

Mid-Career Change - The Irish Experience

Laura Humphreys

MA in Human Resource Management

Submitted to the National College of Ireland

August 2017

Abstract

Mid-Career Change – The Irish Experience

Laura Humphreys

Mid-career change is a ‘phenomenon’ that has become more prevalent despite being an aspect of career development that has received comparatively limited attention to-date. Therefore, what is it that currently drives individuals to question their occupational choices in mid-life and decide to make a career transition? In this recent era of economic uncertainty and major changes in the workplace, this research sought to identify the significant drivers which activate self-directed mid-career transitions, by examining the experiences of ten Irish professionals who at a given time in their life profoundly questioned their occupational pursuits and voluntarily made a mid-life career change. In addition, this research also uncovered the challenges faced by mid-life career changers and revealed implications for both the individual and the organisations role in the context of future career management perspectives. The findings of this study not only contributes to the current body of literature, but also offers a valuable and fresh understanding of this phenomenon.

A qualitative case study methodology was applied, with data gathering by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants from assorted occupations and sectors within the Irish workforce, who have completed their mid-life career transition. The findings seem to point to mid-life being a period when the participants realised that their self-concept and value base, and by extension their professional ideals, had evolved and changed. In essence what drove their mid-life career change was the undertaking to realign these values with the intent to achieve personal fulfilment with a satisfying work life. Attaining work/life balance, job satisfaction and a sense autonomy were broadly similar underlining intrinsic core values observed in previous studies, however an unanticipated driver, the element of opportunity was also uncovered, a dynamic that had not emerged as extensively in previous studies.

It is evident from the research that mid-career change has become more extensive and that responsibility for managing careers is now firmly with the individual. Therefore in light of the turbulent economic climate, organisations need to realise the importance of implementing a collaborative, effective career management strategy to work together in partnership with the individual, targeted to meet the needs of both, in order to realign and build organisational resilience and gain a competitive edge.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland

Research Students Declaration Form

(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Laura Humphreys

Student Number: 15017257

Degree for which thesis is submitted: Master in Human Resource Management

Material submitted for award

- (a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.
- (b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.
- (c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis reports and projects)
- (d) Either *I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award. Or *I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of

Masters in Human Resource Management

(State the award and the awarding body and list the material below)

Signature of Research Student: _____

Date: _____

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library
National College of Ireland

Student Name: Laura Humphreys

Student Number: 15017257

School: School of Business

Course: Masters in Human Resource Management

Degree to be awarded: MA Human Resource Management

Title of Thesis: Mid-Career Change – The Irish Experience

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (<http://trap.ncirl.ie/>), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository.

In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access.

I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library.

I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate: _____

For completion by the School:

The aforementioned thesis was received by _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and express my sincerest gratitude to all the participants for their significant input and invaluable role in this research. Thank you all for your honest and insightful contributions.

My thanks also is extended to my supervisor Dr. Julius Nyiawung and to my classmates, the lecturers and support staff in National College of Ireland for all their guidance and support.

Finally, I wish to thank my father and my family of friends, who were a constant collective companion supporting me throughout this endeavour.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Thesis Declaration Form.....	iii
Thesis Submission Form.....	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Appendices.....	viii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	9
1.1 Introduction	9
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Career Development	12
2.3 New Career Concepts.....	13
2.4 Career Management	14
2.5 Career Change	15
2.6 Mid-Life Career Change	16
2.7 Drivers of Career Change.....	17
2.8 Challenges to Mid-Career Transition.....	18
2.9 Conclusion.....	20
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....	21
3.1 Introduction	21
3.2 Research Approach	21
3.3 Research Methodology.....	22
3.4 Data Collection Methods.....	22
3.5 Pilot Study	24
3.6 Validity.....	25
3.7 Ethical and Confidential Considerations.....	25
3.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation	26
3.9 Conclusion.....	26

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS	28
4.1 Introduction	28
4.2 The Mid-Life Moment	28
4.3 Values.....	29
4.4 The Principal Drivers of Mid-Career Change	30
4.4.1 Work-Life Conflict.....	30
4.4.2 Job Dissatisfaction.....	32
4.4.3 Autonomy	33
4.4.4 Opportunity	34
4.5 Mid-Career Catalysts	36
4.6 Challenges to Mid-Career Change.....	36
4.7 Life after Mid-Career Change	38
4.8 Analysis of Findings	38
4.9 Summary of Findings.....	43
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	44
5.1 Introduction	44
5.2 Discussion	44
5.3 Implications of the Study	46
5.3 Limitations of the Study.....	46
5.4 Conclusion.....	47
5.5 Recommendations.....	48
5.6 Personal Learning Statement.....	50
References	51

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - List of Participants..... 24

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A - Interview Questions..... 60
Appendix B - Interview Constant Form 61
Appendix C - Creswell’s Six Step Analysis in Qualitative Research 62

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Mid-life career transitions may be an exciting phase, however it can also be an overwhelming prospect. The stakes are different from when initial career choices were made and there are many new obstacles likely to hinder the process. The nature of the workplace is experiencing significant changes and with it the notion of a career or ‘job for life’ is also eroding (Whyman and Eilis, 1999). Despite these ‘uncertain times’, the phenomenon of changing careers in mid-life is increasing and becoming a viable option (Holmes and Cartwright, 1996). McGinley, O’Neill, Damaske and Mattila (2014) note that while studies into the topic of career management is growing this researcher agrees that there has been inadequate research and focus on career transitions, particularly in mid-life (Maddox-Daines, 2015, Teixeira and Gomes, 2000; Mallon, 1999; Holms and Cartwright, 1993).

As mid-career change is becoming more prevalent, this researcher is cognisant of the lack of attention this subject has received with the recognition that more research is needed to explore the motives behind self-directed mid-career change (Lyons and Schweitzer, 2015; Maddox-Daines, 2015; Teixeira and Gomes, 2000). With “insufficient hypotheses” (Brown, 1985, p.370) on mid-life career transition, what drives individuals in mid-life to question their occupational choices and decide to make a career change? While this subject has been addressed in many guises including adult development, occupational choice and career development (Bahr, 2009, p.9), few studies have examined the “lived experiences of the individuals participating in this (mid-life career transition) process” (Motulsky, 2005, p.8-9). Therefore the intent of this study was to examine the experiences of mid-career change from the viewpoint of Irish professionals and to identify the key drivers that motivated their decision to switch careers in mid-life.

