very telling, as although a significant body of literature exists, little focus has been put on older women other than in a negative sense. However, the world of work is changing. In an era of globalisation and rapid technological change the current concept of a career has changed from one of predictability and stability to one of unpredictability and instability. Career theories such as the Chaos Theory of Careers, Protean Careers and Boundaryless Careers focus on this non-linearity (Bright & Pryor, 2008; De Vos & Soens, 2008; Inkson, 2006).

The concept of non-linear careers has the potential to be more in favour of women and their career choices, for example, taking time out from the workforce to have children. Rather than being seen as a reserve army to be called upon when younger workers are unavailable, it is critical that women in this age group are seen and acknowledged as an active and contributing segment of the workforce, (Moore, 2009). Women in this age cohort do not necessarily see themselves as winding down to retirement and needing or wanting to be placed in part-time, unskilled and low-paid positions with no chance of progression. The non-linear workforce models provide the tool for change but with this goes the need to be more flexible and willing to change jobs.

In my professional role as a business consultant I am often involved in organisational restructurings. I have noticed the uncertainty and angst felt by many of the women I work with, aged 40 plus, in relation to what they want to do next in terms of employment and careers. Some women are able to move successfully into other jobs but some remain stuck, no matter how much support is given to them. The fact that this is an ignored group which is growing in size and political potential, combined with a desire to understand why some women in the 50s age group are able to change jobs successfully and others are unable to change jobs, provided the catalyst for this research. This thesis seeks to answer one question: What factors contribute to successful job change for women in their 50s?

This research is based on a feminist framework and is underpinned by the three factors identified by Harding (1989) as indicative of feminist research: issues that are problematic for women; the research is for women and provides a 'view from below'; and visibility of the position and potential influence of the researcher. All feminist research has a political agenda, and in this case it is that of highlighting the need for agency, subversion and resistance to the stigma of gender and ageism bestowed on older female workers.

Aims and Scope of the Research

The literature review is divided into four sections of relevance to the research question: Chapter One examines careers and success, while Chapter Two explores older workers and job transition.

The methodology used in this research is explained in Chapter Three. The feminist qualitative research design is described, including the ethical procedures followed, the participant selection process and the methods of gathering data based on grounded theory. The methods used to analyse the research findings are then explained along with any assumptions made and the limitations of the research. The study participants are introduced by way of individual profiles.

Chapter Four describes the main research findings from the study. These are grouped under 12 common themes that emerged from the interview data: definitions of success; motivation for changing jobs; professional identity; learning; the role of opportunity; technical ability; work/life balance; support; barriers to changing jobs; career resilience; comparison with being in their 20s and 30s; and advice they would give to women in their 50s thinking about changing jobs.

Chapter Five analyses the 12 common themes from the research findings to identify the factors which contributed to successful job change. The study reveals a variety of effective strategies women in this cohort use for job change rather than a one-size-fits-all model or theory.

The thesis closes with some final conclusions and recommendations for final study.

Chapter One

Literature Review Part One – Career and Success

Introduction

A considerable amount of the published literature about careers has focused on the career trajectory of white, middle-class men, with women, and particularly older women, being relegated to a less privileged and almost invisible position. However, much of the recent research reviewed in this chapter suggests that the traditional linear career path has been replaced by a non-linear career path. Because of the career breaks many women take to raise a family, a non-linear career path is positioned as woman friendly.

Definitions of career success have also traditionally been based on 'male' factors and objective factors, such as promotion and salary levels. Because of global downturns, flatter organisational structures and rapidly changing technology, job transitions are now the norm. These changes have resulted in a broader definition of success which includes subjective definitions such as work/life balance.

Chapter One, in conjunction with Chapter Two, provides a review of literature relevant to the issues around successful job transitions for women aged in their 50s.

This chapter is structured around two key themes: career and success. Part I of this chapter looks at the meaning of career and is divided into six sections. The first section reviews literature on traditional career goal setting. Secondly, global career theory literature is reviewed. Literature on three selected non-linear career models is then outlined. Next a review of the available literature on transferable skills and older workers is followed by an exploration of the literature on career patterns. Finally the literature on older women and careers is reviewed.

Part I: Career

Globalisation and the impact of global recessions has meant that, increasingly, the world of work is changeable and unpredictable and that the traditional linear career model is no longer relevant. Numerous recent studies have challenged the traditional definition of a career as one that is carefully planned and adhered to (Bright, Pryor, Chan, & Rijanto, 2009; Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Cabrera, 2007; Cappelli, 2009; De Vos & Soens, 2008; Ebberwein, Krieschok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004; Grote & Raeder, 2009; Hall, 2004; Inkson, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2002; 2009).

The tendency towards non-linear careers has meant that the choices an individual makes in relation to his or her job, or the experiences an individual has had relative to their jobs, are made over their entire life rather than a decision that is made once (Baruch, 2004; Cabrera, 2007; Grzeda, 1999). A more contemporary view of careers is seen in a study analysing the robustness of the French Career Transition Inventory where Fernandez, Fouquereau and Heppner (2008, p. 385) defined a career as "a sequence of work roles." Baruch (2004, p. 59) expands on this by defining contemporary careers as "multidirectional, dynamic and fluid" rather than following a traditional linear career path.

Organisations have responded in many ways to the changing external environment, including developing flatter hierarchical structures as pointed out by Baruch's (2004) paper on emerging careers. Flatter structures have resulted in fewer opportunities for promotion and, as Baruch (2004) suggests, this has resulted in a shift in people's priorities, taking on non-work commitments. This means that previous traditional career models, which focus mainly on the context of work, may no longer be relevant (Grzeda, 1999; Kirk & Belovics, 2005).

Traditional Career Goal Setting

Numerous studies have identified that there is a risk of seeing career goal setting as not being aligned with the current dynamic work environment. Career goal setting is seen to reflect narrow views and risks focusing on the future at

the cost of not reacting effectively to the present. Making decisions about one's career is a continuing process, not a one-off (Coppa, 1993; De Vos & Soens, 2008; Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008; Hall, 2004; Inkson, 2006; Krumboltz, 1998; O'Sullivan, 2002; Pryor, Amundson, & J Bright, 2008; Pryor & Bright, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006; Young, 1991).

Instead of traditional career goal setting, the findings of a study on the role of goal setting in career management by Greenhaus et al. (1995) suggest that, in order to look at career self-management, an individual needs to align career decisions with values, work/life balance and interests, and have the flexibility and adaptability to respond to changes in self and the organisation that changes that alignment. There is a need to focus on the present and the future and to ensure there is balance between work and life.

Like Greenhaus et al. (1995), Betz and Hackett (2006) identified that individuals need to be adaptable and flexible. They, too, saw that the development of self-efficacy, which is "a cognitive appraisal or judgment of future performance capabilities" (Betz & Hackett, 2006, p. 6) that is linked to a particular behaviour (such as career decision-making), is important for adaptable and flexible effective career self-management. As Grote and Raeder's (2009) study of flexible working showed, positions still go to those who have taken a more traditional career path. The researchers suggest that organisations need to ensure that those who take a flexible approach are not penalised over those with more traditional career paths (Grote & Raeder, 2009). Expanding on this, van der Heidjen (2002) found that promotion can be seen to be less about length of service and more about being in the right place with the right skills.

Non-linear Career Models

From the matching theories first introduced by Frank Parsons (Parsons, 1909), to life-designing models by Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck, and van Vianen (2009, p. 257), career theories and models have generally developed relative to the era and the changing contexts of that era. The current context-informing career theories and models are those of unpredictability and change which have required a move from a traditional linear approach to a non-linear approach.

Various researchers have suggested a Protean Career or a Boundaryless Career as suitable for a non-linear career model (Cabrera, 2009; Clarke, 2009a; Fernandez, et al., 2008; Hall, 2004; Thijssen, van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008). A Protean Career, named after the Greek sea god Proteus who could undergo rapid transformations, has been defined as a career approach which enables an individual to change to meet labour market requirements (Hall, 2004). In addition, Fernandez et al. (2008) describe a Protean Career as one where the individual is in control of their own career actions and goals and their subjective career success is aligned with their specific values, qualities, attributes and needs. Cabrera's (2009) research into reshaping work and careers to retain female talent suggests that, because of its focus on personal values and multiple careers, a Protean Career may be particularly relevant to women. Most of the women in Cabrera's (2009) study who had returned to the workforce after a break followed a Protean career on their return, for example, engaging in part-time work or a job which gave them a better work/life balance. This assumes that, after taking time out of their careers, women want a less challenging role and that they can afford to so. These findings support other studies which identify gender differences in career types (Huang, El-Khoury, Johansson, Lindroth, & Sverke, 2007).

In a review of the current research on Protean Careers, Hall (2004) noted that, in order to successfully develop a Protean Career, a worker needs to be adaptable and have a good sense of identity of who they are. A Protean Career was found by Hall (2004) to be less common among older workers. Along with Protean Careers the Boundaryless Career is equally suited for a non-linear career.

Traditionally, an individual was employed in the same organisation or profession for their working life. In a constantly changing world of work, a Boundaryless Career, which is one with no organisational or work role boundaries (Inkson, 2006; Thijssen, et al., 2008), is seen as a more effective career type. In a critical analysis of the concept of employability, Thijssen et al. (2008) identify that with career types such as Boundaryless Careers, employees need to manage their own careers, although it is in the employers' interest to help employees develop their career self-management skills.

As a result of the move toward Protean or Boundaryless Careers, the expectations between the employer and the employee have changed from being employed for life to being employable for life (Thijssen, et al., 2008). As a consequence, there is now a much shorter contract between employers and employees. An individual's employability rests on their "identity capital", that is "the varied resources deployable on an individual basis that represent how people most effectively define themselves and have others define them in various contexts" (Cote & Levine, 2002, p. 142).

The Chaos Theory of Careers emerged from dissatisfaction with the rigidity of traditional linear career approaches. This theory acknowledges that the systems within which we operate are open systems which are dynamic, unpredictable and non-linear. The Chaos Theory of Careers acknowledges vulnerability to the potentially significant effects of small changes in the initial conditions, acknowledges the openness to external influences from the complex interlocking matrix in which we are positioned, and moves away from the cause-and-effect predictability of traditional career approaches.

Transferable Skills and Older Workers

Older employees with attributes that were traditionally seen as positive, such as loyalty and institutional knowledge, are at risk of lack of 'employability' due to lack of transferable skills and lack of responsibility for ensuring their own employability (Clarke, 2009a). Those who continually update their knowledge and skills in response to the demand of the labour market are seen to be more employable. Lifetime employability has been defined as "the behavioural tendency directed at acquiring, maintaining and using qualifications aimed at coping with a changing labor market during all career stages" (Thijssen, et al., 2008, p. 167). Interestingly, studies by Huang et al. (2007) showed similar findings for women aged in their 40s.

Three types of self-management employability strategies used by individuals were identified in Thijssen et al.'s (2008) study: 'broadeners', 'sellers' and 'consumers'. Broadeners make use of development opportunities that come their way, for example, training, but they do not think about how they could market themselves in the labour market. Sellers move into the employment

market without additional training. Consumers neither develop themselves, nor look to the labour market; instead they wait and see what comes their way. However, Thijssen et al. (2008) warned that, regardless of what self-management strategy was used, workers need to ensure that they have transferable skills.

A potential tension between a worker with transferable skills and someone who is an expert employed with an organisation for a long period was identified in van der Heijden's (2002) study on prerequisites to guarantee lifelong employability. The study identified declining employability in workers as they aged. For those study participants in midlife (35–49 years of age), skills or growth potential made no difference to employability compared to younger employees, and the impact of social recognition was minor. Those senior workers (aged 50 plus) were seen to have almost no employability, and only ten percent were thought to be able to make promotional transitions.

Having transferable skills needs to be complemented by an individual's flexibility. Van der Heijden's (2002) findings indicate that being seen to be flexible is vital for seniors, and those who are perceived to already have the necessary skills should, as part of the self-management process, be developing skills relating to being flexible in responding to new and challenging situations. Van der Heijden's (2002) findings suggest that a worker's progression within a company may be blocked by their supervisor if they are a valuable member of that supervisor's team. This was found to be more likely to happen if the worker was middle-aged. Developing a history of frequent job changes can be one such strategy suggested by the researchers.

The need for an individual to have a knowledge of their values, career goals and intrinsic motivation in order to know what is important to them, for example, their values, was outlined as a key factor of self-management by Quigley and Tymon (2006) in their research into an integrated model of intrinsic motivation and career self-management. Their notion that this understanding underpins an employee's ability to make choices and to identify and select the right job for them is also supported by Kuijpers and Scheeren's (2006) study on career competencies.

Career Patterns

In the dynamic world of work the life cycle of tasks and occupations has changed considerably (van der Heijden, 2002). This has had an impact on the value of experience which is often suggested as a positive attribute of older workers. As a result of this rapidly changing work environment, new career patterns have evolved (Grzeda, 1999).

According to O'Neill and Bilimoria (2005), an individual's career pattern has three phases. Changing patterns are underpinned by an individual's career locus (internal or external), context and beliefs. In the first phase of 'idealistic achievement', there is a focus on self with an internal locus of control and achieving career success. This self-centredness changes to 'pragmatic endurance', in which the focus is on external locus of control, trying to meet the needs of others and the realisation that it cannot be done alone. An example of this is a need for flexible hours in the case of a mother working with family commitments. Dissatisfaction in this stage can be a result of dissatisfaction with life. Finally, the 'reinventive construction' phase portrays women as having an external career locus of control and a planned career path. Those in the 'reinventive construction' phase saw their jobs as "learning opportunities and the opportunity to make a difference to others" (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005, p. 184). The women in the O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) study aged over 46 years were more likely to be found in phase three, as women in this age group focused on what they could contribute. However, in line with Bright and Pryor's (2008) Chaos Theory of Career, regardless of the particular phase a woman is in, the priority of work can change with life events, such as divorce or death of a spouse.

In emerging career theories, an important part of career management is the ability to identify career patterns (Bright & Pryor, 2008; Clarke, 2009a; Huang, et al., 2007). Three typical career patterns found in a study to identify the career patterns of 549 Swedish women aged in their 40s were 'work centred', 'family centred' and 'work and family combined' (Huang, et al., 2007). The majority of women in the study were in full-time work and found to have 'work centred' and 'work and family' combined as their major career patterns (Huang, et al., 2007,

p. 408). The researchers also suggest that the well-being felt by women in midlife did not appear to be related to their career pattern; instead, it was suggested that it may be related to the significance of career agency or freedom of choice identified by the voluntary decisions made by the women in the study.

Inkson and Arthur (2001) refer to three ways of 'knowing' – knowing why, knowing how and knowing who – which influence an individual's career pattern and underpin the robustness of the individual's career capital. How individuals identify with their job, why they do their job and what they do is called 'knowing why'. 'Knowing how' refers to the skills and knowledge required to do a job, and 'knowing who' relates to the networks and information individuals need to progress their careers. Clarke (2009a) suggests that there is no relationship between career pattern and age; rather, it is whether an individual demonstrates a self-awareness of the employment context.

Clarke's (2009a) findings are supported by Huang et al. (2007, p. 408) who conclude that "career patterns to some extent are related to life values, aspiration, early experiences and socio-economic status", not as a result of age or gender. While ageism exists, it can be negated if an individual takes responsibility for his or her career through developing the right attitudes and behaviours with a focus on employability. The findings further suggest that, for women who had left the workforce, re-entry presented a number of barriers, for example, lack of current skills or lack of network skills (Cabrera, 2007). This impacts on the value of their 'knowing how' competency, or 'knowing who', due to a decrease in network maintenance. Women can, and should, develop and implement strategies, such as how to maintain networks, as soon as they take time out (Cabrera, 2009).

Expanding on Inkson's (2001) three ways of knowing, Clarke's (2009) study of individual approaches to career and employability of 20 individuals aged 30–60, identified four career patterns: 'plodders', 'pragmatists', 'visionaries' and 'opportunists'. Plodders moved between organisations and followed traditional careers with little planning and were not high in 'knowing who'. Pragmatists also had a traditional career and stayed within an organisation. They were high in 'knowing why' and 'knowing how', but their external 'knowing who' was weak as,

although they took advantage of opportunities, they focused on internal networks rather than external networks. Visionaries combined planning with flexibility, as is expounded by Bright and Pryor's (2008) Chaos Theory of Careers model, and could also be said to follow a Boundaryless Career. They had a clear focus on 'knowing why'. While opportunists who focused on 'knowing how' made up most of the study participants, in order to take advantage of opportunities, others followed a Protean Career and not only concentrated on the current environment in 'knowing how' but on the future environment as well. Regardless of which approach is taken, Clarke (2009a) suggests that it is an individual's job mobility and focus on aligning themselves with future careers which contributed most to an individual's perceived employability.

A link with career patterns and career success was found in Clarke's (2009a) study as more likely if women took responsibility for managing their own career and had a focus on lifelong learning. The strategy of self-responsibility and lifelong learning to remain employable was an uncontested finding in the reviewed literature (Bright & Pryor, 2008).

A number of studies found that those who had taken a traditional career view saw themselves as not particularly employable (Bright & Pryor, 2008; Clarke, 2009a). The notion stated in Fouad and Bynner's (2008) findings is that an individual could change their approach, for example, changing from a traditional career management focus to a more Protean approach after an enforced redundancy. In addition, three strategies relative to employability were identified in Fouad and Bynner's (2008) study: workers need to have an understanding of the labour market plus an understanding of how their skills relate to that market and/or what skills they need to acquire in order to be employed.

Global Career Theory

Although we operate in a global market, there are distinctions relevant to different countries' career theories. Burns (2008) identifies four factors in relation to European and American career development theories and practices: 'universality' (one size fits all), 'reading from the centre' (with relevance only to the major European and American centres of economic powers), 'gestures of

exclusion' (not identifying any alternative processes) and 'grand erasure' (ignoring the experiences of those who are not part of the centre). Burns argued that universality and reading from the centre are not necessarily relevant to New Zealand careers. The economies are different and 'gestures of exclusion' and the ignoring of career development of women and Maori, leads to the 'grand erasure' of those on the margins.