For this purpose of this study, career change was guided by the notion there was a transition to a totally a new occupation (Feldman, 2002; Lawrence, 1980), with mid-life deemed the period between the age of 35 and 65 years (Barclay, Stoltz and Chung, 2011; Vander Zanden, 2000). While previous research into mid-life career change has principally concentrated on specific professions, themes or genders (Howes and Goodman-Delhunty, 2013; Bahr, 2009; Khapova, Arthur, Wildersom and Svensson, 2007; Wise and Milward, 2005; Teixeria and Gomes, 2000), this research had the marked intent of examining the specific drivers that prompted Irish

individuals in mid-life, regardless of gender, previous profession or sector, to reconsider their work/career and to seek out their career “path with a heart” (Khapova et al., 2007, p.548; Hall, 2004). Valuable career management lessons can be learned for individuals as well as organisations, as understanding more about why these “contemporary career transitions” (Mallon, 1999, p.358) are becoming more evident may be viewed as a “value proposition” (Noe, 2017b, p.5).

In the following chapter career development, career management and career change are reviewed. Career theories both ‘old’ and ‘new’ are evaluated as well as mid-life and what it means to the individual in terms of career reappraisal and change. This chapter also notes that now more than ever career change is being managed by the individual and addresses the challenges that self-directed mid-career changers face. Other empirical studies on mid-career transitions are mentioned throughout, giving context and a frame of reference for this research. Chapter three illustrates the research methodology and the approach employed. Elements including data collection and analysis methods are outlined and considerations regarding ethical validity and interpretation issues are also described. Presentation of the findings are proffered in chapter four and then examined and analysed in relation to the research questions, objectives and established knowledge and literature, providing imperative insights into the key drivers of self-directed career transitions.

Finally chapter five discusses and highlights pertinent insights of this study with considerations given to the limitations of this research and areas for further study. The implications are also indicated for the individual which could enhance not only the understanding and awareness of mid-career change by “developing a new knowing why” (Mallon, 1999, p.358), but could also have a wide reaching implications for organisations. Recommendations for organisational career management strategies are extended, focused to help position and align the new modern careers while adjusting to the shifting demands and challenges of the twenty-first century economy.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a review of literature which captures the constructs of contemporary career development, management and change, grounded in an unsettled economy coupled by an evolving working landscape which has projected the issue of occupational choices and mid-career changes to the forefront, challenging the customary view of career evolution.

Initially this chapter will begin by presenting insights on career development drawn principally from Donal Super's (1990) seminal theory on career development, followed by an appreciation of the emerging new contemporary career concepts for the twenty first century. Career change in light of the diminishing view of the 'job for life' and the turbulent economic climate will be examined as well as reviewing the current career management issues and opportunities, noting the growing importance of the 'buy in' factor for organisations. This will be followed by consideration given to the significance of mid-life to career change, despite there being no generally accepted theory on mid-life career transitions. Furthermore the possible drivers of and challenges to mid-career change, as expressed in previous studies will be defined, presented and carefully examined, providing the context for this research.

While some limited studies have been carried out on mid-career transitions, few have been researched in an era of global economic uncertainty and none specifically in an Irish context. This study has the unique intent of examining how and why Irish individuals in mid-life, regardless of gender or previous profession, reconsidered the nature of their personal and professional lives and sought out a new career. As the traditional bureaucratic career vanishes, Kidd (1998) emphasises that "recognising subjective views of careers is... the only way to find any coherence in working lives" (Furner, 2013, p.6; Kidd, 1998, p.276).

2.2 Career Development

Theory on career development can be split into two groups the 'established' and 'emerging' theories (Wise and Millward, 2005). The former group represents the traditional fixed, linear, view of career and the latter group regard career development as a being multifaceted, multidirectional, evolving process. While initial indications would suggest that there is

irreconcilable difference of opinions, this researcher considers both paradigms can contribute to the understanding of ‘contemporary careers’ and the mid-career transition process (Wise and Millward, 2005; Kidd, 2004).

There are several theories on career development, with only some of these theories still standing the test of time. One of those being Donald Super’s (1954) Theory of Vocational Choice, which he continually adapted and evolved through the decades and in the 1990s it evolved as the Life Span, Life Space Theory. This researcher would suggest that Super’s (1990) research marked a change in the way theorists formulated their ideas on career development, as up until then it was more about trait matching personality with vocation.

Super (1990) identified that an individual’s self-concept could morph eventually due to distinctive personal and situational life experiences. These experiences coalesce to form life-roles and self-concepts which extends to individuals career development tasks which must be handled successfully to effectively manage career development. Super’s (1990) self-concept notion is the idea that our own identity and by extension our career identity are outcomes of how we view ourselves. The researcher agrees with Teixeira and Gomes (2000) that in mid-career change the impact of professional and personal identity cannot be ignored. This innovative idea that self-concept had a massive impact on the field of career development emphasised that as a person over time refines their self-concept thereby affecting their application to the world of work and expressed by altering career choices.

Although ground-breaking in terms of career development, this researcher suggests that Super’s (1990) theory is based solely on male experiences and did neglect women, people of colour and the socio-economic disadvantaged. The researcher agrees with Kerka (1992) that women’s careers can be less linear than men’s due to choices made to interrupt their career process to take time out, for example to have children, and while they may still achieve the identical development tasks it would happen at altered stages in the life cycle. Traditional development models are highly rigid and prescriptive of stages of age and order and researchers have been challenging the legitimacy of age related phases as well as pointing out that further social and environmental impacts are also experienced differently and at different stages, especially by minority groups (Kerka,1992).

Wise and Millward (2005) write that traditional development models also endorse the idea that career process is hierarchical, in a linear and upward form, and propose that this notion seems to have restricted significance and is “dissolving in the face of organisational change”

(Duberley, Mallon and Cohen, 2006, p.282) driven by the individual and their personal evaluation of career. Recent studies on career development and career transitions maintain the breakdown of the 'old' traditional fixed career path coupled with the ever changing nature of the world of work and the opportunities for "new beginnings in careers" is intensifying (Duberley et al., 2006, p.283; Sullivan, 1999; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996).

2.3 New Career Concepts

In these current uncertain times, underpinned by worldwide economic turbulence reflected in the labour markets, this researcher suggests that it has never been more evident that 'change is the only constant'. The move away from of the traditional career is broadly acknowledged (Mallon, 1999; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Bridges, 1995; Handy, 1994). Previously, it was the norm to have a 'job for life' and 'to work your way up the ladder' being rewarded in return for good work and dedication within one company or sector until retirement (Coutinhi, Dam and Blustein, 2008; Hall, 2004; Savickas 2000; Hall & Mirvis, 1996). It was during this time that the view of career, a series of job-roles of increasing responsibility and rewards, (Coutinhi et al., 2008; Blustein, 2006; Savickas, 2000) was developed however, these once valued milestones and constructs which fortified traditional career paths are becoming less common (Coutinhi et al., 2008; Wise and Millward, 2005, p.400).