Older Women and Careers

"The domestic division of labour and relationships (or the legacy of those relationships) continues to define labour market participation" (Moore, 2009, p. 667), and the traditionally interrupted career path of women has an impact on the career paths of older women (Owen & Flynn, 2004). O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005, p. 170) maintain that it may be the limits put on women's careers in "the gendered nature of organisational advancement" through strategies such as token women in senior management, that can hinder the progress of women. The gendered nature of older women's experiences in the workforce is the focus of a study of 33 women aged over 50 in Great Britain by Moore (2009). It is the interconnectedness of age, gender, race and ethnicity that place older women on the margins. This theme of interconnectedness is common in recently developed career theories (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Moore, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2005; Savickas, et al., 2009).

The women in Moore's (2009) study believed their age was a negative factor when looking for work or promotion (both within an organisation and within a profession) and in being offered training and development opportunities. Yet rather than passive acceptance, they displayed varying levels of agency in their determination to escape those negative factors.

Of interest to this study, because of the inclusion of older workers, is a career model called the Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM). Developed by Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) and based on a number of studies involving 3,000 professional workers, this career model suggests that as individuals age, they change their career patterns. The KCM is based on three factors: authenticity (for example, finding work aligned to one's values), challenge (for example,

aiming for a higher career level) and balance (for example, between work and home, or work and interests).

Mainiero and Sullivan's (2005) study findings suggest that, although both men and women's early careers were based on challenge, women at mid-career had a focus on balance to align family and work commitments, while men focused on authenticity. In late career, women focused on authenticity, as their family commitments had decreased, while men focused on balance. An assumption underpinning their study was that all women would have family responsibilities and choose to take a career break to manage them. However, a later KCM study found that the need for challenge is not only regardless of gender, but also regardless of age (Sullivan, Forret, Carraher, & Mainiero, 2009).

Unlike the 2009 KCM study, Owen and Flynn's (2004) study suggests that older women are less likely to change jobs for career reasons such as challenge. It is this contradictory nature of research that adds to the stereotypical 'winding down in later careers' belief, which both employers and older people buy into in relation to older women and careers. The external career locus of control, identified in women aged 45 plus in O'Neil and Bilimoria's (2005) study, may be a reflection that older women have learnt how to use the system and realise that career success is a matter of both internal and external support.

Conclusion

It is evident from the reviewed literature that linear career models are no longer relevant in the unpredictable and constantly changing world of work (Inkson, 2006). This continuous change has resulted in flatter organisational hierarchical structures which have, in turn, impacted on opportunities for promotion, previously an important part of a linear career (Pryor & Bright, 2007). Careers are no longer seen as traditional, structured career plans but instead defined as the jobs an individual has held (Fernandez, et al., 2008). Career theories, such as the Chaos Theory of Careers, Protean Careers, and Boundaryless Careers, which some say are more suited to the often interrupted careers of women (De Vos & Soens, 2008), have been developed to assist individuals to successfully

negotiate these changes. There is contradiction in the literature as to whether older women see their age as a factor in relation to pursuing career challenges (Moore, 2009; Owen & Flynn, 2004). The world of work is clearly changing as is the meaning given to success in relation to career.

Part II: Success

Definitions of success are multiple and contested, and factors which may impact on how success is defined have received considerable attention in the literature. This section of the literature review looks at the nature of success and has been divided into six parts. The first part reviews literature on the differences between objective and subjective measures of success. Secondly, a number of different models of success found in the literature are reviewed. The literature on the conflicting accounts of women and success, and the relationship between support and success, is then outlined. Next is a review of literature on the cultural implications of success, and finally the literature on older women and success is reviewed.

Objective and Subjective Success

Objective and subjective career success is based on self-perception and the perception of others. Objective success markers are based on what societal standards identify as valuable (Hennequin, 2007) with subjective success being perceived as less valuable. Objective career success is an example of extrinsic success, that is, success external to the individual (Dries, et al., 2008; Hennequin, 2007). Research into this area traditionally identifies a discrepancy in the extrinsic career success between men and women. In a study of 40 successful men and women in relation to gender differences and definitions of success and how that definition impacted on their career, Dyke and Murphy (2006) found men favoured material success while women favoured balance and relationships.

Subjective career success can be seen as the individual's perception of their own success (Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2009). Examples of subject career success include being popular amongst colleagues (Nabi, 2001; Singh, et al., 2009) and how other people important to the individual, such as family, perceive

that individual's career success. Subjective career success may also be socially constructed, as in one's technical ability (Fargher, Kesting, Lange, & Pacheco, 2008; Hennequin, 2007; Nabi, 2001). The "organisational context" (Nabi, 2001, p. 458) the individual is in, can also contribute to subjective success, for example, working for a university that is perceived to have a higher status than other universities.

Encompassing both objective and subjective factors, Dries et al. (2008) identified four career quadrants relative to success. Quadrant one included 'inter-personal achievement' and was based on three factors: performance, advancement and factual contribution. 'Intra-personal achievement' in quadrant two was based on two factors: self-development and creativity. Quadrant three contained 'intra-personal affect' and was assessed on security and satisfaction. 'Inter-personal affect' in quadrant four was based on three factors: recognition, co-operation and perceived contribution. The nine factors in the quadrant could be utilised in the development of organisational frameworks denoting career success and implemented into human resource policy.

In their study of 121 women (of which 57% were older than 35 years of age) completing an MBA or Executive Education seminars at an Ohio university analysing women's career types and career success, O'Neil, Bilimoria and Saatcioglu (2004) identified three basic career types: achiever, navigator and accommodator (see Table 1). Achievers have an ordered career (that is, one that is in planned stages relative to career steps and learning opportunities) and an internal career locus of control. An internal career locus of control is one where the individual takes responsibility for "planning, persistence and problem solving" in relation to their career (O'Neil, et al., 2004, p. 479). Navigators have an ordered career and an external career locus of control. An external career locus of control is one where the individual has a passive and dependent approach to their career. Accommodators have an emergent career with a career locus which falls between internal and external control. An emergent career is one which reacts to the unexpected and is unpredictable. O'Neil et al.'s (2004) research showed that a woman's career type impacted on how success was defined and this definition would include objective factors (such as income) and/or subjective factors (such as personal growth). The study found

that navigators and achievers were more satisfied with their career success than accommodators, yet the women, regardless of whether they had planned or unplanned careers, still gauged their success with objective measures.

Table 1: *Comparison of the three basic career types: Achiever, Navigator and Accommodator.*

Achiever	Navigator	Accommodator
Ordered Career	Ordered career	Emergent Career
Internal Career Locus of Control	External Career Locus of Control	Internal/External Career Locus of Control
Objective success	Objective Success	Objective Success

O'Neil, Bilimoria, and Saatcioglu (2004)

Models of Career Success

A number of models of career success have been identified. Hennequen (2007) has proposed a three-factor career success construct wherein individuals evaluate their own achievements in terms of material, psychological and social factors. Dyke and Murphy's (2006) study determined three factors as necessary for career success: balance, relationships and material success. A variation of that model is that proposed by Gattiker and Larwood (2006) which offers a five-factor measure of career success: job success, interpersonal success, financial success, hierarchical success and life success. Others have linked objective and subjective career success to organisational-based and personal themes (Lee, et al., 2006), measured by extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Heslin, 2005; Nabi, 2001).

Women and Success

Discrepancies between genders include a correlation between societal gender roles and definitions of success. This can be seen through women not focusing on career only but basing success on two factors: “concerns for career and professional achievement, and concerns about personal relationships” (Dyke & Murphy, 2006, p. 366). Making a contribution was part of the women’s definition of success in Dyke and Murphy’s (2006) study. Women would also choose to work in areas aligned to their values even though this meant a career progress trade-off.

For women balancing career and family, research suggests that in relation to family it was the “quality of role involvement rather than role occupancy per se” that denoted success (White, 1995, p. 13). At times other than when in career or job transition, the issue for women is on balancing work and family life. But during transition “the issue is the critical impact of events”, or the impact family life has on career and the impact career has on family life (White, 1995, p. 13). White’s (1995) findings do not match up with traditional definitions of career success for women.

Another challenge to the traditional belief that women align success with attaining a life balance is the finding that women who accommodate relationships at the cost of careers have the lowest levels of satisfaction (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; O’Neil, et al., 2004). This supports the findings of White (1995) who found that successful women, including women with children, were focused on their career rather than on other factors in their lives. In general, successful women did not take career breaks. This finding contradicts the commonly held perception of a woman’s need for work/life balance. The five women in White’s (1995) study who did take a career break for either voluntary work or childcare, were older participants (average age 56) who had non-linear and challenging jobs rather than a linear career.

The power of the perception of success is demonstrated in White’s (1995) study on the career development of 48 successful women. White asked women’s business networks to identify successful businesswomen. The women’s

network contacts were not given a formula related to success, their selection was based on their perception of who was successful.

Support and Career Success

Social support strategies linked to career success and used by both men and women include personal support, peer support and network support (Heslin, 2005; Nabi, 2001; Singh, et al., 2009). Peer support was favoured by men as an indication of their career success, although Nabi's (2001) study showed that men actually received less peer support than women but that the peer support they did receive was of a more 'powerful' type. Men used peer support as an indicator both for their immediate job and their broader career. Nabi's (2001) study of 439 administrative staff (178 men and 261 women) from several United Kingdom universities found that women used personal support related to careers more than peer support as an indicator of career success. Peer support was defined by Nabi (2001, p. 461) as "gaining support and guidance from a more experienced peer."

Adding to the above, in a study of career capital involving 236 participants, Singh et al. (2009) found that while mentoring (or peer support) impacts strongly on an individual defining themselves as successful, more than other forms of career capital, it is only one part of the jigsaw found in an individual's 'career capital'. Career capital can be broken down into two main components: individual capital and relational capital. Individual career capital includes factors such as human capital, for example, education, knowledge or 'knowing how', and agentic capital, for example, taking part in proactive career development or 'knowing why'. Relational capital includes factors such as mentoring relationships and developmental networks. The study's results indicate that career success is influenced by a combination of both individual and relational career capital resources.

Cultural Constructs of Career Success

There is a tendency for career success to be defined by what is relevant to white, middle-class males (Hennequin, 2007; White, 1995). In an analysis of the European Values Study 1999–2000, covering 20 countries and 6,507

observations from Eastern and Western Europe, Fargher et al. (2008) found Eastern and Western European societies' values and beliefs are, at times, stronger than level of income in relation to job satisfaction. Being the main breadwinner in Eastern Europe communist countries was identified by the researchers as linked to job satisfaction, even ten years after the fall of communism. Fargher et al. (2008) suggest that this position gives Eastern European men, traditionally the breadwinners, access to higher job satisfaction than Eastern European women. Their study found a strong correlation between the importance of family, friends and religion, and job satisfaction, for Western European workers but not for Eastern European workers. This suggested that family roles had a more positive impact on job satisfaction for Western European men than women. Overall, Fargher et al.'s (2008) results indicate the women in the study were less satisfied than the men in the study.

The results from a study of 1,146 successful women from nine countries (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, United States, Barbados, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) by Punnett, Duffy, Fox, Gregory, Lituchy, Miller, Monserrat, Olivas-Lujan and Santos (2007) indicated that young women did not see that they needed to forgo family life for careers. This was supported by the finding that whether or not a person had children was not a factor in whether they perceived themselves to be successful. Nor was education level related to feelings of satisfaction.

A study of 23 French blue-collar workers (Hennequin, 2007) found that like Western women, Western blue-collar workers generally do not have limited promotion opportunities available to them. Instead, they develop alternative definitions of job success, similar to the subjective measures developed by women who chose not to, or were unable to, climb the white, middle-class male ladder (Lirio, et al., 2007).

Older Women and Success

Nabi's (2001) research into gender differences relative to subjective career success found that, in general, perceptions of subjective career success by men and women were not the same (Nabi, 2001). Yet both men and women see that their individual definitions of career success have an impact on their career

progression, although what they think they had traded off is different (Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

In a tight job market environment, job success is more likely to be seen as subjective (Nabi, 2001). Human resource management within organisations is seen to support traditional career success definitions preferred more by men than women, for example, promotion (Nabi, 2001), yet women are more likely than men to report job satisfaction (Smeaton & McKay, 2003).

Armstrong-Stassen and Cameron's (2005) study, which assessed the career satisfaction of 185 public sector managerial and professional women aged between 50 and 64, identified differences in causes of satisfaction between managerial and professional women. Older managerial workers' satisfaction was increased when "the organisation values their contribution, is committed to them and cares about their well-being" while older professional women's satisfaction increased when their organisation showed a commitment to them through its "efforts to retain older managerial and professional employees" (Armstrong-Stassen & Cameron, 2005, p. 212). Both sets of women reported more satisfaction when in a challenging role and when able to extend their abilities and develop themselves in their role. Punnett et al.'s (2007) study found no general link between age and satisfaction/success.

In line with Bright and Pryor's (2008) Chaos Theory of Careers, Crowley-Henry (2007) suggests that being in the right place, at the right time, with the right skills has a large part to play in whether one is objectively or subjectively successful or not. From a more tangible perspective, in an article on how to increase one's career success, in a management article on success, Heslin (2005) suggests that in order to experience career success, it may be necessary for individuals to broaden their definition of success and the strategies needed to achieve it.

Conclusion

Traditionally success has been based on objective measures that are associated with white, middle-class male perspectives, for example, salary level or climbing the career ladder, but in line with the changing nature of work,

subjective measures, such as work/life balance, are now given credence (Sullivan, Mainiero, & Forret, 2006). Within the literature a work/life balance is perceived by some as desired by older women, yet this is contradicted by others (Sullivan, et al., 2009). Further tension is noted between women who focus on family and women who focus on career in relation to career success. These contradictions emphasise the inappropriateness of a 'one-size-fits-all' career model for the study cohort. With a change from linear to non-linear career paths the traditional meaning of career success has changed.

Chapter Two explores the literature relevant to older workers and transition.

Chapter Two

Literature Review Part Two – Older Workers and Transition

Introduction

The stigma of age is clearly apparent in the literature. Youth and its attributes, as in general society, are privileged over age in relation to employment and career opportunities such as learning and development. The stories of women and work ended with marriage and family “They are living in a culture that does not believe midlife has a plot line” (McQuaide, 1998, p. 41). Even though the numbers of working women aged 50 plus are increasing (and although a woman in her 50s may have 20 plus years of paid employment ahead of her) there is little research available on those workers actively changing jobs and progressing in the workplace. Equal employment policies are often paid no more than lip service by organisations and the governments that require them (Wilson & Kan, 2006; Wood, Wilkinson, & Harcourt, 2008). The implementation of policies can become a source of new ageism where positive stereotypical attributes, which can be just as damning as negative attributes, are assigned to older workers (Riach, 2007).

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the issues around older workers and transition.

The first section of this chapter looks at the nature of older workers and has been divided into four parts. The first part reviews literature on age discrimination and the social construction of older workers. Secondly, the relationship between physical ageing and older workers is reviewed. The literature on the impact of organisational policies and older workers is then outlined, and finally the literature on older women workers and ageing is examined.

Part I: Older Workers

The relevance and timeliness of this research can be seen not only in the changing demographics mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, but also because of the predicted worldwide skills shortage due to those changing demographics. As is sometimes suggested, this skill shortage will probably not be alleviated by strategies such as immigration, as New Zealand will be competing with other more dominant world markets for workers (Davey, 2007). Instead, it is projected that it will be older workers who will counterbalance a shrinking global worker pool. Older workers who are able to participate to their full financial ability, will benefit both the worker and the society in which they work (Davey, 2007). In order for this to happen, older workers, employers and society have to change their attitudes and behaviours towards older workers (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008; Desmette & Gaillard, 2008; Peterson & Spiker, 2005).

Riach (2007) analysed the social construction of the older worker and points out that jobs identified by organisations as suitable for older workers are generally those that are low level jobs which focus on 'soft' skills, such as communication, rather than those that focus on technical ability or creativity. It is only when there are skill or labour shortages that older workers are more likely to be considered, as opposed to when there is a large pool of suitable, younger applicants (Davey, 2007; Moore, 2009; Taylor & Urwin, 2001; Wilson & Kan, 2006).

Many older workers are happy to remain in employment, but because of changing circumstances, such as being mortgage free, they require flexibility in their employment conditions, for example, reduced hours (Gordon, Beatty, & Whelan-Berry, 2002). Cabrera's (2007) study of 25 women (aged 34–57) on female retention found that in order to retain older workers organisations need to meet their needs. One means of achieving this was by offering Protean Careers where the individual is in charge of their career, which aligns with their skills, values and needs rather than traditional careers, otherwise the brain drain of women will continue. Greller (2006) notes that this type of career is underpinned by the need for lifelong learning.

Some older workers buy into the socially constructed stereotypes of older workers and align their portrayal of themselves to these views, which compounds the issue (Davey, Bright, Pryor, & Levin, 2005; Kirk & Belovics, 2005; Riach, 2007; Wilson & Kan, 2006). Such stereotypes marginalise older workers from the mainstream, and through being placed outside the mainstream, older workers are identified as a 'problem' and, as such, require a different approach to other workers (Riach, 2007).

Age Discrimination and the Social Construction of Older Workers

Age discrimination is an issue that needs to be addressed at all organisation levels. Due to skill shortages, governments are trying to encourage older workers to remain in employment. However, for this to happen, the barrier of age discrimination needs to be overcome (Owen & Flynn, 2004). A review of Australian Royal Commission texts (Ainsworth, 2002) found the portrayal of older women workers positioned them as accepting of low-skilled and low-paid employment. Older workers have yet to be seen "as a potential labour supply in their own right" rather than problematic workers (Riach, 2007, p. 1719).

In an article outlining the positive contributory value of older workers, Petersen and Spiker (2005) identified three strategies which need to be implemented in order for organisations to retain their older workers as part of their human capital. The three strategies are: the importance of human resource policies; the attitudes towards older workers by the organisation and other team members; and the necessity of strategies to ensure the knowledge of those leaving is retained. It is also important to acknowledge that not all older workers want to remain at work.

Age discrimination can play a central role in the labour market experiences of older workers. Those who want to change jobs can face embedded ageist stereotypes perpetuated by employers, other employees and sometimes the older worker themselves (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008; Berger, 2006; Davey, 2007; Taylor & Urwin, 2001; Wilson & Kan, 2006). Because of these ageist myths, age rather than performance is used as a predictor of the older worker's skills and abilities (Riach, 2007). According to Desmette and Gaillard (2008) this discrimination causes a devalued social identity of older workers.

Reproduction of age discrimination within society is done through normalising the language used to refer to people over a particular biological age, for example, 'older workers' (Kirk & Belovics, 2005; McQuaide, 1998; Riach, 2007). Older workers are variously defined as anyone aged from over 40 to over 65 (see, for example, Wilson & Kan, 2006; Davey, 2007; McGregor & Gray, 2001; van der Heijden, 2002; Kirk & Belovics, 2005). Riach warns that any positive action taken in relation to older workers needs to review whether it "reproduces, subverts or deviates from" the older worker stereotype (2007, p. 1707). Riach (2007) also highlights the difficulty of making people aware of the danger of any ageist stereotyping when positive stereotyping is being used for older workers. The attributes credited to older workers in positive stereotyping limit the positions available as much as the negative attributes.

In a challenge to the universalism of older workers through biological determinism, Riach (2007) refers to the work of Judith Butler (1993), relating to gender as a cultural value, and suggests the same concept could be applied to ageing. Butler's (1993) use of the dynamics of performativity in conceptualising gender translates across into the social construction of ageing. In this way, the social construction of ageing could be identified instead of assigning a biological or chronological state.

The terms used to describe job applicants show the power of language in embedding ageist stereotypes. In a study of selection processes by Wilson and Kan (2006, p. 9) a younger applicant was described as "trainable"; but "settled" was the term used for those aged in their 40s; and older applicants were said to be "resistant to change and technology." Poor health, lack of ambition, lack of flexibility and adaptability, inability to learn new things, high cost, low return on investment and winding down are all negative stereotypical beliefs about the attributes of older workers (Davey, 2007), and these attributes, which have become embedded in ageing discourses, result in universalism of older workers.

The suggestion that societal expectations of ageing are maintained through people of all ages holding negative perceptions of ageing and carrying those perceptions into their future projections of themselves is supported by the

results of a study by Perrig-Chiello and Perren (2005). Findings indicated that those who were older defined the age that is 'old' as higher than those who were younger. This pushing the boundaries of what was described as 'old' was more prevalent in women than men, perhaps because society is more critical about the ageing of women than of men (Perrig-Chiello & Perren, 2005).

One of the changes in identity that can happen during the search for employment is that once an individual had been labelled as 'old' they sometimes accept the label and identity degeneration. This was identified in a study of 30 unemployed individuals aged 45–65 by Berger (2006). Berger's (2006) research identified that, for some older workers, it was only when it was suggested that their age was a discriminatory factor that their self-worth decreased. From then on, when encountering difficulties in their search for employment, they realised or assumed it had to do with age. 'Old' then became the defining factor in their search for employment and their identity overall, and they were at risk of projecting it during interviews. Various studies have identified a number of factors which can reverse this, for example, being in a supportive social environment, reviewing identity as a result of a change or crisis, or working on having a positive outlook (Berger, 2006; McQuaide, 1998).

Berger (2006) also found that whether one is defined as older depends upon one's job. For example, a flight attendant judged on attractiveness associated with youth is seen to age before a lawyer who is judged on wisdom associated with age. A positive outlook, social support and changing their identities were some of the strategies used by older workers searching for work to successfully overcome identity degradation (Berger, 2006).

Research by Desmette and Gaillard (2008) investigating the relationship between perceived social identity as an older worker and attitudes towards early retirement and commitment to work, found older workers can develop strategies of withdrawal to avoid the stigma of ageing. This can include early retirement, moving into a transition to retirement job such as lower paid, part-time work, and lowering the priority of work, for example, having more of a focus on caring for an elderly parent. The researchers found this withdrawal was likely to be a result of the older worker not being part of, or identifying with, the work group.

Workers are more likely to move to bridge employment depending upon their personal context, for example, if their health was poor or they were financially able to do so. Males are more likely than females to redefine ageing, for example, being 'old' means being aged 75 years or more (Desmette & Gaillard, 2008).

Physical Ageing and Older Workers

The labour market aligns itself with the qualities and attributes of youth, such as energy, creativity and drive (Peterson & Spiker, 2005). The attributes socially assigned to older workers, such as reliability, loyalty and experience, are embedded in society and are accepted as common sense. By definition those who are identified as older are not attributed with the more prized qualities designated as youthful (Peterson & Spiker, 2005). There is a clear link between these qualities and the socially constructed 'slowing down with age' of older workers (Riach, 2007).

In a review of health and safety literature in relation to the safety of older workers, Haight (2003) identified deterioration in vision and hearing, and a decline in cognitive functioning and physical ability as important factors. Strategies implemented by organisations need to be able to overcome the health and safety impact of these factors.

The inevitability of physical degeneration relative to ageing is highlighted in a study on managing an ageing workforce in the car manufacturing company Daimler HG. For example, this study indicated that there are more back injuries among older workers although back injuries can also happen to younger workers (Streb & Voelpel, 2009). Likewise British Telecom implemented a campaign to reduce heart problems amongst its older male workers after an increase in the number of older males dying from heart attacks. While acknowledging a decline in physical ability related to ageing, Wilson and Kan (2006) highlight that in an economy based on knowledge the number of jobs which require levels of physical ability are declining.

A study by Burns and Leonard (2005) into whether women perceive their later years to be a time of loss, stability or gain, found loss a common theme in

relation to ageing, for example, in relation to health. While accepting that there is some decline in productivity with age, Davey (2007) states that it is dependent on the individual, the demands of the job (for example, a job that requires high reaction times) and the context of the work environment. Workers who did not see themselves as older workers were more likely to keep developing their career, whereas older workers who saw themselves as older were more likely to retire. This is not supported by Greller's (2006) research which found that it was career motivation, rather than age, which resulted in people spending more time in developing their career.

Organisational Policies and Older Workers

Studies have revealed that good health and increased longevity have resulted in an increase in the average age of workers, as has financial necessity for some older workers (Davey, 2007; Kirk & Belovics, 2005). While employers stated that older workers should have development opportunities, the actual behaviour of the employers in the workplace did not support what they said (McGregor & Gray, 2001). This leads to a catch-22 situation where older employees' skills are outdated and not relevant, which appears to relate to a lack of willingness to retrain, but in reality is related to barriers to development opportunities, such as concerns about return on investment, which results in employers not offering training to older employees (McGregor & Gray, 2001; Taylor & Urwin, 2001; Wilson & Kan, 2006).

Greller's (2006) study of the career investment behaviour of 450 college educated men found that older workers are more likely to have experience rather than the formal qualifications of younger workers. A rapidly changing technological environment has meant the value of this experience has declined.

Taylor and Urwin's (2001) United Kingdom analysis of age and participation in vocational education and training found that, overall, more women aged in their 50s receive job-related training than men, although there may be a link with the type of job, for example, clerical work. Ethnic minority groups and those in part-time or temporary work – often the domain of women – were even less likely to receive training. Their research also found that double the number of women aged in their 50s have no qualifications compared to men aged in their 50s.

However, a later New Zealand study by Davey (2007) indicates that there is only a ten percent difference between New Zealand men and women with no qualifications.

It is a commonly held belief that older workers do not “maintain their skills, knowledge and work relationships at a level that keeps them viable” (Greller, 2006, p. 544). Instead, Greller (2006) suggests that those with ageist views who decide which workers are offered development opportunities may skew research results of who takes up, or is willing to take up, development opportunities.

Taylor and Urwin’s (2001) analysis of older workers’ participation in vocational training and education found that employees with higher qualifications tend to receive training opportunities, as their qualifications provide evidence of their ability to learn, in comparison with those with no qualifications. Those older workers who did receive development support were those who had stable employment at a high level (Davey, 2002; Taylor & Urwin, 2001). In order to be effective, any training undertaken by older workers needs to be relevant to the job market (Davey, 2007). Those older workers who were offered development opportunities were less likely to hit career plateaus (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008).

Streb and Voelpel (2009) maintain that managing and retaining an ageing workforce is possible, but only if long-term strategies are put in place. Refuting the short-term strategies implemented by businesses to remedy the factors associated with an ageing workforce, such as health issues, the researchers say they are not practical for the projected increase in the average age of the workforce (Streb & Voelpel, 2009). The strategies are not developed specifically for older workers and, at most, are short-term fixes for a long-term problem. Instead, Streb and Voelpel (2009) suggest that any strategies developed relative to an ageing workforce need to be created specifically for the context of that particular environment and its workforce.

In a challenge to the common business strategy of identifying the positive attributes of older workers in which they are seen as assets rather than a burden (Peterson & Spiker, 2005), Riach (2007) states that by accepting the socially constructed positive attributes of older workers, such as maturity, the

negative attributes, such as inflexibility, are accepted as a given. The focus on the positive means it is more difficult to identify age discrimination. A review of literature on contemporary age discrimination and working life perspectives and contestations by Wood, Wilkinson and Harcourt (2008) stated that ageism is often hidden by equal opportunity programmes. Older workers who accept either positive or negative attributes as correct, however, align themselves with poorly paid and secondary level employment (Ainsworth, 2002; Riach, 2007).

Examples of ineffective short-term and effective long-term policies mentioned above are given in an article about the policies British Telecom has implemented to retain older workers (Pollitt, 2009). Although stated as being for all members, regardless of age, and portrayed as part of career life-planning for all workers, British Telecom employee development policies appear specifically targeted at older workers. Pollitt (2009) outlines five strategies used by British Telecom as particularly relevant to older workers: wind down (reducing hours), step down (to a less stressful job), time out (taking a break for up to two years), helping hands (secondment to a charity) and ease down (decreasing responsibility). A longer term policy can be seen, as there is no age limit for graduate and apprenticeship schemes. British Telecom job advertisements are carefully worded to avoid attracting a particular age group. Embedded stereotypical beliefs are seen when BT uses the voice of older employees to talk about the initiatives, for example, a 62-year-old female worker who says "her colleagues appreciate her experience" (Pollitt, 2009, p. 19).

Older Women Workers and Ageing

The findings of a study on the midlife transition of professional women with children by Gordon et al. (2002) suggest that by midlife, women have developed strategies to cope with competing demands such as work and family. Career and employment were found to be as important as ageing and family to the study participants. The women saw midlife as a time for an internal and external recalibration of what is important to them to achieve a work/life balance (Gordon, et al., 2002). This indicates that rather than the mythical midlife crisis, midlife is a time of evolving.

Despite understanding the 'rules' of gender and ageing, many women do not succeed in the objective world of work. Women are thought of for certain positions or promotions because of the "gendering practices" and the "practicing of gender" in the workplace (Martin, 2003, p. 342). An analysis of Australian Royal Commission policy documents were found to portray older women as willing to accept low status and low-paid jobs (Ainsworth, 2002). Age, too, has a set of norms and expectations which, through constant repetition, are embedded into societal values.

Ethnic cultural implications for older women positioned on the margins can be compounded, as in addition to ageism they could also be coming to terms with the tension between their cultural norms and the work norms, such as being driven and being successful (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996).

Conclusion

Demographics show the New Zealand workforce is ageing and people are remaining in the world of work for longer. Yet, as was mentioned in the thesis introduction, acknowledgement of ageism is in its infancy. The social construction of ageing is deceptively covert due to age being seen in chronological or biological overt markers. The literature reviewed in this section shows that ageism exists in organisational policies and procedures, even though legislation is in place to ensure older workers have the same opportunities as other workers. Employers, other employees and older workers themselves buy into stereotypical ageist beliefs which contribute to embedding ageism in the workplace. There was contradiction within the literature as to whether women were aware of the age barriers they faced in employment, and contradiction as to whether as they aged they moved away from careers to more of a family focus.

The final section of this chapter looks at Transition – Moving from One Job to the Next' and has been divided into seven parts. The first part reviews literature on the role of career adaptability in relation to success. Secondly, the contradictory notions of being 'employed for life' or 'employable for life' found in

the literature are examined. The literature on career resilience and career decision-making is then outlined. Following on is a review of the available literature on the crisis of ageing, and then older workers and transition are explored. Finally the literature on older women workers and transition is reviewed.

Part II: Transition – Moving from One Job to the Next

Throughout life, individuals go through many transitions which can be defined as moving from one state or position to the next (Perrig-Chiello & Perren, 2005). Of particular relevance to this research is the distinction William Bridges (2009), author of *Managing Transitions Making the Most of Change*, makes between 'change' and 'transition'. He sees that a change is physical, such as moving workplaces, while a transition is psychological.

Work is important to people and, in times of economic downturn, people will go through many voluntary and involuntary transitions (Ebberwein, et al., 2004; Owen & Flynn, 2004; Perrig-Chiello & Perren, 2005). Job transitions can be intra-organisational, inter-organisational, inter-professional (Latack, 1984) and could also involve task change, position change and occupational change (Heppner, 1998).

An article on work transitions by Fouad and Bynner (2008) suggests that an individual's successful transition depends upon a number of factors, including "the emotional, personal, social and financial resources he or she brings to that transition" (p. 244). People entering a transition do so from different positions based on factors such as background, location and education. The level of desire and aspirations to change can be motivators for "positive and active agency by individuals to reconstruct their lives and identities in new directions, replacing what was often passive acceptance of a particular location in the labour force or in the community" (Fouad & Bynner, 2008, p. 246).

Career Adaptability

Career adaptability can be said to be the cognitive, social and psychological resources available to an individual which enable him or her to be able to overcome the barriers to changing jobs (Fouad, 2007). A study of career

adaptability in relation to transition of 18 participants aged 30–61 years identified three common career adaptability themes, regardless of whether job change was forced or chosen: “adaptive responses, contextual challenges and insights into transition” (Ebberwein, et al., 2004, p. 297). This study identified factors which underpin an individual’s possible adaptive responses to job loss (which would also be relevant for a chosen job change). Five responses used by people who are adaptive were identified. The first response is the need to treat losses with a sense of urgency. Next, people who ignore the fact that job loss is imminent face more barriers in their ability to adapt. The third identified trait of adaptability is the need to be aware of threats to job stability and to take action, for example, by updating résumés. The final two identified traits are a need for consideration of long-term consequences of any action and to be realistic about job goals showing adaptation rather than reaction to the situation (Ebberwein, et al., 2004).

Ebberwein et al. (2004) found that a number of contextual factors underpin an individual’s response to job loss. For example, financial circumstances have a major impact on how people cope with job loss. Women aged in their 50s reported that their families had more of an impact on their jobs than their jobs had on their families. This is backed up by the results of a study by Cinamon (2006) in which young adults said that family/work would have more conflict than work/family. Young women perceived potential conflict to be higher than young men. Working life and family are intertwined, and a change in one impacts on the other. For Ebberwein et al. (2004) another major factor in how the job change is experienced by an individual is the manner in which a forced job change is handled by an employer, for example, provision of outplacement services such as résumé development.

Fouad and Bynner’s (2008) research on the different types of transition throughout a person’s working life and the resources needed to make those transitions identified that the importance of the context in which the job transition took place, and the affected individual’s adaptability, were of major importance in relation to how smoothly the transition took place. Transition needs to be seen “as a normal part of career development” (p. 11) happening in the context of the person’s life and impacting on other life areas. Fouad and

Bynner (2008) were also critical of career transition theories for treating voluntary and involuntary transitions as the same.

A study by Perrig-Chiello and Perren (2005) focused on the way transitions in other life areas can impact on job transitions. The study findings identified three different types of transition: those that were normative age-graded, such as entering puberty; those that were normative history-graded, such as economic recession; and those that were non-normative, such as developing cancer. The experience of transition into puberty could have an impact on how future transitions were experienced rather than how other transitions take place. This was because puberty is a time of developing an identity, and that process of identity development helps define who we are even in later life. In addition, a person's personality has a major part to play in how they adapt to transitions (Perrig-Chiello & Perren, 2005).

Fouad and Bynner's (2008, p. 246) study on work transitions noted that an "individual's career adaptability, their identity capital and their social support systems" have an important role to play in making a transition successful. Factors such as the historical and geographical context and the current legislation also have an impact on the effectiveness of transitions. For example, government policies that assist older workers, such as a return to education, can help make transitions more successful. Fouad and Bynner (2008) also suggest Western European cultures are more likely to have policies in place to assist individuals with transitions as there is a belief in state responsibility to help.

Like Bright and Pryor (2007), Ebberwein et al. (2004) assert that, rather than hope they will not have to change, individuals of any age need to be prepared for job change as a natural part of their career. Factors such as time, information and social or emotional support can be seen to help or hinder the process. Moreover, those from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to take the first job offered rather than consider their personal preferences.

Regardless of what type of change, it is a person's career adaptability that has a major influence on the success of the change. There have been dramatic changes to career patterns over the last 50 years in the lifetimes of participants

of this research, as noted in Parsons (1909) matching theory to Pryor and Bright's (2003) Chaos Theory of Careers. A study of 205 men and women by Sterrett (1999) to explore radical job changes in the 1990s found that women make more radical changes than men. These radical changes were linked to the context of a woman's life, for example, moving geographical locations if her husband moved, or moving in and out of the workforce due to family demands. The study suggests that a woman's career pattern is likely to be non-linear, with women working in lower level jobs with fewer chances of promotion than men. Recent changes to career paths are likely to be to women's advantage, as studies have shown that the career of the future is seen as one which will be a non-linear career and will require people to be flexible, giving women an advantage over those who operate within the linear structure (Sterrett, 1999).

Within the literature there were gendered differences and conflicted findings in relation to perceived career barriers. Sterrett's (1999) study also found that women at a lower level accept their place within lower level positions and are therefore more able to focus on demands outside of work. Unlike the men, who tend to over-perceive barriers to their careers, women did not perceive that there were more barriers facing them than men. To make changes to the accepted social structure, women's perception had to change, and collective action would need to be taken (Sterrett, 1999). Sterrett's (1999) study also concluded that women's lack of awareness of the barriers they faced meant the situation was unlikely to change, whereas men who have been socialised to take a win/lose approach have a narrower view of what makes a successful career.

In contradiction to Sterrett's (1999) findings, a study to identify the individual and organisation characteristics related to career success in women aged 50 plus, in managerial and professional positions, by Armstrong-Stassen and Cameron (2005) found that the women in their study were aware of the barriers they faced and became dissatisfied with their careers because of the barriers which hindered their progress. Likewise, Latack, Josephs, Roach and Levine's (1987) study of the career transitions of male and female carpentry apprentices found that women were aware of the barriers they faced in getting employment and developed strategies to successfully overcome them.