While some research declares "the career is dead long live the career" (Hall, 1996, p.8; Mallon 1991, p.358) others scholars do not share this assessment, arguing that the tradition full-time employment remains the norm (Rodrigues and Guest, 2010; Lloyd and Bereznicki, 1998). However this researcher considers that the latter sentiment does not reflect the unstable nature of the economic environment or the needs and motives of the individual, and agrees that it has become ever more apparent that careers are needed to be re-framed as the "organisational career is dead" (Hall, 1996 p.8). With the suggested passing of 'traditional' careers, comes emergence of the 'new' boundaryless career (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). These multidirectional career-paths offer greater mobility, crossing boundaries of jobs and organisations requiring transferable competencies that can extent to multiple organisations (Lyons, Schweitzer and Ng, 2012, p.9-10).

Hall (1996) predicated for the twenty first century a new career contract, the protean career, would become the more the norm. This new career paradigm shift suggests a consequence due

to the altering of the psychological contract becoming intensely transactional in nature. (Coutinho et al., 2006; Wise and Millward, 2005). Those with a protean orientation are less concerned with organisational recompenses and more driven by motives of “autonomy, personal values and psychological success” (Noe, 2017b, p.9). This is a career managed and steered by the individual and which could be reframed at different stages as the individual or environment transforms. This emerging career path, grounded in ongoing learning and identity change, has replaced the customary “career path to the top by a path with a heart” (Hall, 1996, p.9). No longer is the transition to and an adoption of a new career to be viewed as a peculiarity or as a failure but should, this researcher contends reflect the “zeitgeist”(Mallon, 1999, p.385).

It was almost fifty years ago that research began to recognise that the idea of the “career for life” (Holmes and Cartwright, 1993, p.37) was no longer imperative. In an era of a rapidly changing business environment, where the connotation of “career success” (Hind, 2005, p.273) is now altered, now being gauged against aligning value systems and attaining balance, there is a growing acknowledgement that the idea of boundaryless and protean, even the portfolio and kaleidoscope, careers paths are now more recognisable and accepted (Hall, 1996).

2.4 Career Management

Acute economic difficulties have emerged worldwide, advanced by what many researchers acknowledge as range of factors including automation, globalisation, rapid technological improvements, new attitudes towards work and increasing labour mobility (Brimrose, Barabasch, Brown and Mulvey 2015; Hall, 1996; Kerka, 1991). In order to survive economically organisations have and will face the need to change, adapting to meet, maintain and ultimately sustain the rapid pace of the new emerging economic landscape.

Faced with the reality that the idea of the job for life is swiftly diminishing, growing instability in contracts of employment, crucial changes in the workplace (Zikic, Novicevic, Harvey & Breland, 2005) and the altering of the psychological contract (Hall, 1996) has significantly prompted individuals to engage in exploring career options and alternatives and making significant career decisions. Nonetheless this researcher asserts that from a career management perspective this ‘era’ affords businesses a great opportunity to simultaneously achieve both organisational goals and interests of high performing individuals. With Noe (2017) warning of the organisational risks of non-engagement in meaningful career management could be massive

in terms current and future business needs. Failure to engage in career management often leaves employees undervalued and frustrated while organisations risk high turnover, engagement in erroneous learning and development strategies resulting in shortages of talent and gaps in the succession plan.

In this time of global organisational transformation, this researcher agrees that never before has there been a time when the career is being driven more by the individual (CIPD, 2016; Noe, 2017; Hall, 1996; Kanter, 1990) encountering unique issues and challenges while negotiating and managing their mid-career transitions (Brimrose et al., 2015; Fredrichson, Macy and Vickers, 1978). However this researcher proposes that while the responsibility for driving careers has become a “more of a personal quest and much less of an organisational one” (Whymark and Eilis, 1999, p.117), it offers employers a prime opportunity to engage in careers management partnerships with employees with the purpose of aligning organisational and individual needs (CIPD, 2016; Noe, 2017).

2.5 Career Change

With the rapid changes in the economic landscape, it seems that a “lifelong career is not the norm” (Hall, 1996, p.9) in the twenty first century. Current thinking on career development echo similar sentiments (Brushfield, 2016; CIPD, 2016, 2010; O’Donoghue, 2015; Usborne, 2014) suggesting that workers should no longer anticipate to secure a life-long career and should expect to make career transitions at some stage in their professional lifetime. Job changes and turnovers happen regularly from a switch to a comparable job with another employer or to a role that involves the route of the ‘normal’ career path (McGinley et al., 2014). However for the purpose of this study, the notion of what represents a career transition will be guided by Feldman’s (2002) interpretation that transition of careers occurs for people upon “entry into a new occupation which requires fundamentally different skills” (Feldman, 2002, p.76).

The necessities for career change are diverse and numerous (Phanse and Kaur, 2015; Holms and Cartwright, 1994) but may be related to ineffective initial career choice, implying that it might be particularly tough to make career decisions at an early stage in ones career (Bandura, 1982). Ibarra (2004) concurs, asserting that career change happens later in an individual’s work-life and is seldomly guided by organisational processes but directed by the individual.

The phenomenon of changing careers to a completely new occupation is also now not that uncommon, and even more socially accepted (Barclay et al., 2011; Wise and Millward, 2005; Teixeira and Gomes, 2000; Kerka, 1991) as workers no longer have the same expectations, relying more on their own resources and are readily accepting responsibility for their own career management (Lloyd and Bereznicki, 1998, p.268).

2.6 Mid-Life Career Change

Mid-career can often be referred to as mid-life, mid-adulthood or middle age and while career transitions can happen at any period of life, mid-life has been noted in literature as an imperative time for change (Barclay et al., 2011; Heppner, Multon and Johnston, 1994). While the exact scheduling of mid-life assessment is still up for debate, for the purpose of this study ‘mid-life’ will be identified as the period between the age of 35 and 65 years (Barclay et al., 2011; Vander Zanden, 2000). This is a very important transitioning time as it can be a time during which individuals may question and audit themselves, re-examining the direction they are going and their intentions for their future lives both personally and professionally, “a time of looking back and at the same time looking forward” (Oplatka, Bargal and Inbar, 2001; Vander Zanden, 2000 p.488; Amos-Wilson, 1996; Williams and Savickas, 1990; Riverin-Simard, 1988).

McAdams (1999) suggests that when people enter the mid-way point of their own career journey, they will often tweak and make small modifications to their own career path. However, the reframing process is substantial as it can comprise of a complete move away from primary career identities (Brown and Brimrose, 2014). Whether this critical change of career direction, is as Brown (2015) suggests, internally stimulated or may be given momentum by external events, scholars proposing “the leading edge careers” (Mallon, 1999, p.358) claim that mid-life career experiences do not follow the customary traditional linear career development direction (Maddox-Daines, 2015; Ibarra, 1999). This research asserts that as mid-career changes become more commonplace, examining and understanding what drives individuals to profoundly “change and reframe their career identities” can offer valuable insights (Brown, 2015, p.2; Brown and Brimrose, 2015).

2.7 Drivers of Career Change

What is it that drives individuals to begin to question their occupational choices and decide to make a mid-life career change? Previous studies into mid-life career change have concentrated on specific areas, featuring particular occupations/professions including Hotel Managers, IT Professionals, Artists, School Teachers and Police Officers (Hennekam and Bennett, 2015; Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2013; Shropshire and Kadlec, 2012; McGinley, 2012), particular themes, for example self-identity, self-renewal, values, experiences, barriers, patterns and implications (Brown, 2015; Lyons et al., 2015; Phanse and Kaur, 2015; Teixeira and Gomes, 2000; Holmes and Cartwright, 1993, 1994; Perosa and Perosa, 1984) and gender issues (Sterrett, 1999; Bahr, 2009).

While studies in mid-career transition have focused on different perspectives, this researcher asserts that embedded in these findings is a coherence with the elements that drive mid-career change. This researcher contends that while the reasons for mid-career transition may be diverse and numerous, previous research generally considers them in two broad categories, intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of mid-career change. This research will be studying the issue of mid-career transition with the intent of identifying the predominant drivers of mid-career change amongst Irish adults who at a particular time, intensely questioned their professional pursuits and embarked on a mid-career change, the most “radical of all shifts in mid-adulthood” (Kerka, 1991, p.1).

Intrinsic drivers of career change include job interest, satisfaction, creativity, innovation (Holmes and Cartwright, 1994; Hall, 1991; Rhodes and Doering, 1983) congruence with personal values (Armstrong-Stassen and Cameron, 2005; Hind, 2005; Wise and Millward, 2005; Teixeira and Gomez, 2000; Holmes and Cartwright, 1994) work-life balance (Hind, 2005; Allen, Herst, Bruck and Sutton, 2000; Holmes and Cartwright, 1994; Kanchier and Unruh, 1988) harmony of self and professional identity (Brown 2015; Khapova et al., 2007; Ibarra, 2004; Teixeira and Gomez, 2000) and autonomy (Eaton-Walley and Lowe, 2013, Green, 2008). Examples of extrinsic factors include better pay, prospects, status and job security (McGinley 2012; Shropshire and Kadlec, 2012; Bahr, 2009; Holmes and Cartwright, 1994, 1993; Coe and Stark, 1991).

While literature contends that there can be several drivers of career change, the researcher found that work related motivation theories as well as the previous research signify vocational choice and ensuing mid-career change decisions refer to internal motives rather than external

factors as having a greater influence (Green, Hemmings and Green, 2007) and this is now thought to be “the norm among 30-50 year olds” (Holmes and Cartwright, 1994, p.59). These innate personal attributes, beliefs, values and experiences are inherently linked to how people define themselves in a professional role and that as these evolving self-conceptions change they can also motivate a change from an established career path (Ibarra, 2004, p.6; Super, 1990). This researcher contends that this echoes Super’s (1990) contention of the integral link between self-concept and professional identity with Hall (1976) going further by proposing that when the intrinsic elements are unified, this is often an indicator of success (Noe, 2017b, p.8; Green et al., 2007).

Furthermore studies have also revealed that whether voluntary or involuntary, mid-career change can be marked by range of factors or by “turning points” (Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2013, p.63) in one’s career development. Brown (2015) suggests that changes in career direction may be internally fuelled, an original career ambition was not accomplished or needs, interests, values may have changed or may gather momentum by external expected or unexpected life occurrences including marriage, divorce, illness, redundancy. Globalisation and the current economic uncertainty evident by organisational downsizing, outsourcing, work role changes, has sent job security and stability into question. Coupled with longer life expectancy, the extension of the retirement age and economic necessity, have all fuelled the changing nature of work and concept of career. These could well be the “trigger events” (Ibarra, 2004, p.9) that act as catalysts for career changes (Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2014, p.62-63; Zitton, 2009; Duberley et al., 2006; Ibarra, 2004, 2003; Teixeira and Gomes, 2000). With the responsibility for career management now firmly back in the hands of the individual coupled with the turbulent nature of the economic landscape, understanding and managing the process of change is the obvious key to career transition success, relying on “proactive, strategic planning and careful management” (Hind, 2005, p.268) by the individual.

2.8 Challenges to Mid-Career Transition

Transitions and changes at any time in an individual’s life can be exciting but yet can still be an unnerving time. Fear of the unknown, anxiety of getting it wrong can weigh heavily. The researcher asserts that changing career is demanding and comes with its own apprehension, but making this career switch in mid-adulthood, midway through your working life, not only must be overwhelming but brings another level of challenges and adjustments.

Fredrickson et al. (1978) affirm that the main challenges mid-life career changers confront include critical economic, educational and psychological elements. Duberley et al. (2007) refer to the shadier side of mid-career change recognising the probable financial requirements while outlining the difficulty of self-managing the mid-career transition. Holms and Cartwright (1993) deem the main constraints to that mid-career transitions may be the requirement to re-train, decrease in income and status, lack of confidence and family support.

Further practical obstacles of mid-career transition have been accredited as including scarcity of training opportunities and “ageism at an attitudinal level” (Arrowsmith and McGolderick, 1997, p.272; Holms and Cartwright, 1993, p.48). The World Health Organisation (2017) report that employers often have negative attitudes towards older workers and Holms and Cartwright (1993) contend that this is a key deterrent to mid-life change. This researcher agrees that employers have to address the issues of lingering ‘ageism’, and further maintains that although there are wide-reaching training and educational opportunities available, there is a deficit of knowledge and awareness of how to access these educational opportunities. This combined with lack of access to adult career guidance/management services offering accurate, current and local information on different occupations, routes, choices and financial supports available is more indicative of the issue.

Brown (2015) and Savickas (2012) highlight the role and importance of significant others. These observations chime with the findings of McApline, Amudsen and Turners (2014) report that career changers may depend on their “career cheerleaders” (Hosty, 2017), namely their close long standing relationships, for emotional support and advice. Ibarra (2003) agrees, and extends this reach to that of friends, extended family and work associates, writing that they can also hold an individual back from making the career change due to “scepticism, conservatism and pigeonholing” (Ibarra, 2004, p.8) and potential mid-career changers may re-think or even dismiss their own aspirations to conform with what society expects of them.

With the fear and stress that falling income levels and status may bring, the repercussions and sacrifices that would have to be made, coupled with social and psychological stressors, the potential financial cost of private career guidance services and further training and education, illustrates some potential challenges confronted by the “pioneers of new career forms” (Duberley et al., 2007, p.289).

2.9 Conclusion

A mid-life career transition may be an exciting phase, however it can also be a frightening prospect. The motives and the stakes are different from when initial career choices were made with many new challenges likely to deter the transition process. As mid-career change is becoming more prevalent the link proposed by Super (1990) between an individual's professional and personal identity cannot be ignored. The notion of the job or career for life has significantly diminished with the emergence of the new career concepts, coupled with changes in the world of work and in these turbulent economic times individuals are now navigating their own career trajectory choosing to view a mid-life career transition as a viable option. Valuable career management insights may be gained for the individuals and organisations alike, as understanding why these contemporary mid-career transitions are becoming more apparent may be regarded as a valued commodity (Noe, 2017b).