Employed for Life or Employable for Life

Restructuring in the 1980s resulted in the weakening of relationships between workers, employees and employers (the psychological contract of expectations relative to careers between employers and employees, and employees and employers) (Hall, 2004). Unlike younger workers, who will move during a restructuring, Ng and Feldman's (2009) findings suggested that older workers try to hold on to jobs in restructuring, reflecting that commitment to organisations is highest in older workers. In addition, they saw this commitment increase when the older workers were from ethnic minorities as they had more fears about discrimination and were less likely to change jobs. In general, older workers look for jobs which will provide them with more security. This aligns with the notion of 'employment for life'.

Those who had been through restructuring in the 1980s were more likely to reflect on their employability. Clarke's (2009a) study found that previous employment experiences influenced current perceptions of employability. Yet Ebberwein et al.'s (2004) findings indicate that for older workers, previous employability experiences are not linked to current employability. Participants in Clarke's (2009a) research generally understood that, in order to be employable, workers needed to be proactive, adaptable and flexible, with an understanding of the current job environment. These findings are supported by Moore (2009), Riach (2007), and Bright and Pryor (2008). This contradicted traditional expectations that a high skill base specific to an organisation, hard work and loyalty would mean older workers would be looked after by their employer (Clarke, 2009a).

Transitions for those aged up to their late 50s were likely to be based on factors relevant to bettering their career, such as taking on more responsibility. From the age of the late 50s reducing stress, hours and responsibilities were given as key reasons for making transitions although it was not clear whether these were forced or chosen transitions (Owen & Flynn, 2004). Older workers were found to remain in the same jobs and with the same employer, more so if they were over 50 years (Owen & Flynn, 2004). Due to being on the margins, those from ethnic minority groups, along with those with low length of service and low educational

levels, were found to be less likely to change jobs (Ng & Feldman, 2009). Owen and Flynn's (2004) research points out that those with lower qualifications and pay are more likely to have experienced a forced job change; however, Ng and Feldman's (2009) findings suggested no link to gender and age in relation to turnover.

Career Resilience

A number of studies found career resilience to be a factor in transition (Baruch, 2004; Blenkinsopp & Zdunczyk, 2005; Grzeda, 1999). Career resilience has been defined as a person's capacity to overcome career knock-backs and has been found to be relevant in relation to forced change (Grzeda, 1999). The importance of career resilience in a changeable environment is also supported by Baruch (2004, p. 62) who suggests that "resilience, intelligence and employability – these are essential survival tools in the struggle to endure the change." Career resilience is linked to the individual's level of "self-esteem, need for autonomy, adaptability, tolerance for uncertainty and tolerance for stress", and having these attributes can mean the difference between being a career changer or not (Grzeda, 1999, p. 306).

Acknowledging the reality of the impact of the world of work on individuals, Grzeda's (1999) findings suggest that organisations need to be aware of the importance of career resilience and to foster that attribute within individuals. Being more aware of an individual's career resilience will assist in making certain the organisation has flexible individuals to ensure organisation and individual success. While current environments demand a flexible workforce, this is not necessarily supported by the organisation.

Making sense of mistakes in managerial careers was the focus of a study by Blenkinsopp & Zdunczky (2005). The study found that a career transition mistake can be major or minor depending upon the occupational or sector context. Career transition mistakes may not be related to the workplace, for example, dislike of a new geographical location. Those who had a history of successful transitions would be more affected by a negative transition and may remain locked in a negative transition cycle which supports the pattern-making concept identified in Bright and Pryor's (2008) Chaos Theory of Careers.

Transition mistakes can be made due to a lack of research about the new position. If the new role is similar to the one currently held, individuals do not do as much research about the role as they would if they had been changing to a totally different role (Blenkinsopp & Zdunczyk, 2005).

Rather than the actual job transition experience, Blenkinsopp and Zdunczyk's (2005) findings claim that people in mid-career have a history of work experiences, and it is from this experience that they bring most of their expectations. They also identify that mid-level managers brought in as new blood with new ideas need good support, otherwise they will be likely to have a negative career transition, for example, the experience of feeling like a round peg in a square hole.

Career Decision-making

Many workers appear to dislike their jobs yet, for a variety of reasons, find it difficult to make a decision relative to their career. Pendulum thinking, when a person swings between two options, is given by Bright and Pryor (2007) as an example of the behaviour relative to career indecision. Career indecision relates to not having a career goal or not being happy with current career goals.

Three factors causing career decision-making difficulties were identified by Gati, et al. (1996) in an empirical examination of a taxonomy of difficulties in career decision-making. The first difficulty was not being ready. This could be for a number of reasons, such as a lack of motivation, general difficulty with any type of decision-making or illogical expectations. The second difficulty was inadequate information. This could be as a result of no knowledge of the correct decision-making process, a lack of understanding as to how to retrieve necessary information, an inadequate understanding of their own skills and attributes, and/or a lack of information relative to available careers. Factors which impact on the third difficulty, inconsistent information, were unrealistic information, conflicting desires with self and conflicting desires with others. The first difficulty is evident prior to the decision-making process, while the second and third difficulties take place during the process (Gati, et al., 1996). Continuing on with the proactive theme suggested by Singh et al. (2009) and Clarke (2009a), making active choices and taking responsibility for those

choices ensures a more sophisticated decision-making process (Lewchanin & Zubrod, 2001).

Research into the impact of goal setting on career management, conducted by Greenhaus, Callanan and Kaplan (1995), identified two factors that were relative to career indecision. The first factor, developmental indecision, means a worker does not have enough career information. This is more typically found with younger workers who have limited knowledge of themselves and the environment and is aligned with Gati et al.'s (1996) 'not being ready'. The second factor, chronic indecision, is the result of the individual putting off making a decision and therefore indicative of not being able to set career goals. The findings indicated that this is generally found in older workers who have more situational barriers, such as children. Organisations can assist employees to move to career decidedness through increasing their self-awareness (Greenhaus, et al., 1995).

Traditionally, career certainty has been perceived as a positive attribute (Bright, et al., 2009; Greenhaus, et al., 1995). The findings of Bright and Pryor (2008; 2007) challenge the notion that indecisiveness is a negative attribute; instead, they see it as part of living in a chaotic world. In addition, Greenhaus et al. (1995) point out that those who are very clear in their career decidedness and the decisions they make are said to make one of two types: hypervigilant or vigilant. Hyper-vigilant decisions are made by employees who have a career goal, but lack knowledge of self or environment. These people will rush to make decisions as a result of what is happening in the current context, for example, in response to a restructuring, and may make decisions not aligned with their values. Vigilant decisions are those made when an individual is not under stress and which align with the individual's needs and values. Various research supports the notion that, in some circumstances, postponing making a decision can be the right response (Bright, Pryor, & Lucy, 2005; Greenhaus, et al., 1995).

Supporting Clarke's (2009b) findings on the importance of context, Fouad's (2007) research identified that when making a career decision, the context a person inhabits is important, as well as all the 'isms' (such as ageism or sexism)

associated with that particular context. Work and non-work relationships can also help or hinder career choice, for example, receiving a negative or positive reaction from spouses or friends. Throughout life, career choices are influenced by “parental socio-economic status, schooling and education/environment opportunities” (Fouad, 2007, p. 556), although people with strong aspirations may negate these factors. It is also suggested that problems with making career decisions may be linked to general decision-making difficulty and anxiety (Fouad, 2007).

The Crisis of Ageing

In a review of literature relevant to age and voluntary turnover, the psychosocial construction of ageing, along with changes in work environment, were found to cause older workers to be less likely to change jobs than younger workers (Ng & Feldman, 2009). Examples of psycho-social construction include: the emotions of older workers focusing on the positive; the importance of long-term social relationships for older workers; older workers liking stability and not wanting to lose anything; and the self concept of older workers, for example, less confidence in their ability. Older workers have less confidence or self efficacy in their ability to change employment and show concern in relation to the notion of age discrimination (Ng & Feldman, 2009). The results suggest that older workers who do not get satisfaction, either internally or externally, from their current job may retire rather than search for a new job (Ng & Feldman, 2009).

This traditional view of ageing workers was challenged by O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) in their study on managing midlife transitions in career and family among 64 subjects aged between 35 and 50. Instead of a move away from careers, the researchers identified an initial move from a focus on family to one on career for women in this age group. However, from a more traditional perspective, the findings noted the importance of identifying feelings and values. The researchers also identified that a combination of identity development as part of middle age, and the developing need for internally driven self-direction in relation to career, can cause additional confusion for those in midlife. The study found that rather than a negative event, a transition which is in response to a

crisis, such as a restructuring, can be an opportunity for changes that have been long desired, and it can be taken as a time to reflect on, and re-adjust, an individual's view of the world (O'Connor & Wolfe, 1987).

Older Workers and Transition

Research by Owen and Flynn (2004), based on a survey by the Centre for Research into the Older Workforce (CROW), analysed 5200 individuals in relation to job transition for mid/late working life. This study highlights the fact that, like women everywhere, in Great Britain women in midlife are the 'meat in the sandwich' pulled between government incentives to be in the workforce on one hand, and family demands to be caregivers for the younger and older generation on the other. While the study found the overall number of working women is increasing, the increase is not as great for women in midlife. The researchers saw the reason for job transition in midlife as moving towards retirement or working past the retirement age. Women are seen as having a primary focus on family with work a secondary focus (Clarke, 2009b).

The CROW study identified three types of older workers: "choosers", 'survivors' and 'jugglers'" (Owen & Flynn, 2004, p. 333). Choosers were more likely to remain in work for intrinsic reasons, such as challenges and opportunities of the position. They were also the most highly qualified and highly paid. Survivors were the lowest paid and with few, if any, qualifications. If survivors remained in work it was because of necessity, for example, to meet mortgage payments, rather than desire. Jugglers were least likely to be in work as they had external commitments, such as aligning with a retiring husband or looking after other family members. Their income was generally secondary income and their work part time.

The CROW study reported that, before the age of sixty, individuals were more likely to change jobs because of career development, whereas reduction of stress was the likely motivator for those in their late-50s. Older women were seen to have more employment options than older men. This was for reasons such as older women being more likely to have a better attitude towards such things as working flexible hours. However, as was found in other studies, the jobs available to older women were often at low rates of pay (Ainsworth, 2002;

Davey, 2007; Wilson & Kan, 2006). Choosers were more likely to have better flexible working opportunities than survivors or jugglers. Owen and Flynn (2004) suggest that ageist stereotypes in relation to older workers, such as poor performance or taking excessive amounts of sick leave, were incorrect. These stereotypical attitudes may be slowly changing.

Older Women Workers and Transition

Traditionally, older workers were seen to prefer to be winding down in both responsibilities, physical robustness, cognitive ability and the pace of work (Czaja & Sharit, 2009). Challenging this notion, professional women with children, who were going through a midlife transition, were found by O'Connor and Wolfe's (1987) study to see midlife as a time of excitement and challenge. Their findings suggest that, at midlife and older, women who have had other demands on their time were able to focus on their careers and bring factors such as a mature approach to the workplace, which younger employees do not have (O'Connor & Wolfe, 1987). Despite this, as previously noted, accepting positive attributes, such as a mature approach, can be seen as also accepting the negative stereotypes of ageing.

Conclusion

The literature explored in relation to transition showed that this cohort entered the workforce at a time when the concept of 'employed for life' was a given, yet as is revealed in the literature, due to the unpredictable nature of the working environment, this notion has moved to one of being 'employable for life'. Of particular relevance to older workers, the importance of career adaptability was highlighted as a strategy for workers who want to operate effectively in the unpredictable and non-linear world of work. Also explored was the need to develop career resilience in reaction to the transitory nature of work. Yet again the literature revealed contradictory viewpoints in relation to older women, in this case whether older women were winding down or seeing the possibility of transition as an exciting challenge.

If a review of the literature and research should legitimise a topic and help construct a balanced view, then from this review of literature in Chapter One

and Chapter Two the view is narrow and negative in relation to older female workers. As is clearly shown by the absence of literature relevant to older women changing jobs, dominant patriarchal discourses have little place for working women in midlife other than as low-paid, low-skilled workers. What literature there is, is contradictory as to whether older women workers want to slow down or want to progress within their career.

Chapters One and Two have demonstrated very clear themes within the literature: the workforce is ageing; people are remaining actively involved in the world of work for longer; the world of work is constantly changing; the traditional meaning of career success is changing; and traditional career planning is no longer relevant.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

In a world in which the nature and function of work is constantly changing and in which the stigma of gender and age already position older women on the margins, it is pertinent to identify how women aged in their 50s successfully negotiate the five themes identified in the literature review: the workforce is ageing; people are remaining actively involved in the world of work for longer; the world of work is constantly changing; the traditional meaning of career success is changing; and traditional career planning is no longer relevant when changing jobs.

The aim of the research was to identify any commonalities in how six diverse and unrelated individual women aged in their 50s successfully changed jobs. This chapter locates the research within a feminist framework which was chosen to ensure respect for, and acknowledgement of, the validity of the women's experiences.

The overall research design, along with the process of completing the research, is outlined and explained. This includes discussion of the criteria and process for selecting participants, the recruitment of participants and the processes of informed consent, the process of interviewing, and the methods used to analyse the research findings.

Methodological Principles Underlying the Study

Feminist research has a political agenda, namely to bring individual consciousness and positive change to the lives of women and to realign the power base away from patriarchal oppression and control (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). It is through the collaboration of the researcher and individual participants in the research process, and the co-creation of the knowledge

produced, that this consciousness and social change will happen (Letherby, 2003; Reinharz, 1992).

The current research is multi-disciplinary, drawing on the areas of women's studies, sociology, psychology and business studies. The overall methodological framework is feminist, utilising qualitative research methods of semi-structured, in-depth interviews.

I am interested in the factors relating to women aged in their 50s and successful job change, and how job change for women within that age group is ordered, controlled and understood as a valid and political concern (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Taking a qualitative approach ensured that the participants' experiences were at the centre of the research. A focus on women's accounts of their own experiences makes visible the ways in which the wider social structures impact on individuals (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Claims about the findings of a small study cannot be taken as representative of a particular cohort. However, in-depth interviews with the participants who had a variety of employment histories provided insights into a range of issues that impact on women in this age group.

Qualitative research can be described as that which is not based on the gathering of statistics. Instead, qualitative research identifies and values the ontological position and perspective of the research participant, in other words, how the participant makes sense of her world in her day-to-day, lived experience (Letherby, 2003). Reinharz (1990, p. 294) sees "the qualitative as the outside trying to get in", and this can be seen in this research by making visible the invisibility of the job change experiences of women aged in their 50s.

The first reason qualitative research was considered appropriate for this study is because such techniques enable access to first-hand accounts of the women studied in relation to job change. This approach provides a way of hearing the participants' stories in the context of their day-to-day lives. As Letherby (2003, p. 85) has recognised, through use of qualitative techniques I had access to "the private, the emotional and the subjective" reality of the lives experienced by the women I interviewed.

The second reason qualitative research techniques were chosen is that they are seen as pertinent in an area where limited research findings are available (Gubrium & Sakar, 1994). As the previous chapter has demonstrated, there is limited research available relating to older women and job change within New Zealand, yet women aged in their 50s are a significant and growing part of the New Zealand population (Davey, 2007).

A third reason for choosing qualitative methods is that, although there can be no universal experience for women in any age group in relation to job change, collection of their career narratives facilitates identification of common themes in their individual experience (Letherby, 2003).

Kirby and McKenna (1989) suggest that there are four tasks when researching from the margins: unmasking the knowledge; creating the knowledge; affirming the knowledge; and sharing and reconstructing the knowledge. Unmasking the knowledge involves identifying the creators of the particular knowledge and the conditions under which the knowledge was created, as well as “whose meanings or experiences” that knowledge reflects (Kirby and McKenna, 1997, p. 97). The creators of the knowledge are the participants and the researcher, with the researcher interpreting the participants’ interview responses and identifying any commonalities relative to job change. The task of creating knowledge recognises that knowledge is socially constructed, and that those who are in different societal locations have different social experiences. The present study is premised on an understanding that women aged in their 50s are located socially in ways that place them on the margins in general, and particularly so in relation to job change, being perceived as older and as women. The process of affirming acknowledges the experience of those living on the margins, such as their invisibility, taking into account the overt manner in which such things as invisibility are maintained. In this research, it means listening to the stories the women tell, based on their experience when changing jobs, and identifying and acknowledging their individual definitions of success. The final task of sharing and reconstructing identifies the need for researchers to handle the newly created knowledge responsibly and to use that knowledge for action resulting in positive change. The information in this research will be shared by making the findings available and speaking to groups

of women about the research and the findings (see Chapter Six and the Conclusion).

The Research Process

For the purposes of this research, a research sample of six in-depth interviews was completed with women aged in their 50s. The cohort of women was chosen because each has experienced a paid job transition that she defines as successful at some time during the 12–18 months prior to the interview. The research process began by ensuring the research met Massey University ethical requirements (see below). Once ethical approval was granted, potential participants were identified using snowballing sampling based on the researcher's personal networks. To ensure all participants met the required criteria a screening questionnaire was sent to each woman who indicated interest in volunteering to take part in the research. Each of the selected participants was then sent a consent form which introduced the researcher and the aims of the research and outlined the semi-structured interview style, the length of the interview, the audio-recording of the interview and detailed the consent and confidentiality requirements.

Participants were then sent a pre-interview questionnaire to gather generic background information prior to the interview (see a copy of the participant pre-interview questionnaire in Appendix 1). Based on qualitative interviewing, a face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interview took place at a location determined by each woman. The interviews were held between September 2009 and February 2010, and each lasted up to almost two hours. Using Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory (O'Leary, 2004) as a basis, the interview transcripts were analysed to identify common themes in the women's experiences. The findings were then analysed to identify factors that contribute to successful job change for this cohort.

Each of the above steps used to conduct the research is expanded on below.

Ethical Requirements

A screening questionnaire was completed, as required by Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluation Involving

Human Participants. This identified the research project as low risk. A low risk application was completed and a notification form developed and forwarded to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC). This research was given Low Risk approval by the MUHEC and the application recorded on the Low Risk Database (see copy of MUHEC low risk approval in Appendix 2).

Confidentiality and Anonymity

In line with Massey research requirements, confidentiality of participants was assured by the researcher being the only person having access to the recordings and transcripts. In order to preserve the participants' anonymity, pseudonyms were used. Any particular identifying source, such as the name of a workplace or geographical location, was removed from the quotes used in the thesis. In one case the name of the participant's profession was removed as the previous hierarchical level of the participant would mean she could be identified.

Ethical issues were raised and discussed with my supervisor and peer group. Issues around the potentiality for conflict of interest were addressed, given that I have a business consultancy which includes consultation and career advice for women. For example, one aspect of the research design which had the potential for conflict of interest was my use of the snowballing technique, based initially on personal networks, to recruit research participants. To ensure any potential for conflict of interest was avoided, I did not contact individuals who had previously contracted my services or who potentially might contract my business consultancy services in the future. Neither I nor my professional consultancy have any vested business interest in any particular outcome, although the findings from this research may be used to inform future practices within my business consultancy.

Participant Selection

The word used to refer to the research subjects is important as it helps define the basic premise of the relationship between the researcher and the person being interviewed. Following Seidman (1998), the terms 'interviewee', 'respondent', 'subject' and 'co-researchers' have been rejected for a variety of reasons, ranging from taking a passive role in the research process to being too

involved in the research. Instead, the term 'participant' is used because it usefully encapsulates the intention for a more equitable relationship between the researcher and the researched and an active participation in the interview process by those being researched.

The criteria for selection of participants in this current study was: (i) that they were women aged between 50 and 59 years, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, financial situation, sexuality, mental ability, physical ability and education; and (ii) that they had changed paid jobs in the three years between March 2006 and March 2009 while aged in their 50s; and (iii) that they defined their job transition as successful.

Despite these relatively straightforward criteria, I was surprised at the difficulty I had in locating participants who met these criteria. For example, one woman who met the age requirements had had the content of her job changed over time, and although she was doing a 'new' job, she had not applied for this new job. It was subsequently decided that this case was not in the intended spirit of the selection criteria and therefore not included in the study.

The 'snowballing technique' was employed to contact participants. This involved asking some women in my own network to make contact with other women in their personal and professional networks (see Alston and Bowles, 1998). Early feminist research based on interviewing methods has shown that women can hold the view that their job is not important enough or that their story will not be of any interest (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1983), and this may be more likely of women in a more mature age group. By utilising personal contact and someone else suggesting that their story has value, it was hoped that potential participants would be encouraged and be more likely to see that they were a legitimate member of the target group.

Invitation to Participate

Information sheets inviting women to take part were given to all interested women by hand, post or email (see Appendix 3 participant information sheet). Each woman who wished to be part of the research sample was asked to complete a screening questionnaire to ensure they met the criteria for the

research. For example, being in paid work (see Appendix 4 for a copy of the participant screening questionnaire).

There were two women who did not meet the criteria and were not eligible to participate. Those women were informed by telephone or email (depending on their preference).

Participant Consent

Prior to the final selection I gave as much information as possible to potential participants through discussion and the information sheet, to enable them to make an informed choice about participating. Each participant was given a consent form to complete by ticking a yes/no option in which she gave consent to the interview being sound recorded, not having her recordings returned to her and having data placed in an official archive (see a copy of a blank participant consent form in Appendix 5).

The Participants

In the spirit of feminist research, I asked each of the participants to develop between 150 and 200 words introducing herself as a participant rather than me, the researcher, putting my interpretation on their descriptive profiles. Five of the six participants responded and their unedited profiles are included below. For Participant Six – Fiona a brief profile, developed by the researcher, is included.

For the purposes of this research, a sample of six in-depth, semi-structured interviews was completed with women aged in their 50s.

The six women selected live in the North Island of New Zealand and range in age from 51 to 59.

Participant One – Helen

I am 58 years young (or old depending on my mood). I am married and have two grown-up daughters from my previous marriage.

My age has been part of the reason for my changing jobs. Another reason was because I enjoy office work as well as cooking and was delighted to be

accepted for my present position. This gives me plenty of chance to use both these skills.

I have not worked continually for years. Since then I have had part time positions but have always resigned at some stage. I have held my present position for 16 months and will probably stay for quite some time.

I would describe myself as fairly shy with some confidence. I am fairly confident in most of my work skills I am presently using. I think my main problem is time-management (or too much work. My boss does not agree that I have too much work)

I believe that friendly colleagues are most important work wise followed by work enjoyment and money.

I tend to be rather negative in my thinking and am prone to moodiness. However I have been told I am much appreciated at work and am a person who is 'nice'.

Participant Two – Linda

I am 57 years old and for most of my working life have worked for the same organisation, probably a total of about 25 years though not continuous service and albeit in different areas. My last job change was a promotion to a position in which I had been acting for a considerable length of time, and that took effect in April 2009. In all I have been in paid work since I was 16 years old, with the exception of about four years when my child was young.

I am confident in my abilities to carry out the role, though since having a secondment outside the country have found on my return that my technical skills have suffered and I find this frustrating. It is currently difficult to find the time to upskill because I have approximately 43 staff reporting to me either directly or indirectly through Team Leader's and that is a high workload.

My role is managerial, with the most important components being risk management in an emergency service role where I must ensure appropriate response and use of resources, and that public and field staff safety is not

compromises by the approach we take. I also maintain an overview of the information from callers to ensure we are basing our decisions on the best available information and we need to be constantly reappraising our approach as any incident unfolds.

I love my work. I feel in particular I have a big responsibility towards ensuring the section operate in a cohesive manner and that morale is good so that work is as pleasant a place to come to as possible. I am well paid but that is not the primary consideration - I can genuinely say that I take my leadership role seriously.

All in all I feel very suited to this role as I think I have a flair for managing staff. I think it is probably true to say I expect staff to operate to a high standard, in keeping with their experience, and will tackle issues early - but that staff do consider me fair.

Participant Three – Karen

I am a 59 year old widow, previously married and then a single mother of four. It has never occurred to me that my age would have any impact on my changing of jobs.

As a matter of necessity, I have been in paid work, almost continuously, for over 40 years (that sounds scary). I believe that I am confident, highly skilled and not consciously competitive. I do office administration work, have moved into office management, and want to build on that, making the most of new opportunities that come my way that might interest me.

The things that are important to me in work are challenge, the ability to stretch myself beyond my comfort zone – and therefore grow; in colleagues or employees honesty and integrity, straightforwardness and a good day's work for a good day's pay are things I look for. Money is important, but is not the be-all and end-all. Having said that, I'm not going to take a reduction in pay at any time. I like to be able to learn and grow through new experiences and opportunities. The balance between work and life outside work is now becoming more and more important and I will not allow work to consume my life. If the job

can't be done within a 37-40 hour week I think there is something wrong with either the job, or me.

I think my personality is extrovert (but honest), straight up and I have a keen sense of humour and sense of the ridiculous. I am intelligent and like my abilities to be acknowledged. I demand high standards of myself and am, I guess, a perfectionist.

I have nobody around to limit me (husband dead, all 4 kids overseas!!), so I should be able to accomplish whatever I want to. I am now beginning to do more outside my work life, having taken Italian lessons in the past two years and now I've just enrolled in a painting course (though heaven knows why – perhaps I want to give someone ELSE a challenge).

Participant Four – Jane

I'm 58 and just over two years ago I left the organisation I had been with for over twenty years (if you allow for government re-structuring!). I'm a public servant, and for most of those twenty years I worked on forestry statistics. I struggled to gain promotion (probably largely because I'd become 'typecast' in the work I did, running surveys, and possibly because I had occasional health issues, being a long-time survivor of depression). I decided it was time to find work more in line with my interests. As a women's studies student, I wanted a role with more emphasis on social issues. I applied for three jobs at three different government departments, and two of them offered me an interview within days. I had no sense at all that my age was an issue – rather that my experience was an advantage. I'm now writing statistical publications for the Ministry of Health, focussing on mental health and suicide statistics. I love the work, even if being a public servant has palled somewhat.

My interests are running, cricket, biking (my newest challenge!), gardening and reading. I'm single and loving it. I have nine nieces and nephews in Australia, and I love being an aunt – albeit long-distance. I'm about to embark on the first step to retirement, with a change to a 4-day week starting in April. I'm hoping this will result in a more organised study focus, as well as more home-grown vegetables and enhanced fitness!

Participant Five – Mary

I am 51 years old.

I considered the change more carefully than in the past in terms of career progression, where previous experience fitted in, and security of tenure.

I bring to the new job more maturity and experience than in the past along with confidence that I can do a good job.

I have been in paid work since 1976. Omg that's 34 years.

I am confident, competent, capable and highly skilled. I am not particularly competitive with anyone but myself. I set high standards for myself and also expect those I work with to have high standards.

I am in a leadership role in the [name of organisation]

Most important to me work wise is:

Making a difference for vulnerable populations

Working through challenges – and they need to get progressively bigger

Continually learning – work needs to be stimulating

I need to be busy and under a bit of pressure at all times otherwise I will slack off

Friendly colleagues is a bonus

My personality can be described as quite driven and particular about getting details right – probably a bit of a perfectionist but getting better at being more tolerant about non-perfection both in myself and others – that's probably called maturity.

In terms of how I deal with employees I have been described as firm but fair and I agree. Treating everyone with respect and equity is important to me. I do not tolerate bad behaviour particularly when I see a direct link to poor service delivery for vulnerable clients.

I have a stable partner who works in a senior position in education. We have 3 dogs and work hard at maintaining a good lifestyle that allows us respite from full time busy positions. We have a holiday bach where we can get right away from telephones, television and life in general and be complete hermits for the weekend and holidays. This is important in maintaining energy levels necessary to sustain my busy job.

Participant Six – Fiona

During the study process Fiona moved overseas and did not respond to requests for a self-written profile.

Fiona is a qualified healthcare professional who had remained in the same profession since completing her training when she left school. Fiona's mother had been in the same healthcare profession. Fiona is married with two children. She wanted her job to be fun, to work as part of a team, and for her job to be a challenge. In her 50s, Fiona no longer wanted to work night shift and wanted more of a balance between work and home. Fiona described herself as a fatalist and had very set ideas about the type of job she wanted.

Pilot Interview

A pilot interview was completed with one woman who met all of the criteria except the time-frame criterion. This one-person pilot indicated that the interview questions were relevant and effective in getting the pilot participant to reflect on her experience. From feedback given after the interview, a pre-interview questionnaire was developed.

The Interviews

Interviewing was selected for five main reasons. Firstly, my underpinning ontological position is one that identifies that the experience, understanding, perceptions and lived reality of the women I interview "are meaningful properties of the social reality" (Mason, 2002, p. 63) that my research was investigating. Secondly, my epistemological position acknowledges the legitimacy of data gathered through two-way interaction during an interview and the analysis of common themes based on the information collected. The themes identified from

the women's narratives I count as legitimate knowledge relative to factors in successful job change for women aged in their 50s.

Operating from a basis that knowledge is situational, and being able to ask participants questions relevant to their individual context rather than a generalised situation, was the third reason for choosing interviewing. Mies (1991 p. 66) has observed, "experience means taking real life as the starting point, its subjective concreteness as well as its societal entanglements."

Fourthly, interviewing enabled me to probe and clarify when gathering information, rather than just collect surface information. Fifthly, in keeping with the aims of a feminist framework, the interview method gave participants more control over the research process. By using a semi-structured interview I reduced the power imbalance between myself, as the researcher, and the women, as participants, by having an open interaction by using a participatory model (Reinharz, 1992). The participants had more control over the route the interview took and played an active rather than a passive role (Letherby, 2003). If I had not thought of a particular area it could be raised by the participant and included, as happened during my pilot interview.

Within the interview, the approach was to make it easy for the participant to share her own experiences. The open and inclusive nature of this approach should mitigate against any potential researcher bias (Lather, 1991). This meant the process used by the researcher was more facilitative than a rigid control of the flow of communication (Reinharz, 1992).

The participants were acknowledged as 'knowers' and their experiences as vital, valid and contributory to the research (Devere, 1993; Reinharz, 1992). This was done through acknowledgement that the research would only take place with their contribution; for example, by way of a follow-up email to participants outlining that it was their responses which enabled me to identify particular themes relevant to women who change jobs successfully.

As a feminist interviewer, I wanted to ensure the voices of the women involved were heard (Oakley, 1987). Interview results were to be used for the collective good of all women, while protecting those who were powerless to protect

themselves (Finch, 1984). This principle was applied by the recording of interviews so that the participants would be quoted directly in the subsequent findings and discussion of results.

It was planned to have face-to-face interviews with all participants, but difficulty in finding women who met the criteria and were willing to take part meant I had to include women from a variety of geographical locations within the North Island of New Zealand. This necessitated the completion of some of the interviews by telephone.

Six interviews were completed, ranging from 30 minutes to 105 minutes in length. There was an optional follow-up after each interview, consisting of a meeting, phone call or email to enable the researcher to clarify any aspects that arose during the interview. Participants had my contact details and were free to get in touch with me if they had any questions or wanted to provide additional information after the interview. For example, after the interview one participant sent me her curriculum vitae as additional information. All interviews were followed up with emails or telephone calls for clarification and a self-written profile description for five of the six participants (the profile for participant six was written by the researcher).

Each interview began with a brief social chat to put the participant at ease before the recorder was turned on. I began the interview by outlining the process of the interview and then briefly reviewed some of the information on the pre-interview questionnaire to reassure the participants that this was about them and their stories, and to remind them of what they had said in the pre-interview questionnaire.

The questions were open-ended (see copy of the interview question guide in Appendix 6) and used to ensure that, as a minimum, I covered similar areas with each participant.

At times the participants talked about things that were not necessarily within the scope of this study. To the extent that they were outlining the context of their lived experience, I did not interrupt, but on occasions where participants appeared to be going 'off track' I would prompt them to return to the focus of the

interview with another question. One participant spoke off the record but did not ask for the tape to be turned off. Consequently her 'off-the-record' comments were not used in this study.

Feminist research identifies the need for the relationship between the researcher and the research participants to be built on the values of trust and openness by using such techniques as self-disclosure. For example, based on Reinhartz (1992) and Oakley (1987), where relevant, I would answer questions posed by the participant and exchange information based on my own experiences, in order to establish reciprocity and rapport.

At all times, though, it was the participants' experiences and views that were at the centre of the interview process. Rather than comment on the content of what participants said, I would, where appropriate, ask the participants to expand on an issue, or I did not extend the discussion when a participant went off on a tangent which was interesting but not necessarily relevant. Open-ended questions were used throughout, with closed questions being used as clarifiers.

Each tape was transcribed by the researcher to both protect confidentiality of the material and anonymity of the participants, and to enable maximum exposure to the interview material. For example, transcribing the tapes enabled me to hear and appreciate the emotions which accompanied the actual words, something which is often not appreciated during the course of the actual interview.

Methods of Analysis

Unlike many interventions into powerless groups, feminist research frequently has an agenda for contributing to social change. While initially the research was to meet the requirements of a Master of Philosophy, a longer term goal for the research is for it to have practical application.

The methods of analysis brought to the findings of this study constitute inductive analysis. In contrast to deductive analysis, which uses a framework developed before the data is collected (as used in positivist research, where a hypothesis is formulated and then tested), inductive analysis 'discovers' categories after the data is collected and is the basis for qualitative theories, such as grounded

theory. The use of grounded theory contributed to the feminist framework underpinning this research, as it enabled the collected material to be used to identify common themes within the women's experiences, rather than fit the information into predetermined or existing categories (Letherby, 2003).

The actual methods of analysis employed were based on Glaser and Strausse's (Silverman, 2000, p. 152) three stages of grounded theory:

1. Develop categories which illuminate the data.
2. Saturate these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their relevance.
3. Develop these categories into more general analytical frameworks with relevance outside the setting.

In practical terms this meant that the analysis of the data was completed in three stages:

Stage One – Review of information

An initial review of each recorded interview was completed to get a general overview of the information. Each recording was transcribed.

Stage Two – Analysis of the information into themes

Before the analysis of the interview transcripts there was no pre-identification of possible themes. Similar themes identified in two or more of the transcripts were grouped together to eventually form themes in the job transition process.

Stage Three – Comparison

The comparison of the themes identified from the data transcripts forms the basis of my discussion in Chapter Four. The commonalities of the women's experiences of successful job transitions form the basis of the analysis offered in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design employed in the study. Developing a feminist framework involved careful evaluation and selection of the methods to ensure that the research was “respectful of the respondents and acknowledges the subjective involvement of the researcher” (Letherby, 2003, p. 5).

The methods chosen included qualitative interviews and grounded theory. The use of qualitative interviews enabled the women to recount their own experiences in recognition that their experiences are a valid form of knowledge. Using an inductive approach (grounded theory) to analyse the research findings ensured that the themes evolved from the information rather than being predetermined.

Issues of women’s subjectivity and agency, especially in terms of women’s self-representation relative to job change, presented as important factors in the analysis of the findings in relation to any commonalities in the women’s accounts.

The next chapter presents an overview of the key issues that emerged from the interviews.

Chapter Four

Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings from my interviews with the participants about their successful job change experiences. In the semi-structured interviews, the women described their job change processes from when the possibility of changing jobs was just a thought, through to starting in their new position. Each woman identified the factors which helped and hindered her transition from her previous paid job to her current paid job. While the participants were all women of a similar age in paid work, their individual experiences were unique.

While the interviews were the primary source of data, the pre-interview questionnaires and follow-up telephone calls are also considered in this discussion of research findings. The findings have been categorised into twelve common themes, and this chapter is structured around these. The twelve themes are: definitions of success; motivation for changing jobs; professional identity; learning; the role of opportunity; technical ability; work/life balance; support; barriers to changing jobs; career resilience; comparison with being in their 20s and 30s; and advice they would give to women in their 50s thinking about changing jobs.

Definitions of Success

One of the criteria for selection of participants was that they defined their recent job change as successful. Definitions of success have been categorised in the literature as either subjective or objective. Subjective success focuses on an individual's sense of what is worthwhile, whereas objective success is based on an external measure, such as salary level or promotion. These definitions have been found to be highly gendered, with subjective measures being seen as embodying traditionally feminine traits and objective measures embodying

masculine traits. Rather than impose a definition based on my own and others' values, I left each participant to define what success meant to them.

The participant responses ranged from subjective definitions only, objective definitions only and a mix of both. All of the participants wanted to do a good job whether from their own standards or in order to get recognition from someone else.