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the rationale for the selection of the particular research approach and methodology for this study. As mid-career change in an Irish context embedded in an era of global economic uncertainty has yet to be investigated, the application of a robust research approach and methodology to best analyse and convey the mid-career experiences and allow for an in-depth understanding was imperative.

This chapter will begin by discussing the benefits and advantages of adopting a qualitative approach complimented by case study methodology. The data collection methods are then outlined with the importance of purposeful selection to the research objective addressed. The significance of having a pilot study is then considered followed by the implementation of the necessary elements to maximise validity are confirmed. Ethical and confidential concerns are referred and finally the data analysis methods and interpretation issues are also presented.

3.2 Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach to examine and ascertain significant insights and understandings into the topic of mid-career change as experienced by Irish professionals. Creswell (2007) points out that qualitative approaches are valuable when implementing research with an understudied group and McGinley (2012) indicates that the qualitative approach may provide a clearer picture of career change than presently exists in current literature.

Several studies on career change and development are grounded in quantitative analysis, with information gathered by means of self-reporting type questionnaires intended to gauge variables purportedly connected to career change (Super and Savickas, 1996). This researcher argues that this approach solely allows the participations to provide information but not to communicate the “meaning of their experience” (Teixeria and Gomes, 2000, p.70), limiting the richness of understanding of the holistic experience of the career change process and therefore a qualitative approach was adopted in this study.

This researcher in utilising the qualitative approach did not aim to generate ‘universal truths’ but rather endeavoured to accumulate significant “local knowledges” (Woolfe, Dryden and Strawbridge, 2003, p.153). This approach allowed the researcher to explore the contemporary phenomenon of mid-career change within a real-life Irish context offering an in-depth understanding while also adding to the discourse of mid-career change. The researcher intended to amplify awareness of overlooked experience of mid-career change and to generate dialogue, which “can lead to better understanding of the way things appear... and through that insight lead to improvements in practice” (Barritt, 1986, p.20).

3.3 Research Methodology

Stake (1995) suggests that case study methodology allows the researcher to extensively examine events, situations, activities and processes. While other dynamic methods including interpretative phenomenological analysis may also present insights that may enhance the comprehension of contemporary career transitions (Wise and Millward, 2005), this researcher suggests that the case study method develops detailed intense knowledge about phenomena and is effective in “examining levels of complexity that might otherwise be difficult to reveal” (Antonesca, 2006, p.71).

Notwithstanding that the case study approach rarely provides generalisation to a larger population (Yin, 1984), this researcher concurs that the strength and true essence of the case study method is its flexibility (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw and Casey, 2015; Antonesca, 2006) and ability to explore and investigate in-depth “a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context” (Yin 1984, p.23). When considering a holistic, comprehensive investigation the qualitative case study strategy is a “robust research method” (Zainal, 2007, p.1) and offers the best possibility of providing previous unknown insights.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

As the case study methodology benefits from having multiple sources of evidence, this ensured the robustness of this study (Yin, 2009). The primary data source for this study took the form of semi-structure interviews, guided by open ended questions with the intention of allowing the participant tell their own career narrative. Hennekam and Bennett (2015) note that the

narrative allows the participant to explain their career change experience while giving the researcher an added opportunity to garner additional understanding of the career transition process (Ibarra, 2003). This method of collecting data allowed the participant to express a holistic, clear account of their experiences of their mid-career change.

The interviews were used as the primary data source for this research as they enabled the researcher to place “behaviour in context and provides access to understand their action” (Seidman, 1998, p.128). The interview questions were based on initial career/course choices, motivations, both intrinsic and external for changing careers, influence of self-concept in the decision to career change and the obstacles faced throughout the career transition experience (See Appendix A). The interviews did not exceed 120 minutes and were recorded and transcribed to safeguard the complexity and authenticity of the information gathered. This process did evoke and reveal “rich data” (Charmaz, 1995, p.33) from the participants and also permitted for data triangulation of information attained from other sources enhancing the credibility and reliability of the findings (Dodge, 2011; Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995). The researcher agrees with Dodge (2011) and Yin (2009) that triangulation is vital to carrying out a case study in connecting together the varying sources of data, to ensure that all results echo the participants’ understandings as precisely as possible.

Antonesa (2006) recommends that the researcher should go to where the answers to the research questions gives the greatest possibility to be obtained. Given the nature of this study, finding a closely defined group of whom the research question was significant and matched the purpose of the study was essential (Stake, 1994). All participants for this research were “selected deliberately” (Maxwell, 2005 p.88) due to having a lived experience of a mid-career transition and are “information rich” (Patton, 2002) and this researcher agrees that they were best placed “to achieve a depth of understanding” (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood, 2013, p.2).

Ten participants took part in this research, an equal proportion of male and female, all of whom have experienced a significant career change in mid-adulthood. At the time of interview all participants were over 35 and under 65 years of age and all had completed their career transition, however the length of time in the new career varied. Both public and private sectors of employment were represented. None of the participants know each other and all originate from both rural and urban areas with various levels of education. While all participants originate from different parts of the Republic of Ireland, they are currently based within the

eastern board of the country. The researcher does not know any of the participants personally and therefore did not have any preconceptions or advanced knowledge of the details of the participant’s career change narrative.

The researcher also carried out a pilot study on two participants, one male and one female. This was to ensure the researcher’s interview questions were unambiguous, clear and pertinent and also allowed the researcher to adjust and make any necessary amendments.

Table 1 – List of Participants

Participant No.	Code	Gender	Age	Former Career	New Career	Study
1.	P1	M	41	Salesman	Healthcare Professional	Pilot
2.	P2	M	51	HR Manager	Psychotherapist	Main
3.	P3	M	48	Truck Driver	Librarian	Main
4.	P4	M	53	Police Officer	Solicitor	Main
5.	P5	M	58	Logistical Manager	College Lecturer	Main
6.	P6	F	63	Teacher	Acupuncturist	Pilot
7.	P7	F	35	Event Manager	Teacher	Main
8.	P8	F	45	Air Hostess	Entrepreneur	Main
9.	P9	F	41	Teacher	Solicitor	Main
10.	P10	F	38	Nurse	Solicitor	Main

3.5 Pilot study

Researchers have argued that pilot studies are not necessary with qualitative research (Holloway, 1997) as they can be time consuming and beset with unforeseen issues (Mason and Zuercher, 1998). However the researcher contests this notion, suggesting that pilot studies can be “crucial” to a good study design (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001, p.1). The main objective for completing this pilot study was to ‘trial run’ the semi-structured interview

scenario in the hope that it would offer an ‘advance warning’ for any unanticipated problems and indicate direction in terms of alterations and improvements that could be made to the study design. It also offered a unique opportunity to improve the skills of the researcher and, as a consequence, enhanced credibility of the qualitative research (Janghorban, Roudsari and Taghipour, 2014, p.4). Concerns are also raised in literature suggesting that the use of pilot study participants as part of the main study may contaminate the findings, however this researcher agrees with Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) that as the sample of this study is relatively small, to exclude the pilot study participants would significantly reduce the overall body of findings.