Helen employed a subjective definition of success, stating: "I feel worthwhile", whereas Linda expressed an objective definition stating as part of her definition: "I can include straight measurements, I can see there are improvements, for example, attendance and all of those things." Only Jane directly related her feeling of success to how other people perceived her. This was related to a pay rise, which to her represented how pleased her employers were with her, which increased her self-confidence. Instead of thinking that her skills and abilities were such that she could demand a particular salary amount, Jane's frame of reference was external, and 'they' were pleased with her performance. Jane explained that in her previous job she did not get the promotions she wanted so she had looked to other areas of her life to see where she had been successful. During the interview it also became clear that in her previous job she had not sought promotion because she was the only one prepared to do the menial jobs.

In defining success, Mary expressed a subjective view. Throughout the interview she identified the importance to her of working in a role where she was helping others. In contrast with the stereotypical role that older workers want jobs without challenges, Mary also identified the importance of a role where she was getting "enough to keep you interested and probably enough trouble to sort out if you look beyond the issue", which could be seen as a masculine stance.

Fiona made the link between what determined success for her and the influence age had on that definition. She explained:

As you get older, night shift isn't good for the system. I was working 12-hour shifts for the [*name of department*] at this job; the

longest shift is 6.5 hours; they are often five so that is one huge bonus.

Linda's response to what success meant for her was mixed. On the one hand she expressed concern for how the taxpayer's dollar was spent, feeling she may be overpaid, stating: "there are a lot of people living in ... fairly dire circumstances and it is not for us to fritter money and waste time." On the other hand, she believed "I've got an opportunity to have a lot of influence on a lot of people."

For Linda it was also the skills and ability gained in her previous professional role that she brought to the new job which enhanced her credibility and which helped make it a successful job change. This was alluded to when she said: 'and we were discussing case law and [sic] were quite surprised that I had that level of understanding'.

She thought the organisation, through its patriarchal beliefs and practices and ineffective recruitment process, hindered rather than enhanced the successful change.

Karen believed it was her ability to see the new job as an opportunity, combined with her determination to achieve the very high standards she set herself to do a good job, which helped make it a successful change. In a hesitant manner she stated:

But um yeah the reasons I think that I have been successful are that I did achieve things on time. I did things to a high standard.

For Fiona too, doing the best job possible helped make it a success, as well as being given a free rein to do things. For Mary and Fiona, an important factor in the success of the new job was their employers' faith in their ability to do the job.

Motivation for Changing Jobs

Motivation can be broadly defined as a desire to do something and can be intrinsic, such as an individual's need for a challenging job, or extrinsic, such as needing to earn more because of a partner's loss of job through illness. The motivation to change jobs for the women in the study was varied. In

contradiction to the thought that older workers are looking for jobs within their comfort zone and a countdown to retirement, four out of the six participants were looking for a job which would offer a challenge or an adventure. As Mary put it: "I will rise to a challenge rather than get something that is within my comfort zone and get bored." The participants had either looked for, or had found, a job to provide a challenge. Helen changed jobs because "when I started I got the impression that I would spend a lot of time in the bakery but that didn't really eventuate." Karen was bored and thought her previous job was "kind of beneath me." Mary moved "because jobs in [*name of town*] that would stretch me are few and far between" and such a job was advertised.

Because Fiona could not get a job in the department in which she wanted to work, she moved, whereas Linda moved because "it would be an adventure" and she thought the new job would be exciting. Jane said: "I made up my mind in that last year that I was going and that was that." She had been stuck in a rut and finally, after many years, had the will to make the move.

Professional Identity

A professional identity is a social label which describes who you are and what you do and is generally an important part of an individual's identity (Price, 2000). In any transition there is a loss of identity as you move on to new beginnings with some parts of the identity, which may have more invested in them, being left behind, for example, a professional role.

Three of the women – Mary, Fiona and Linda – had worked in roles with a qualified professional identity although only Fiona was currently employed in that role. Loss of that professional identity was an issue for two participants who both referred to this during the interview. Mary left from choice to seek new challenges and acknowledged how difficult it was to let go of her professional role. Linda made a forced change out of the professional role because of health issues and did not appear to have let go of her previous role. Her references to that professional role throughout the interview made it clear that that professional role, even though she was no longer in it, was still very much part of who she was professionally. They had both left their professional roles some

time before but this role loss still had an impact on them in their current situation. Mary explained in detail:

I had a certain degree of insecurity and have had ever since I haven't been practising as a nurse or midwife, and that is a long time. But that professional registration has been really hard to walk away from, as I felt ever since as though I didn't have a real job. You know it has taken me a while to accept management is a profession in itself. Even to the point of not reading nursing or midwife literature. It has taken a long time to make that change and think that I am not a nurse or midwife any more and you know what can I do – I can't really do anything (*Mary*).

Linda, who had left a professional role but still worked within the same organisation in an administration role, outlined the tension she felt at times. For example, when, as a result of organisational policy, she had to hand over a task to her supervisor who had less experience than her, she commented:

I suppose he had several years [experience] but I think he had been at [*name of company*] for four or five of those so very little experience on the road compared to my 16 and a half years and well into the 20 years. You know, it is just because he has a uniform on (*Linda*).

Linda's status within the organisation was raised when people recognised her previous experience in the more valued professional role. Tension occurred when someone in the professional role, who had less experience in that role than her, was given authority and accountability over her in her current administrative role. Whereas Mary did not refer back to her profession for credibility in her new role, Linda's previous profession gave her credibility and validation in her new role.

Learning

A negative connotation of ageing is the perception by some that older people have difficulty learning new things (Greller, 2006). This belief, like all ageing stereotypes, can come from other people, such as recruiters, or from the older

person themselves and is accepted as a 'given'. However, all the participants showed themselves as capable and willing to learn if given an opportunity.

Unfortunately, Helen experienced blatant ageism from a tutor while attending a polytechnic course to gain computer skills while updating her job skills after a divorce. Helen was asked her age by the tutor during a class discussion: "and when I told her 'oh' I have never forgotten that 'oh no, you are too old, you are going to find it so difficult'." What should have been an empowering experience of gaining new skills instead had a profound negative effect on Helen's attitude towards age and her own ability in relation to getting a job. Despite this initial setback and finding "the technical bits difficult", Helen said: "I'd been to polytechnic and I'd done computer courses but I do find the technical bits difficult so a lot of it I didn't take in."

Fiona believed that her profession, which required a constant updating of skills, wanted younger people who could learn, rather than older people who had difficulty learning. She also believed that once a person was aged in his or her 50s it was harder for them to learn. This participant had thought long and hard about applying for a job for which she did not have the necessary computer software skills. When she voiced her doubts about whether she could do the job or not to the person handling the vacancy she was told that everybody was 'trainable'. Fiona found this statement empowering. When asked if she believed she had the capability to pick up the new skills required in her new job, she had been confident she did.

There are two contradictions here, first, Fiona's belief that people in their 50s, such as herself, had difficulty picking up new things, and second, that she voiced her doubts about being able to pick up the new software package, while contradictorily thinking that picking up new things was within her capability.

The Role of Opportunity

The ability not only to identify, but to be ready to take advantage of opportunities which come our way, is one of the factors needed to successfully adapt to the rapidly changing world in which we live (Bright & Pryor, 2008). The women in the study took advantage of the opportunities available to them to change jobs,

even if they were not necessarily confident that they would get the job, for example, Linda saying: "oh well I will stick my name in the hat." Linda also commented that, in her younger days in an interview, she would say she could do something in order to get a job when she had no experience or idea of how to do it. Yet, as she got older, she said she did not tend to "fly by the seat of my pants" quite so much. Mary was satisfied in her job and loved the people she was working with. While recuperating from an operation she commented:

I had some time off and I was so bored and I think it was just about then that I started to think ... maybe I do have one more career change in me and if I did go for another job what would it be and I actually saw this job then (*Mary*).

Fiona said she was a 'fatalist' and was resigned to working within the same organisation but not in the particular department she wanted to work in. She saw an advertisement for her new job outside of the organisation when looking in the paper for a job for her son who had recently returned from overseas: "it was like fate, it just made me open up the paper that day."

Despite saying she was a fatalist, she also engineered opportunities, for example, when taking an overseas holiday she remained in touch with a previous manager and colleague who wanted her to be in the team in the department she wished to work in when she returned.

Another participant, Karen, manipulated the situation so her previous position, in which she was bored, was made redundant during an organisational restructuring. Karen, who presented as a very decisive person, talked of being indecisive about one job for which she applied. She was not offered the job and took that as a sign that she was right to be indecisive as the job was not for her. Karen constantly talked of the role luck played in her working life, yet she also constantly gave examples of strategies she used which impacted on how that 'luck' happened, for example, telling people she was looking for a job.

When discussing with Mary about keeping an eye on what jobs were available, Mary said she did it in the same way as she kept an eye on what houses were on the market. It did not mean she wanted to move house or that she was

dissatisfied with her current house, it just meant she kept an eye on what was available. This strategy also let her know what skills were required for various jobs so she could ensure her own skills were up to date.

Each of these women, from Helen who waited until desperation drove her to apply for a job she did not think she would get, through to Karen who told people she was looking for work, in their own way made things happen. At times, they referred to what happened as 'luck' or 'chance' or 'fate' or 'opportunity'. Not only did they recognise the situation as an opportunity but also they had manoeuvred themselves into the situation where they could take advantage of the opportunity, for example, Helen doing a computer course.

Technical Ability

One of the negative stereotypical traits assigned to older workers is their purported inability or difficulty in keeping up with changes on how things are done (Greller, 2006). In contrast with this stereotype, all of the participants were confident in their technical ability. This was a surprise given that some participants commented on or presented as having a lack of confidence or low self-esteem. Jane was very confident in her technical ability, but a recurring theme in her comments was a fluctuating level of low esteem. Yet, despite this low esteem, she enjoyed marketing herself within an interview:

I just enjoy talking about my work and what I can do. I think it is a mindset. You go into an interview knowing that you have to sell yourself and somehow or other the confident me comes into play usefully (*Jane*).

Helen, although confident in her technical ability, did not see that her technical skills were relevant in the current job market. She commented that during the search for a new position: "I just got very negative about it; I just didn't believe I had the skills for anything." In the end, absolute desperation to leave her old job drove her to apply for a new job, even though she did not think she had the skills. Helen constantly made the comment throughout the interview that she had low skills which were worthless, and it was not until she was asked directly

if her skills were right for the new job that she looked up, smiled and said: “for that job they were perfect.”

Work/Life Balance

Women are seen to have devoted their lives to raising a family and/or caring for older parents. Once free of these restrictions, a work/life balance is something that older women are perceived to be looking for in jobs in the context of being true to oneself (Gordon, et al., 2002). While none of the women specifically said they changed work to get a better work/life balance, it was a contributing factor.

The idea of a work/life balance had first been suggested to Jane by a career guidance person:

This whole idea about ... spending time doing different things in my life. Some which may be paid work and some of which may not – redistributing the eggs in the basket a bit (*Jane*).

It was only in hindsight that Fiona realised how exhausted she had been in her previous position. In relation to getting a better work/life balance she had wanted to decrease the stress and get away from shift work.

Working in her new job meant that, at night and on the weekends, Helen was tired and things such as housework had slipped. Her husband did not place the same importance on housework as she did and therefore was not as supportive as she would like him to have been. For financial reasons, reducing her hours was not an option.

Mary did not see getting a better work/life balance as a factor and for the first year in her new position, expected to work long hours. She had not expected the chaos in her life as a result of regular trips out of town. In contrast Linda retained shift work in her new job which enabled her to have four days off in a row which she said gave her a great work/life balance.

Support

For the purposes of this study, ‘support’ shown to the participants is defined as either professional support, for example, a career advisor, or private support, for

example, a friend. None of the participants explicitly stated that support was critical to the success of the job change. Without exception, during each of the interviews, although reference was made to the participants' partners, friends and colleagues, it almost appeared that they had to go through the process of changing their jobs without support. Each reacted in a puzzled way to my question "What support did you have as you went through the process, for example, friends, family?"

The support perceived to be available to the women in the study was limited. When initially asked what support they received as they went through the transition, three of the participants said they had no support. Helen commented: "It never actually crossed my mind that other people might be interested in helping me." Of the three, only one said that, in hindsight, support had been available. The most commonly perceived support available in reality, and in hindsight, was from friends and partners.

Three of the women had had experience working with a career specialist, for example, a career advisor or human resource person. For Jane, the professional support from a career advisor had been several years ago. At the time she had not been able to move forward work-wise and had felt the career advisor had become impatient with her due to her inaction. Despite that, the topics covered during those sessions were relevant to her recent transition.

Mary's professional support came as a result of a professional meeting which was part of a training course. Mary commented in the meeting that she was thinking about applying for a particular position and the person she was meeting with knew the manager in her new position and was able to provide information about Mary's skills relative to the position.

Linda was living in a remote region with limited access to working electronic equipment at the time she applied for her current position. She felt particularly isolated and alone as she went through what was a gruelling application process which lasted over twelve months.

The job change for four participants was on the whole self-directed, with little or no substantive support from others. Rather than this being due to an actual lack

of support available, the participants' responses suggest, for whatever reason, they did not recognise the support available or chose to go through the process independently.

Barriers to Changing Jobs

Barriers to changing jobs can come from internal sources, for example, not having the confidence to apply for a particular position, or external sources, such as a partner not wanting to leave a geographical location.

The main barrier to changing jobs for Fiona was that she could not get the job she wanted, which was a permanent job in an intensive care department. She did not want to apply for any other job within the organisation and made the decision that she would not apply for any other job in intensive care and risk facing the demoralisation of not being appointed. Fiona also said that living with the tiredness and stress of working in intensive care became an accepted part of life. Another barrier for Fiona was: "probably not believing I could do anything else but I guess being lazy. Who wants to do something when you have a job and you get the money?"

For Linda, the main barrier was the complicated recruitment process. This included an appointment being overturned at her instigation, appealing an appointment, a change of focus on the selection criteria, a change of appointment/selection panel, combined with electronic equipment not working when trying to send in one of the applications. During the process, the position was opened to both those in a professional role and those in a support role. Linda commented that those who held the professional role were generally male and given more credibility.

The main barrier for Karen was the potential for thinking it would be a 'good' job and finding out it was not, and not wanting to take the risk in case it was not a good job. Karen thought that having anxiety about getting another job, not having enough faith in herself and leaving one job before having another to go to, increased the risk of accepting the wrong job.

For Mary, barriers to leaving her last job included leaving a familiar environment and leaving colleagues she liked. She also had to come to terms with the fact

that a terminally ill respected colleague did not want her to leave, and each time she saw him he would tell her that she should not be leaving. Mary's partner would not leave the provincial town in which they lived, which limited the type of job available to her.

During the job search and in the interview, the disempowering message Helen repeatedly gave herself was that her skills were poor and the skills wanted by employers were not the ones she had. When questioned, she identified that her skills were not poor, it was simply that employers were often looking for more advanced skills than she had. In her current job her skills are, in her words, a "perfect fit".

Jane's energy had gone into dealing with the other issues in her life and for several years there was not enough energy left over to find another job. At one stage her personal life was so unpleasant she could see no way out and was in such despair she contemplated suicide. It was only with her inner strength, professional support and the support of friends that she worked through the issues:

Part of it was getting stuck doing the basic routine work that had to be done and that no one wanted to do, and then new people would come in and I would train them up and then they would move on and I would still be left with this stuff, and it was a combination of that and my inability, I suppose, to push myself. My ability to push myself and say now look it's time for me to do something different (*Jane*).

Jane was doing tasks she was overqualified to do and did not like doing, yet she continued to do them as no one else wanted to. Her employers let it continue as they needed someone to do those tasks, and Jane let it continue even though she resented doing it.

Although there was a mix of internal and external barriers, in general the barriers the participants had to overcome were self-imposed.

Career Resilience

Career resilience can be seen as a person's ability to move forward after setbacks. Five of the six participants showed career resilience in that they picked themselves up and moved forward after such things as Helen being told she would never be given promotion, Linda having appointments overturned and Karen being left to support herself and a family of four. For Helen, divorce after 28 years of a traditional marriage meant she suddenly had to develop marketable skills and get a paid job. For Jane, being involved in unpleasant sexual harassment situations within the work team meant she missed out on jobs to which she perceived she should have been appointed.

Some of these events happened years before but had impacted on how the participants talked about their most recent job change. The career resilience could still be heard in the way the participants spoke, or in their expectation that they would make things happen. In Fiona's words:

I took myself off to [*geographical location*] Beach and screamed and ranted, and I just knew there was a reason; there is always a reason for things happening and I had to tell myself for God's sake pull yourself together.

All participants demonstrated career resilience regardless of their levels of confidence and self-esteem. Interestingly, the two participants who displayed particularly low self-esteem and self-confidence, were the two who displayed the highest career resilience and picked themselves up and kept going.

The Impact of Age

The underpinning focus of this study is the impact of age when women aged in their 50s change jobs. Jane had not considered her age had a negative impact as she got her job very quickly, and the organisation she now works for were very keen for her to be part of their team. She sounded quite surprised and almost puzzled by the question.

Like Jane, Karen was surprised to hear that her age might be a barrier. Karen had been working with a recruitment consultant who suggested she limit her

résumé to a certain number of pages so her age would not be highlighted. Until then she had not seen her age as a problem but thought she would play their game if that was what was required. More importantly she believed her skills and ability would outweigh any negativity related to her age. Karen thought men had more of a problem with age than women, as their egos cannot cope with being knocked. Karen had never considered that at a certain age she would not be working.

Helen thought her age “was definitely against me” and that younger people had more skills and were quicker at picking things up. In contrast to Helen, Mary could only see her age as a positive, for example, her current skill level and confidence gained through experience, although she thought it made her more cautious than she had been in her youth. Like Mary, Fiona saw her age as a positive. For her it meant that she had more confidence in herself than when she was younger and that she had life skills and experience to bring to her position. Yet, in response to an earlier question, Fiona had said that in her profession, where keeping up to date with new findings, processes and procedures was necessary, an organisation may prefer someone younger who had better ability to learn than someone aged in their 50s. Fiona clearly accepted the ageing stereotype, that as a person ages their ability to learn declines. One of the most memorable and empowering things for Fiona about the employment process for her current position was her new team leader saying she believed everyone was “trainable”.

Mary, a dynamic powerhouse well respected by her colleagues and clients, was quite contradictory in that she also thought her age was a barrier to changing jobs. Although she loved new beginnings and unknown territory, it was harder when she was older because the older she became the more entrenched she was in her job.

Linda expressed a desire to be contented in her job regardless of what she was doing. While she thought ageism existed, she did not see that it had impacted on her present position. She saw it was more her credibility from a senior professional role that she had previously held within her present organisation,

and which was viewed favourably in the eyes of the generally male members of that profession, which was more important.

Comparison with Being Aged in the 20s and 30s

During the interviews, participants were asked what they had looked for in a job when they were aged in their 20s and 30s compared to now they were aged in their 50s. Whether it was working in a role which helped people, or no longer doing shift work, most participants were moving to or staying with what was important to them.

Helen said when she was in her 20s and 30s she would only have considered doing office work and “the idea of doing more menial work, [such as] working in rest homes, I would have looked down my nose [at].” At an earlier age she would have considered the jobs she had held in her 50s, as a result of her changed marital circumstances, beneath her.

When aged in her 20s and 30s, Linda had wanted to be out on the road and dealing with confrontational situations and people face-to-face. Now aged in her 50s, she was content to work behind the scenes with an inside job, using her skills and knowledge in a support role.

Jane thought that she had returned to the idealistic views of her youth in wanting to make a difference for people. In her 20s, Jane had been in the traditional female role of a teacher. When asked why she had returned to those views, she said she had sorted things out in her life and had more confidence to do what she wanted to do.

In her 20s and 30s, Fiona, like Jane, was in a traditional female role, that of a nurse. For her, aside from the fact that nursing was the only thing she wanted to do, when she was younger a job was essentially to pay the bills. As Fiona aged, and after bringing up a family and travelling overseas, her perspective of the role of nursing and her confidence in her own ability to know the right thing to do had changed.

In her 20s and 30s, Mary was neither interested in a management role, nor had she realised she had the ability to be in such a role. The knowledge that she had

the ability (regardless of whether she wanted to use it or not) would only come in later years. When offered a management role in her 20s, Mary turned it down as she did not want the responsibility and challenges she now required in a job. Like Mary, for Karen the difference between what she wanted in a job in her 20s and 30s and now is that she now wants the responsibility and accountability of management in any job.

Advice to Women in Their 50s Who Are Thinking Of Changing Jobs

Based on their self-defined success in changing jobs, the participants were asked what advice they would give to other women aged in their 50s who were thinking of changing jobs. The advice they gave ranged from the subjective, for example, believe in yourself, to the objective, such as practise your interview skills. There was no magic formula and at times they identified what they wished they had done rather than what they actually did.

From Linda's experience in selecting staff, older women tended to be naive when answering questions and, like Helen, she saw that critiquing résumés and practising interview skills was important.

Helen stressed that believing in yourself and in your ability was important and part of that process was reviewing and improving your qualifications if necessary. She also suggested having a structured approach to looking for work, for example, through looking at more than one source or finding out who to send unsolicited applications to.

For Linda, by the time she was in her 50s she saw that all the hard work had been done:

In your 50s all you have to do is live. You kinda know what is going to happen in your life, how many kids you are going to have, or whether or not you got married or not, or where you live. Yeah, so all you have to do is enjoy your life. So if something appeals, give it a go (*Linda*).

Linda thought older women have valuable experience but need to be thick-skinned about the reactions from younger people. She believed that you could

analyse a situation and realise that someone's reaction to you may be more about them and their circumstances than about you.

In a similar vein to enjoying life, Mary suggested that women take advantage of the opportunity to have a "new lease of life" and "if you are erring on the side of caution, throw caution to the wind and go for it." Fiona, like Mary, said that if women want something badly enough then they should go and get it. She suggested that women of her age group should consider how they present themselves, in that they should be comfortable in their own skin. This last comment suggests that as women age they become more true to themselves, and this is supported by Linda's comment: "above all you have to do in your 50s you must enjoy life."

No participant suggested that anyone follow the exact process they followed in getting a new job; rather, it was snippets from their most recent job change process and other job change processes they had been through, plus the advantage of hindsight, that provided the information.

Conclusion

The findings clearly identify that while the participants are all women of a similar age, in paid employment, their individual motivation for changing jobs and their job change experiences are unique, as are their self-defined definitions of success. These definitions of success varied from subjective to objective or a mix of both. The sometimes contradictory nature of their comments can be seen in this chapter, for example, Mary both seeing and not seeing her age as a barrier. The thought that their age might be considered a barrier to changing jobs was a surprise to some of the women. Ironically, while all women appeared to live in supportive environments, not one mentioned seeking or thinking about seeking extra support for herself as she went through the job change process. These women had diverse personalities; they were not necessarily assertive and confident, and yet, while some were initially reluctant to change, all of the women eventually took a risk in order to change jobs. Their overwhelming message to women aged in their fifties thinking about changing jobs was to do it.

Within the twelve themes discussed in this chapter, five groupings emerged: change; openness and flexibility; strategies; information; and faith and trust. The following chapter will be grouped around these five categories.

Chapter Five

Research Analysis

Introduction

The cohort of women in the present study were born into an era of great social change in respect to the field of paid employment, wherein a traditionally stable world changed into a dynamic and unpredictable environment. The illusionary image of a job for life in one organisation was no longer valid and, instead, individuals had to remain employable for life. This chapter analyses the research findings of this study in order to identify the factors that contributed to the successful job change experiences of the six women.

The analysis offered in this chapter is not attempting to universalise the experiences of the women in the study or to develop a formula relevant for all women in this age group. Rather, it seeks to identify and analyse the factors or principles behind those themes that contribute to a successful career change.

Based on the key themes that emerged from the research findings as identified in the previous chapter, the analysis offered in this chapter will be structured around the themes of change, openness and flexibility, strategies, information, and faith and trust.

Change

As previously noted a persistent theme that emerged from the present study was that the illusionary image of a job, where an employee remained with one organisation, is no longer valid; instead, individuals had to ensure that they remained employable for life. This reality, along with changing economic requirements, means people want or need to work beyond the traditional retirement age. One important consequence of this is that an individual's ability to cope with change will impact on their success or failure in the world of paid employment.

Two perspectives were evident within the theme of change: a traditional, reactive perspective, more aligned with trying to have absolute control over what happened, and the more dynamic, proactive perspective aligned with assessing opportunity and accepting unpredictability much like the Chaos Theory of Careers (Bright & Pryor, 2008). The participants in this study generally displayed proactive approaches to job change, as shown by Mary, who constantly monitored job vacancies, or they would move between the two approaches, as seen in Karen's manipulating a reactive approach through proactively ensuring her position was one which was disestablished. Those with professional identities appeared to be the most proactive in relation to changing jobs.

The participants displayed patterns of behaviour of which they were not necessarily aware, in that they were either reactive or proactive in their approach to changing jobs. Regardless of whether they changed to a similar job displaying closed-system thinking, or changed to a different type of job displaying open-system thinking, the underlying reality was that their job or career plans needed to be monitored, reworked and able to accommodate and assimilate changes. The future is unknown and cannot be determined with any absolute certainty. A useful technique which three of the women in the study had used, to a greater or lesser degree, was to identify patterns of behaviour. This enabled these participants to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their respective approach to changing jobs and to use this knowledge to strengthen their future approaches to change.

Although change is frequently seen as a clearly defined physical action, such as leaving an old job one day and starting a new one at a given point in time, change also has a psychological component which cannot be so easily compartmentalised. The psychological process can be considered in three parts: the ending of an identity; transition from one identity to the next; and the beginning of a new identity (Bridges, 2009). In this sense, a job change starts as soon as it is an idea in someone's mind. This can be seen in Mary's talking about staying in her new position for only two years. Even though her new

position is currently presenting her with challenges which she enjoys, she is already contemplating the possibility of an ending.

According to non-linear career models (Bright & Pryor, 2008; Fernandez, et al., 2008; Hall, 2004), a static career plan is not effective in the rapidly changing business environment. The interests of an individual also change as they age. This rapid change has consequences for the world of work as it means that careers are not predictable. Only one of the women in the present study has remained in the same career throughout her working life, which is the same career as her mother. Although the criteria for participation in this study was that each of the women had to have changed jobs, none identified the change as part of a bigger career plan. Instead, changing from one job to another was described as 'their future'. Research has identified that changes to career types (for example, Boundaryless Careers), employment contracts and psychological contracts mean the employee is now responsible for their own career (Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). However, none of the women in the present study mentioned that she had a formal career path or the expectation that someone else would take responsibility for managing her career.

Regardless of whether the study participants were proactive or reactive in relation to change, or whether or not they recognised they had patterns of behaviour in relation to how they approached change, or whether or not they considered they had a career path, the underlying principle is that the women in this study did change.

Openness and Flexibility

Traditionally, a career path was developed by or for an individual as a career guide and was something from which they did not deviate, yet none of the women in this study mentioned having a formal career plan. Before the government reforms of the 1980s, the New Zealand labour market was perceived as stable, and a successful career was one with few job or organisation transitions other than those organised by the employer, who took responsibility for their employees' careers (Davey, 2007). After the 1980s, the reality of changing organisational structures, outsourcing of previously in-house functions and employers divesting themselves of responsibility for employees'

career development, meant that the notion of a job for life was generally no longer sustainable. Several job transitions in a working life, and not necessarily with the same organisation or linked to a set career plan, has since become the norm. Instead of the traditional control provided by adhering to a career plan, controlled flexibility is seen as a desired attribute for dealing with the reality of work in the twenty-first century (Czaja & Sharit, 2009).

Operating using open-system thinking does not mean that structure or plans are unnecessary; rather a plan is a guideline that is open to unplanned influences and needs to be maintained and adjusted in response to those influences. A necessary part of flexibility is being prepared and able to take risk. This was demonstrated by the women in the study who were open to the possibilities as being the ones who were willing to take a risk, without being reckless, on uncertainty.

One of the main causes of uncertainty in the New Zealand workforce since the 1980s has been organisational restructuring. Such restructuring has had an impact on the working lives of some of the participants in the study, resulting in forced changes. However, once they had to change, either from a reactive or proactive perspective, five of the six women in the study both embraced the opportunity to change and found that not knowing what their next position could be was energising. The two women who were very specific in the type of jobs they would consider were operating within a closed system, as shown by their point system attractor approach. Yet they could not control outside influences, such as specific job availability or the calibre of other applicants. This inability to control all the associated external factors resulted in high stress and anxiety levels for these individual participants.

In their most recent job change, all the women in this study remained true to their values and what mattered to them. Setting a career plan early in a person's life does not allow for the potential changes in values and what matters to them as they move into adulthood and older age. While this was the case for four of the participants in the present study, one of the other two participants found that being in her 50s with lessening financial demands and devoid of

family responsibilities enabled her to have the freedom to go back to what she valued in her 20s.

The women displayed the ability to 'think outside the box' in relation to jobs. In the case of the women in this study, while they eventually saw themselves as having skills that were transportable, in that they were relevant to different job types, none of the participants mentioned particularly innovative ideas, such as a portfolio career or setting up their own business and creating job opportunities (Inkson, 2006). The women seemed to have no awareness of themselves as part of a much larger, complex system with interconnecting points. Those operating with a focus on one job only appeared blind to the limits of their control. Overall, the women's attitudes were not in line with the notion of believing that unpredictable positive and unpredictable negative events will happen because of being part of a larger matrix (Bright & Pryor, 2008). Rather, they each appeared to perceive that they operated within, and were influenced by, events within their own immediate world, which potentially lessened the opportunities they saw available to them.

For three of the women, the construction of themselves as older workers at times limited the choices they initially saw available. The women were divided as to whether they accepted the negative – and mythical – embedded stereotype that older workers find it harder to upskill, particularly in technological areas (Taylor & Urwin, 2001). Yet four of the women in the study made mention of the learning component in their new positions. Again, the women were initially mixed in their responses in relation to openness and flexibility. Yet, regardless of whether they were open to the opportunity and unpredictability, eventually all the women in the study were open to possibilities, even if it was a last-resort desperation that drove them from probability thinking (Pryor & Bright, 2003). In order to be able to change, the women had to have faith and trust in their ability to change.

Strategies

Uncertainty is not something that most people are comfortable with in any area of their lives, and a typical reaction is to try to implement control strategies. In order to be effective within uncertainty, in contrast to living a life attuned to the

concept of probability through trying to predict what is going to happen with a focus on a logical, single result, the Chaos Theory of Careers suggests that individuals should broaden their thinking to that of probable possibilities. Therefore jobseekers need to implement strategies that encompass probable possibilities (Bright, et al., 2005).

Non-linear career theory, such as the Chaos Theory of Careers, suggests a much wider focus is needed, which includes risk-taking or seeing failure as an opportunity to learn, rather than failure as something to be feared (Pryor & Bright, 2005). If one accepts the concept of a rapidly changing, unpredictable, unstable world, then there is certainly a need to move away from probability thinking. Yet just as with a single focus on probabilities, a focus on possibilities would put the individual in danger of becoming stuck again, but this time through not knowing which of a range of possibilities to select.

When dealing with the imposed uncertainty of an organisational restructure, one participant, who found the stimulation of change invigorating, would immediately develop a plan for finding a job, but not necessarily a plan for finding a particular job. In doing so she developed a sense of purpose in relation to a job search, yet remained open to possibilities. In contrast, two of the participants limited their approach to probability thinking and experienced much frustration during the job change process, as they restricted themselves to a specific job choice. A balanced strategy focusing on probable possibilities is the only way for individuals to overcome the self-limiting barrier of fear of failure to be able to cope with uncertainty (Bright & Pryor, 2008).

The four participants who were open to opportunity were constantly sifting, either consciously or subconsciously, through available information which may lead to job opportunities even when they were not necessarily thinking about changing jobs. For some, looking at available information was part of their daily life, rather than only when looking for a new job. They saw this information-gathering activity not as something that would instantly give an answer as to what job they should move to next, but rather as something which would keep them aware of the opportunities that were available.

Although they have their place, job change strategies that were traditionally effective and based on probability thinking are not necessarily effective when operating in a chaotic environment (Cappelli, 2009). Nor are strategies which focus only on the possibilities available. Instead, strategies with a mix of probable possibility are needed. These strategies acknowledge the reality of the uncertain world we live in and see risk, not as a failure, but as a necessary part of learning in any endeavour undertaken. In an unpredictable world, jobseekers who are able to deal with the reality of ambiguity are more likely to be successful in their job search. As with the findings of Bright and Pryor (2008), participants in the study who had a clear sense of purpose about their job search strategy felt less stress than those who tried to impose control over the process.

Information

The twenty-first century is the information age, and we are bombarded with conflicting and often rapidly changing information on a daily basis. Knowledge is power, and in past times information was only accessible by a privileged few. Yet, through tools such as the Internet, access to information is now widely available. This, however, means that it is also very quickly out of date, so it would be very difficult for anyone to claim to have all the knowledge available on a matter. This was illustrated in the case of one of the participants' unsuccessful attempts to be appointed to a particular role when she was confident of appointment through previously being contracted to work in that role. Lack of information on such things as the personal biases of the person making the final decision and the calibre of the other applicants meant she failed to be up to date on the likelihood or otherwise of her being appointed to a job sought, and she was therefore repeatedly disappointed.

Another example of not having all available information is demonstrated by two of the participants giving as the reason for leaving their previous jobs their finding out that those jobs were different to what they thought they were going to be. Even though they thought they had done a thorough investigation into what the jobs would be, the actual job tasks were not what they thought.

Conversely, they, as employees with skills, may not have been what the previous employer thought they would be.

The changing nature of access to knowledge also has implications for the professional role of career advisor. In the past, career advisors were seen as the experts who would know what their clients should do work-wise for the rest of their lives. Instead, career counsellors now need to move from being a source of career information to being a support as people go through job transitions. This shift is evident in the change in terms from career *advisor* to career *counsellor*. When searching for information, not one of the participants privately paid to see an 'expert' (as in a career counsellor) to assist them with their career decisions. Two of the participants saw career counsellors or used the information from a previous visit to a career counsellor, but in both instances the counsellor's fee was paid by their employer. Both saw the information gained from that visit as one piece in the information jigsaw.

In order to attract young job applicants, social networking sites, such as Facebook and YouTube, are being used as portals for employers to provide organisational information and job vacancy information to jobseekers. Jobseekers use the sites to provide information about themselves to those with job vacancies. While some of the women in the study had used the Internet as a source of available job vacancies, none mentioned visiting any social networking sites either to search for vacancies or to advertise their skills and availability. Instead, reference was made to job search sites, such as SEEK.

There is a limit as to how much information, and control over that information, one person can have. The women were divided as to whether to constantly source information or only source it when looking for a new job. They did not personally seek the services of a career counsellor, nor did they use every available information source in their search for available jobs.

Faith and Trust

For those engaged in the world of paid work who seek professional career or job advice, the words 'faith' and 'trust' are important. Traditionally, an employee had faith and trust in the organisation to do right by the employee in relation to

their career (Bluestein, 2006). One participant in the study seemingly subconsciously expected her previous organisation to take care of her career needs and was wounded by the fact that, from her perspective, she had been overlooked for promotion. Even though she realised she had made the decision not to apply for internal promotion, there was a sense the organisation should have been looking out for her, career-wise.

Faith and trust in the process is a major part of any successful job change (Bridges, 1996). While some people rely on their faith in a career counsellor to guide them through job change, faith and trust are also components of the individual's faith in herself and her ability to change. Settled in their new jobs, all participants declared prior faith in their technical ability to do their jobs. This was more firmly stated by those who had a recognised profession or were tertiary qualified. One woman in the study implied that her faith in her technical ability was because she had had good support while learning the role. This was possibly more to do with her growing confidence to actually ask for help. Another woman, although lacking confidence in herself as a person, lacked no confidence in her technical ability.

As organisations are no longer seen as responsible for their employees' career development, it is up to the individual to source career advice (Bluestein, 2006). In contradiction to this notion, as previously mentioned, the two women in the study who had sought professional career advice had done so at the behest of their employers, and the career counsellors' services had been paid for by the employer. For most people, a visit to a career counsellor is a search for being able to predict what type of job they are best suited to, when the possibilities are limited to a set of probabilities. This is a clear example of closed-system thinking. Yet instead, what the women remembered from their sessions was tips on how to present themselves or how to organise their work/life balance.