3.6 Validity

A sample pilot study was undertaken to ensure that the interviews would meet the requirements of the research objectives with all amendments carried out prior to the main sample being interviewed. The researcher at all times remained impartial and congruent throughout the interviews. The authenticity of the interviews and their content was ensured through the recording and transcription by the researcher. In the analysis phase the data was rechecked and read several times to ensure that it reflected a complete and correct portrayal of what was said in the interviews (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). The researcher also triangulated multiple data sources to confirm transpiring findings and to build justifiable themes, a process which added to the validity of the study (Crewsell, 2014; Yin 2009; Stake, 1995).

3.7 Ethical and Confidential Considerations

All participants took part in this research on a voluntary basis and their true identities remained anonymous throughout the study. To protect identities each participant was assigned a letter number code, for example participant no.1 was represented in this study as P1 and so on. The five male participants were assigned the first five numbers, 1-5 and the female participants were assigned the following five numbers, 6-10. Participants were completely briefed as to the nature of the research and informed as to how the information would be collected, recorded, kept safe and conveyed. All participants were advised as to their entitlement to extract themselves from partaking in the study at any time. Confidentiality was afforded to participants

and adhered to by the researcher at all times. Participants were invited to sign an informed consent document before the interview stage of the study began (See Appendix B).

3.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study as customary to all qualitative research, data analysis proceeded concurrently with the processes of purposeful selection, data generation and the writing up of findings (Creswell, 2014; Antonesa, 2006). While there may be no universal convention for analysing qualitative data (Houghton et al., 2015, p.9), this study followed Creswell's (2014) interactive six steps during the data analysis process (See Appendix C). The strong "recursive element" (Dodge, 2011, p.57) to this process of analysis greatly lent itself to the researchers objective to find and extract themes from the data collected (Burnard and Morrison, 1994). Transcripts of all the interviews and notes taken from the field notes were iteratively read and coded in relation to the themes and issues which emerged from the literature review, as those most critical for exploration of the dynamics of mid-career change. The researcher expected some of these themes to be clearly expressed however others were somewhat latent (Howes and Delahunty-Goodman, 2014). This researcher was aware that to put these themes together involved "weighing up the salience and dynamics of issues and searching for a structure rather than a multiplicity of evidence" (Wise and Millward, 2005, p.403; Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, p.54). Interpretation of the data began by asking "what were the lessons learned?" (Creswell 2014, p.200). Staying with this notion Creswell (2014) indicated that the research findings would "confirm past information or diverge from it" (Creswell 2014, p.200), and may also suggest new questions, call for additional research and action that may be required through further studies.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the rationale for the selection of the qualitative research approach complimented by case study methodology which would effectively and clearly express the experiences and grant an in-depth understanding of mid-career change, set in an Irish context in an era of economic uncertainty. The data collection and data analysis methods were also presented, with the matters regarding ethical, validity and interpretation also proffered. This

research approach and methodology chosen is considered by the researcher as a rigorous strategy which allowed for a comprehensive grasp of the issue in a holistic and considered manner providing significant insights regarding why these “contemporary career transitions” (Mallon, 1999, p.358) have become more prevalent in an Irish context.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research undertaken to reveal the prevailing drivers of mid-career change and the challenges faced by ten Irish participants who at a given time in their life profoundly questioned their professional pursuits and embarked on changing careers, “the most radical of all shifts in mid-adulthood” (Kerka, 1991, p.1).

The research objective was to uncover the prevailing drivers of mid-career change from among Irish professionals. The participants themselves have extremely different backgrounds, levels of initial education, family and civil status and while the number of participants in this study is relatively small, it is gender balanced. Nonetheless while their individual stories differ considerably, shared themes emerged uncovering the predominating drivers of mid-career change among these Irish professionals. The findings also revealed other important and unanticipated aspects indicating that the current study offers valuable lessons to individuals who maybe thinking of a mid-career change and also to organisations who could benefit from embracing a more holistic career management strategy.

A considered analysis of the findings is presented in relation to the main research question, objectives and the existing knowledge. To demonstrate the value of the research, clear links were made underlining how the research findings reflects, varies from and extends current knowledge of mid-career change, an aspect of career development that literature suggested has had insufficient attention.

4.2 The Mid-Life Moment

Mid-life has been signified in literature as a time of recollection, re-vigour and renewal, a time for reflection denoting an auditing period in one’s life. It was apparent from this research that all of the participants did engage in a period of considered self-deliberation. These periods were found to be marked by an intensified internal reflection and questioning appearing to be derived from a re-evaluation of experience, achievement, knowhow and a long working life. This particular time appeared to be also nuanced with a complete candidness allowing participants

to take a “*reality check on with exactly was important*”(P1) to them. Participants asked themselves confrontational and personally challenging questions including:

“I was working extremely hard, long unsocial hours for relatively little pay and with very little thanks. Then one day a light bulb turned on in my head and I asked myself, why am I doing this? I don’t believe in it anymore, it doesn’t make me happy when there are so many other things I could be doing and that I am passionate about. Ok it might be hard work but at least I would enjoy what I am doing”(P8)

“Why am I working so hard? I am not getting anything out of this only lots of aggravation”(P9)

“Work was getting harder and much more physical and I realised I can’t do this for the rest of my life. I’ve gone as far as I can here, something has to change”(P10)

“My boss, she sees more of my than my family. What’s that about?”(P2)

Having reached mid-life participants seemed to realise that they have reached a ‘plateau’ in their working lives and they were no longer stimulated by same career ambitions or job responsibilities. As their lives evolved, so too did their values and mid-life seem conducive to reflect, re-negotiate and to take action.

4.3 Values

While contemplating their future and trying to make sense of their working lives the participants realised that there was significant “*cracks*”(P2) in their personal and professional identity, a realisation that somewhere attitudes, beliefs and motives, essentially their key values had radically altered. Comments from the participants reflecting how their values and intrinsic needs were no longer been met in their profession included:

“I realised my heart just wasn’t in it, it wasn’t making me happy anymore”(P9)

“I wasn’t comfortable with the direction the company was taking. I was just a small insignificant cog implementing procedures and policies that I didn’t see any value in for the employees except lining the pockets of the shareholders. I could see the nature of the business changing and it was not for the better in my view”(P2)

“It was becoming cut throat and ruthless in the office. The competitiveness was palatable and I felt I was in the rat race and it didn’t make me feel good about myself”(P1)

“Back in my twenties I flung myself in to my work, nose to the grindstone, nothing was more important than my work but things change, the way I felt about things twenty years ago is very different to how I evaluate things now, I suppose that’s called growing up!”(P6)

All participants realised at a point in their life, notably mid-life, that their values and intrinsic needs had changed considerably and were no longer, if ever, truly congruent. It seemed important to all the participants that their career goals should complement their personal core values and a mid-career transition appeared to be necessary to accommodate this aspiration. By making a mid-career transition it not only seemed to offer the participants an possibility to rebalance their life and work values directing their energies in a more meaningful direction but also offered the additional *“opportunity to learn and develop”(P1)*, *“a sense of purpose and direction”(P7)* and *“the chance to maybe do something good”(P2)*.

4.4 The Principal Drivers of Mid-Career Change

The findings of this research suggest that it was the strong internal values of the participants that motivated their career transition. The prevailing values revealed in this study as the principal drivers of mid-career change included the requirement for work-life balance, job satisfaction, autonomy and the opportunity to carve out their own career ambition.

4.4.1 Work-Life Conflict

Participants in this research conveyed that their vocational life was an important part of their life as a whole. Therefore aspiring for a balance between work and life, a balance to enhance a prized quality of life, reflected one of the predominant driving factors leading to mid-career change. All participants commented on how the lack of a balance between their work and their family life placed tremendous stress and strain on their quality of life. While most remarked that this was something that never was or seemed to be an issue in the earlier stage of their working life, however as they moved into mid-life with additional responsibilities, a renegotiation of priorities seemed to become acutely crucial to their own wellbeing and family/social life.

“Work had started to take over everything, even my headspace. I found myself thinking about work 24/7 and this impacted hugely on my family time. My wife and family all seemed to take second place to my work” (P2)

“I realised what was important, things I took for granted for so long, my volunteer work, my time with friends, visiting and caring for my parents was bit by bit disappearing and for what? More grey hairs?” (P6)

It was apparent from the majority of the participants that issues of different working times, working long hours, the expectation that you were on call to work at any time, day or night and balancing family obligations was taking its toll.

“I worked a different work schedule to my wife and this was a regular sources of conflict between us” (P1)

“I was working 60+ hours a week, it was putting a strain on relationships, quality time with my partner and the kids was constantly comprised and I wasn't available to commit any events/holidays. Work was taking over all my time and my family started to resent me for this and this caused many heated arguments” (P3)

There surfaced the sense that participants were missing out on family time, regularly relegating their social and personal lives in order to fulfil work commitments. There was also a realisation of isolation in that they were becoming *“cut off from the normal stuff” (P7)*. Not only was work having an effect on time spent with friends and family but also voluntary and community commitments were also been impacted on.

“I loved training the local athletic teams, I was part of the community and giving something back and I really looked forward to the training evenings, but work had such a hold on me as I was regularly called away with emergency work issues. I was virtually on call night and day and I could be called away at a moment's notice, so I felt I had no choice but to give up training the teams” (P4)

“... Ha Ha a social life? What's that?” (P8)

Even when not actually in work, downtime was usually earmarked for catching up on sleep and the basic necessities. The precious times they did share with friends and family often turned into either time spent *“worrying or moaning about the job, it had total taken over” (P10)*.

The impact on domestic life or life outside of work seemed to be a crucial aspect and in this study it appears to have been an issue from both men and women.

“I didn’t notice it in the beginning because I was away a lot, but eventually I realised that my social circle seemed to be just vanishing. It wasn’t their fault, I was so subsumed with my job that they just got on with their own lives without me being a part of it and the reality of this was hard to come to terms with” (P8)

“I didn’t realise that life was passing me by” (P3)

While not all participants have children or are married, all have friends, family, significant others and other important commitments in their lives. One female participant with children did report that having children did somewhat reduce the importance of work in her life but none of the female participants actually discarded their professional role for a domestic role. All participants did comment that once the children were born the issues between work and family commitments often clashed and was something that developed gradually as the children grew and more significant events were happening in the family unit.

“It was stressful looking for time off, approaching my boss was not something that I was really comfortable with, even when the reason was totally legitimate and very important to me. Sometimes I chose not to even ask for the time off because the thought of having to go and ask my boss for leave was far more stressful to me than missing that particular occasion or family event” (P10)

“I felt I was constantly explaining all the time to friends and family why again I couldn’t be there” (P3)

“I wanted a career that I could see my children and be a bigger part of their lives” (P9)

There was a strong desire to re-negotiate their work-life balance and regain a commitment to family and life beyond work. For these participants the answer lay in a career change, offering a mid-career journey to a career pathway that would result in less stress, better health, and a more accomplished and fulfilled life.

4.4.2 Job Dissatisfaction

There was an overall agreement that people had “checked out” (P1) of their job and work was becoming a “chore” (P6). Participants echoed the sentiments of being bored and “browned off” (P2) by the same work expectations day in day out, recounting the constant struggle to motivate themselves about their work. Various reasons came through including that work was

not offering the same challenges or sense of fulfilment anymore. Even the incentive to compete with the younger generation of workers was becoming tiresome and they felt they had nothing to prove or strive to achieve anymore.

“I started not to enjoy even going to work, to just go through the motions then coming home exhausted and not in good form” (P6)

“After over twenty years of doing virtually the same thing day in day out, it became more repetitive and tedious and at times totally frustrating. The passion and love that was there in the beginning of my career had been disappearing for several years. I’d been there done that, seen everything, there was just no challenge left in it for me” (P4)

“It may be a cliché but there was just no job satisfaction anymore” (P5)

For some the complete “switch off” (P8) was illustrated by participants going through the “unbearably monotonous” (P2) work routines, with one participant commenting that this daily grind “sucked the life blood out of me everyday” (P10). Some seemed dissatisfied that their energies were being wasted in a job/career that offered them nothing in return expect frustration. They were not happy, and while they got on with the job there was for some an emptiness inside themselves “... and it actually became soul destroying” (P2) Two participants felt that they had just come to the end of the road in their work-roles as the same “buzz” (P8) and pleasure they attained from work was not there anymore and this indicated to them a time to change careers.