These examples illustrate changes within the world of work and that traditional career planning is no longer relevant. The client has faith that the counsellor is acting in the client's best interests, as opposed to having faith that the counsellor has control over the job search or career path process. For one of the women, in one instance, the counsellor wanted to have control over the

process, and when the client was not doing what the counsellor wanted, the counsellor lost interest in the client. In this case the counsellor operated from a closed-system perspective.

More importantly than the focus of faith in career counsellors, what was clearly demonstrated by all the women in the study was faith and trust in their own ability to change. This was not an automatic response for all the women, yet it was one to which they all eventually moved. They approached the actual process of change with interest and curiosity.

Conclusion

In order to further understand the women's job change experiences, this chapter analysed the five themes identified from the research findings (change, openness and flexibility, strategies, information, faith and trust). The six women in this study were a diverse group. They had different levels of education, self-confidence and type and level of job experience. The study set out to determine the factors the participants had in common that enabled them to move forward and successfully change jobs.

Regardless of whether the women were initially open to change and opportunity, or trying to keep absolute control over what happened to them, in the end they all moved to being open to opportunity in order to go forward. None of the women had developed any sort of job search plan, yet each of them used strategies aligned with non-linear career models. All the women eventually demonstrated their ability to change and their openness and flexibility.

Qualifications appeared to influence whether the participants were initially more open to probability or possibility thinking, although all participants eventually demonstrated a probability/possibility mix approach. One of the areas where the women's responses were not in alignment with the reviewed literature was in the area of career patterns or reflection. Although some of the participants had looked at what had worked in the past, they did not reflect on how to identify past patterns of behaviour as a strategy to identify potential job change issues

when changing jobs. Reflection would enable the women to develop strategies to smooth future job transitions.

There is a vast number of information sources available to find or use to distribute information about jobs and job applicants, yet the women used traditional information sources to identify job opportunities, such as newspaper job vacancy sections or recruitment agencies. Non-traditional information sources, such as Facebook, LinkedIn or blogs, were not utilised. Surprisingly, the information possibilities relating to being part of a complex matrix were not identified by the participants.

The participants all had faith in their own ability in relation to work. Another important factor demonstrated by the participants was the need for resilience when moving forward. The women did not rely on or put their trust in someone else to find them a job (excluding recruitment agencies); instead, each had faith in her ability to successfully move through the change process. The career paths and actions of the women very clearly reflect the role of chance and unpredictability. The following conclusion explores the 'so what' of the research findings and analyses.

Conclusion

The initial motivation for this thesis was a desire to determine the factors that influenced how some women aged in their 50s successfully changed jobs while others, despite wanting to move on, remained stuck regardless of the amount of support they received. There was one research question which asked: What factors influence successful job change for women aged in their 50s?

The demographics of New Zealand are changing at a rapid rate. By 2012, 21% of workers will be aged over 55 (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). Both men and women face age discrimination in employment, as youth and the stereotypical attributes associated with youth are more valued than age. This highlights the need for changes to employers' attitudes towards older workers. During World War Two women were 'manpowered' into the factories and the land army because of the shortage of able-bodied men. Research indicates that there are still some employers who see older workers as a reserve army to be called upon when no one else is available (Moore, 2009).

This conclusion first addresses the implications of the findings of this study for any women in this cohort who want to change jobs, then outlines the implications of the findings for careers. This is followed by considering the relevance of a feminist perspective and finally the implications of the findings for future research.

Implications of the Study for Older Women Workers

The cohort of women in this study was a product of the baby boomer era, when women were expected to marry, stop work and raise a family. Marriages were meant to last, a husband was expected to support his wife and family financially, and the retirement age was 60, at which stage you would receive a pension. In short, life was defined by stability and predictability. This is in marked contrast to our current reality and particularly so in the job market. Acceptance of this unpredictability facilitates an individual in job change.

While not denying agency for women aged in their 50s, social constructs of aging can constrain the options available to them. Underpinning this research is the acknowledgement that not only are the women marginalised because of their gender, but also because of their age. Employers tend to have preconceived ideas about the type of work suitable for older employees and this limits the types of positions they are offered. Not letting their chronological age be a defining factor in their job search contributes to successful job change for women in this cohort.

Older women can be constrained by employers, other employees and even their own perceptions of older workers. These perceptions include their potential in relation to the type of work they can do and the type of position which they can apply for. For example, believing that older people have difficulty learning new things, particularly with respect to new technology, is a barrier to employment. Yet this belief can become an excuse for women to not extend their own learning and therefore can reinforce the myth.

In New Zealand, legislation prohibiting discrimination in relation to factors such as age and gender should help force a change of attitude. Yet, as the literature demonstrates, employers are still able to subvert the legislation by finding ways around it, for example, promoting youthfulness in advertisements (Wilson & Kan, 2006). While this may not be fair, it is a reality.

As is shown by the findings in this study, women in their 50s can have an active and progressive working future. In order to do so, there are two areas through which they must navigate. Not only do they need to be able to update their job skills in response to rapidly changing technology and processes in order to be able to operate effectively in the workplace, they also need to be able to challenge the socially constructed barriers created by the privileged position of youth over age.

Women aged in their 50s are not at the end of their paid working lives, they are in the middle of it and need to redefine themselves as having potential to progress in their careers or change jobs and organisations. In New Zealand these women could be a major political force. Becoming older is inevitable but,

as the women in this study show, it does not mean a worker is at the end of their career.

Implications for Careers

A contributing factor to successful job change is a non-linear perception of the jobs one has had (or one's career) when transitioning to a new position. Consciously building and updating a portfolio of skills and constantly scanning the horizon to see what skills are required or what positions are available is relevant to changing jobs. This will assist in undermining the image of older workers with outdated and irrelevant skills. Being open to seeing your skills as a portfolio which can be transferred to different types of positions is important, not only for this age group but for anyone operating in the current job market.

Previous behavioural patterns, such as consideration of how past transitions have been handled, or an individual's career resilience, influence the success of future transitions. Also contributing to the successful job change is displaying open-system thinking in taking a risk and actually changing jobs.

The majority of traditional career change models are palpably male-centred. They are based on the experiences of Western, white, middle-class men and fail to take into account two vital points: the ways in which gender is socially constructed and its implications for women in the world of work; and the changes in the traditional male-dominated business world.

Due to the current tightening job market, and a tendency for flatter organisational structures, subjective factors of success, previously the domain of women in low-paid jobs, are becoming relevant to a wider section of society, regardless of age or gender. As is shown by the participants in this study, being able to identify opportunities and being open to what those opportunities have to offer is one of the factors which can contribute to successful job change.

Relevance of a Feminist Perspective

Both first and second waves of feminism focused more on women, middle-aged and younger, and any concern for the aged had more to do with conditions and access to residential care. Second-wave feminism had a focus on inequality in

relation to gender and race, but not age (Calasanti, 2008; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001). One unintentional outcome of this was that feminist priorities have, like the rest of societal priorities in general, contributed to a tendency to render older workers and their needs invisible (Utz & Nordmeyer, 2007).

The third wave of 'do-it-yourself' feminism can likewise be viewed as complacent with respect to their belief that battles for such things as gender equality have been successfully fought. However, while third wave feminists might have youth in their favour, they too need to realise that they will age. The subtlety of age is such that often it only becomes relevant when one ages oneself. Regardless of whether the focus is on third-wave or on ageing second-wave feminists, strategies of agency, resistance and subversion against the discrimination of age and gender need to be implemented. As Coleman (2009, p. 12) states, "The real challenge of practising feminism in a post-feminist age is how committed feminists, of whatever generation, work together in feminist ways in the pursuit of the feminist goals of gender, equity and social justice."

Implications for Future Research

This research counters the societal view of older workers as a last resort. Given the increased age at which a person is entitled to a pension, and removal of compulsory retirement age, a woman in her 50s may have an additional twenty plus years in paid employment. With demographics showing a projected increase in the number of women in this cohort and given our ageing population, there is a need for further investigation into effective career models for older women and particularly the factors that contribute to successful job change.

The women in the study self-defined their job change as successful yet during the interview were not asked whether they did not apply for certain jobs as they believed their age would be an insurmountable barrier. Further study is needed to identify if fear of being labelled an 'older worker' is the reason for avoiding competing for higher level jobs. Moving to part-time work, for example, to make time available to look after an elderly parent, may be a plausible reason for themselves and others for not progressing within the workplace.

Current employment legislation pays lip service to age discrimination, and a more robust legislation, and commitment to it, is needed to stop ageism in the workplace (Wilson & Kan, 2006). Studies such as this one have a place in exposing age discrimination in the workplace.

In relation to career or job change, many areas of marginalisation and agency applicable to this cohort of women remain unexplored. Questions which need to be addressed include: How feminism responds to age discrimination inequalities in relation to older women changing jobs? What the feminist response is to the perpetuation of age discrimination embedded by the women themselves, as they change jobs? and How feminists with differing understandings of feminist actions can unite in relation to age discrimination?

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Participant Pre-interview Questionnaire

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL JOB CHANGE FOR WOMEN AGED IN THEIR FIFTIES

Below are 12 questions I would like you to answer before our interview. Your answers will give me useful background information about you before we have our interview. Please email me your response pjfinnie@clear.net.nz

1. Are you the sole income earner in your household?

2. Do you have any dependents? If so, how many?

3. Do you have a partner in paid work?

4. When did you first think about changing jobs and why?

5. When did you start your new job?

6. Was your previous position dis-established during a restructure?

7. What was the main reason you left your previous job?

8. What do you look for in a job?
9. Has what you look for in a job changed over time? If so, in what way has it changed?
10. Why do you say moving to your present position was a successful job change?
11. In the past when you have changed jobs how have you gone finding another job?
12. How did you find out about your current job?

Researcher – Pam Finnie
Email – pjfinnie@clear.net.nz
Mobile – 027 244 4303

Supervisor – Dr Jenny Coleman
Email – J.D.Coleman@massey.ac.nz
Telephone – 0508 439 677 x 7880



Appendix 2: MUHEC Low Risk Approval

Massey University

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT
TO THE VICE-CHANCELLOR
(RESEARCH ETHICS)
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North 4442
New Zealand
T 64 6 350 5573
64 6 350 5575
F 64 6 350 5622
humanethics@massey.ac.nz
animalethics@massey.ac.nz
gtc@massey.ac.nz
www.massey.ac.nz

24 July 2009

Pamela Finnie
PO Box 8121
NEW PLYMOUTH

Dear Pam

Re: Factors that Contribute to Successful Job Change for Women Aged in their Fifties

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 23 July 2009.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

Please ensure that the following statement is included in all information provided to participants during recruitment (eg, information sheet, preamble to questionnaire, etc):

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research."

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia V Rumball (Professor)
**Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Research Ethics)**

cc Dr Jenny Coleman
School of People, Environment and
Planning
PN331

Mrs Mary Roberts, HoS Secretary
School of People, Environment and
Planning
PN331

Appendix 3: Participant Screening Questionnaire

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL JOB CHANGE FOR WOMEN AGED IN THEIR FIFTIES.

Thank you for your interest in my research project. I have attached a copy of an information sheet which gives more details about the project. If you would like to take part please complete the screening questionnaire below and return it to me:

Email: pjfinnie@clear.net.nz

or

Mail: P O Box 8121
New Plymouth.

I will respond to everyone who completes a screening questionnaire.

Researcher – Pam Finnie **Supervisor** – Dr Jenny Coleman

Email – pjfinnie@clear.net.nz **Email** – J.D.Coleman@massey.ac.nz

Mobile – 027 244 4303 **Telephone** – 0508 439 677 x 7880

FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL JOB CHANGE
FOR WOMEN AGED IN THEIR FIFTIES.

SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

Question	Circle answer
Are you currently in paid employment?	Y N
Was your previous position in paid employment?	Y N
Were you aged in your fifties when you left your previous job and are you currently aged in your fifties?	Y N
Did you start your current job between the beginning of January 2007 and the end of March 2009?	Y N
On a scale of 1–5 (1= unsuccessful 3= successful 5 = extremely successful) what rating would you give to describe the change to your new job?	1 2 3 4 5
Was your decision to leave voluntary (you could have stayed in your old job) or involuntary (for example, organisation closing, your job was dis-established, ill health, partner moving to a new geographical location)?	Voluntary Involuntary



INFORMATION SHEET

Factors that contribute to successful job change
for women aged in their fifties.

THE RESEARCHER

Who is the researcher?

I am completing a thesis for a Master of Philosophy (Women's Studies). I am 49, married, with two children. I have a training and development business, and I live in New Plymouth.

Why are you doing this?

Two reasons:

First, this research project is part of a thesis for my Master of Philosophy (Women's Studies).

Second, I have a fascination with the subject of women and ageing. A number of factors including longer life expectancy, no compulsory retirement, higher divorce rates and a tightening economic environment mean women's working lives are being extended.

In the current environment the career expectations of previous generations, for example, "a job for life", are no longer relevant. The caregiver role taken on by many women, for example, raising children, means that their career needs and experiences are different to men of the same age.

I am interested in how these factors impact on women, aged in their 50s, successfully changing jobs.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

What is the project about?

The purpose of this research is to identify the factors that contribute to successful job change for women aged in their fifties.

PARTICIPANTS

Who are your target participants?

Each woman will be aged in her fifties and have started a new permanent paid (part-time or full-time) job between August 2008 and February 2009. Their previous position will have been a permanent paid (full-time or part-time) job and they will describe the change of job as 'successful'.

Does it matter if I went to a new job within the same organisation?

No.

Does it matter if I went from full-time to part-time or vice versa?

No.

Does it matter if I went from being self-employed to having a permanent job or vice versa?

Yes, for the purposes of this research participants need to move from a permanent job to another permanent job.

How many women will be taking part?

As part of my study I need to interview between eight and ten women aged in their fifties.

How will I find out if I have been selected?

You will be contacted and sent a pre-interview questionnaire to complete.

What happens if I don't get selected?

You will be contacted and told you have not been selected.

What happens if I do the interview and then want to withdraw?

You can withdraw anytime before the 31 August. After that your information will have contributed to the analysis of the results.

How long will it take to be interviewed?

It is likely the total time taken will be between 1 hour 45 minutes and 2 hours 15 minutes.

Pre-screening questionnaire – 5 minutes

Pre-interview questionnaire – 10 minutes

Face-to-face interview – 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes.

Additional contact (if necessary) to clarify points made in the interview – 30 minutes.

PROJECT PROCEDURES

What steps are there in the project?

I have broken the process down into 8 broad steps:

1. Prospective volunteers will respond to a flyer asking for women aged in their fifties to participate in a research project.
2. Each woman who responds will be sent an information sheet and a screening questionnaire to make sure she meets the research criteria.
3. The eight to ten women will then be selected to take part in the project.
4. Each of the selected women will be sent a pre-interview questionnaire to complete. The women not selected to take part will be contacted.
5. In August 2009 all participants will have a face-to-face interview with the researcher. This interview will be audio-recorded.
6. The recording will be analysed and any common themes among participants will be identified.
7. The themes will be compared to current literature relating to change processes.
8. The results will be analysed and the thesis written.

Will people be able to identify my responses?

No, any information in the thesis will be either generalised or anonymous.

What if I meet the criteria and want to take part but can't make it to a face-to-face interview?

We will work around it.

Will I get to see the results?

All participants who request one, will be sent a summary of the research results.

What happens to the audio recordings?

They are stored securely until the thesis has been published and then they are destroyed?

Can I have a copy of my audio recording?

Yes, if you request it you can have an audio copy of your face-to-face interview?

Aside from your thesis for what else will the results be used?

The results of this research will be relevant to people working in the career advice field. I also intend to speak at conferences about the findings.

Researcher – Pam Finnie

Email – pjfinnie@clear.net.nz

Supervisor – Dr Jenny Coleman

Email – J.D.Coleman@massey.ac.nz

Mobile – 027 244 4303

Telephone – 0508 439 677 x 7880

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with anyone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice Chancellor (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.



Appendix 5 – Participant Consent Form

Massey University

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Te Kura Pūkenga Tangata

SCHOOL OF PEOPLE, ENVIRONMENT
AND PLANNING
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North 4442
New Zealand
T 64 6 356 9099
F 64 6 350 5737
www.massey.ac.nz

Factors That Contribute To Successful Job Change For Women In Their Fifties

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Full Name – printed _____

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Appendix 6: Interview Question Guide

POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ENDING PREVIOUS JOB

1. Tell me about your last job?
2. When did you first start thinking about leaving – the first flickering thought that you might leave?
3. Did you want to leave – why or why not?
4. In hindsight, were there any other reasons for leaving?

TRANSITION

1. Starting with when you first thought about leaving, can you give me a time-line of the things you did during that process, until you started in your new job?
2. Once you decided that you would leave (or found out you had to leave) your old job what things did you think about in relation to the type of job you wanted, for example, hours or salary.
3. What were the barriers to making the change? How did you overcome them?
4. What things did you take into account when thinking about the type of job you were looking for? How did you decide what type of job you wanted?
5. How did you go about finding out what jobs were available?
6. How did you find out about the job you got?
7. How many jobs did you apply for before you got this one?
8. What was your attitude and/or feelings as you went through the process?
9. What support did you have as you went through the process?
10. In hindsight, was there support available to you that you didn't use?
11. In the pre-course questionnaire you said this had been a 'successful' job change – what do you mean by 'successful'?
12. What things helped you take steps to find a new job?

THE NEW JOB

- 13. What things made it easier when you started your new job?
- 14. What helped make this a successful job change?
- 15. What was your part in making it a success?

GENERAL

- 16. From your experience what barriers to changing jobs should others be aware of and how should they get over them?
- 17. Is there anything else you would like to add that hasn't been covered?
- 18. What five pieces of advice would you suggest be given to women in your age group who are thinking about changing jobs?

POSSIBLE PROMPTS

- 19. What impact – if any – do you think your age had on the process of changing jobs? Why is that?
- 20. Getting a better 'life balance' is a term heard in relation to changing jobs – did that have any part to play in you changing jobs?
- 21. Were the things you were looking for in a job any different to those you were looking for say when you were in your 30s /20s?
- 22. Was there ever a time when you felt as though you were between two worlds – the old and the new?
- 23. Was there anything about your attitude as you went the process that helped make it a success?
- 24. I'd like to find out a bit more about...