4.4.3 Autonomy

The need for autonomy in a career also emerged as one of the dominant drivers of career change in this research. Not only does it attest to the significance of job satisfaction in ones working life but in this study autonomy appears to be significant in its own right embracing the need for opportunities to use discretion, decision making, creativity and independence in your working life. Comments including:

“Even after years of working in the role there was still no semblance of permitting me to work independently, everything I did had to be checked and sent through a chain of command. It became stifling and overwhelmingly inhibiting” (P1)

“I was being micromanaged to death, even with all my years experience I still had someone looking over my shoulder, closely monitoring and questioning my decisions” (P2)

“Every idea got buried under layers of managerial bureaucracy” (P10)

“I felt my productivity and effectiveness was constantly being comprised by the inability of the directors not to let me get on with things” (P5)

“The reins never loosened, why I am not sure, but it certainly didn’t instil confidence, it actually felt oppressive” (P2)

Issues including the inability to change or negotiate schedules and work patterns, not free to decide how targets were to be hit and with everything being monitored from start to finish saw stagnation gradually creep in. Participants seemed to crave the freedom to deviate outside the normally rigid role or boundaries, with confidence being constantly undermined participants were left feeling like *“just a number, there to follow the rules and not to have any input in ideas and decisions” (P1)*.

4.4.4 Opportunity

Acquiring a desirable career is something most people strive for in life and for the participants the opportunity to work in their *“dream career” (8)* didn’t materialise until later. All participants commented that in the final year of their secondary education as fledgling school-leavers, the idea of being virtually compelled to select a course or a forever job was *“absolutely ludicrous” (P2)* and that entry into their former occupations were not really guided by their intrinsic drives but due to extrinsic motivators especially familial pressures to obtain a college course or into the workforce in any guise.

“There was eight of us in the house and I was the eldest. Money was tight so I had to come off the rations scale and start putting money into the household. That meant that I had to get a job, continuing with education was not an option for me at that time” (P3)

“The pressure was on from home and school and even friends, I had to pick a course any course, sure at 17 years of age I had no idea what I wanted to do, who does at that age?” (P10)

“I couldn’t wait to leave school, and I just wanted to get a job any job so I could buy a car. I wasn’t thinking about my long term career goals at that stage” (P1)

“My parents had a huge impact on my choices, the jobs that were acceptable were the permanent and pensionable jobs, that’s why I chose to become a teacher, no other reason” (P6)

Although all participants have very different lengths of time spent in education, varying qualifications and experiences, what they all do have in common is the fact that the opportunities to pursue careers at an earlier stage of their working lives were not as available as they are currently and they also felt the pressure to attain “*the golden ticket job*” (P6) - a permanent and pensionable job that offered financial security and status. Participants also highlighted that career guidance in secondary school was not as evident as it is now and the vocational impetus and guidance they received in school was “*to get good job*” (P8) rather than to follow a career trajectory that you felt you wanted to pursue. Also the amount and range of educational courses and pathways were not available or as attainable for everyone. This insight offers, the researcher suggests, an explanation as to why the participants of this study never followed or had the opportunity earlier to consider or pursue occupations or careers that may have been regarded as a “*little out of the ordinary*” (P3). Therefore explaining the reasons why some participants worked in jobs and occupations that were once deemed as the sensible and secure options, but later lacked the challenges, pursuits and inner congruence to withstand the forever career.

Another participant who was made redundant from their role suggests that while it would have been tolerable to continue in their former career, admittedly not as contented as he might have otherwise been, believed it gave him “*the imposed opportunity*” (P3) to engage in proper appraisal of his life, interests, and abilities and to choose a career that he was passionate about.

Changing careers in itself was seen as an opportunity to do something “*radical*” (P7), once participants investigated and realised the notion of changing career, with the possibility of attaining a much sought after career or qualification, was a viable option for them. Opportunities including part-time education, adult evening, online and night-time courses, and vocational training schemes were availed of, enhancing and broadening their wide-reaching knowledge and experience. These were opportunities that were not available to them earlier in their working lives but mid-life seemed the right time, having evolved and honed their strengths and abilities, to avail of these opportunities which were found to be in this research a feature which gave impetus to their mid-career transitions.

4.5 Mid-Career Catalysts

The study found that in a number of circumstances participants did experience external unexpected life events or turning points in their mid-life which seemed to fortify their career transition decision. From redundancy and re-deployment, to a loss of a parent and major health issues, participants recounted that these mid-life events were times that made them re-think and re-evaluate their lives and prioritise what they felt was most important, including the rebalancing of their personal and professional life.

The nature of the current turbulent global economy causing instability where further catalysts to mid-career change and were felt by participants who found themselves at the front line of the changing occupational landscape. Some participants revealed a complete disillusionment with the changes in their jobs and the direction which left two participants feeling “*constantly stressed and totally burnt out*”(P1). Both participants who mentioned being stressed by work, did seek medical attention with one participant having to be hospitalised due to stress related symptoms. This was a “*wake up call*”(P6) for both participants and a realisation that their demanding work schedules had been affecting their quality of life for some time and major re-structuring of their future working lives was necessary to fit a new fulfilling healthy personal lives.

One participant described their experience of an acrimonious divorce as the catalyst to re-focus and get her career and life priorities in order, with three participants acknowledging that following the death of close family members, “*...it copper-fastened my resolve*”(P9) to change careers as they believed that “*life was too short to be spending most of your time doing something that made you feel unhappy*”(P1).

4.6 Challenges to Mid-Career Change

In this research challenges to mid-career change came in many guises. The main challenges appeared to emanate from the participants themselves, encompassing in an overarching niggles of self-doubt. The prevailing obstacle the majority of the participants felt was initially from themselves. Questions included, “*Can I really do this?*”(P9), “*I am too old to do this?*”(P6), “*Do I have the enough skills?*”(P7), “*Am I smart enough?*”(P3), “*It will take too long to change?*”(P10), “*What if it all goes wrong?*”(P2).

Financial challenges were mentioned and for some it rated higher as a concern. Matters including the monthly ability to pay bills, the cost of re-educating/re-training themselves while still paying the cost of childcare and/or for the education of others in the family were mentioned. Other financial sacrifices were made due to the requirement to cut costs and budget, therefore holidays, changing motor vehicles and house refurbishments/extensions were put on hold. For some the financial impact was considered “bearable”(P6) but loans were sought and savings used, however all participants were in complete agreement and rationalised the financial impact by the notion of having to “just cut ones cloth”(P9) as the transition time was only going to be provisional and that any sacrifices that had to be made financially and otherwise would “be recouped in spades by being in a career that I want to be in”(P7).

Other factors that played a significant role in hindering the mid-career transition came from the influence of others. The possible negative perception of significant others, family and friends was viewed as credible difficulty. Some participants mentioned that the opinions of some family and friends were seen as potential barriers once the initial idea of changing careers was floated. Participants repeated the dismay of elderly parents especially declaring “why would you leave a permanent and pensionable job”(P10) and “sure who’s happy in their job?”(P7). One participant recounted how some friends and family perceived mid-career change as a “failure or a blip and they rallied round as if someone had just died”(P8).

A practical and attitudinal bias of age was also cited as a potential obstacle and challenge to mid-life career change. Comments including;

“Am I going to get a job at my age?”(P5)

“Would employers think I’m too old?”(P4)

“I will be competing for roles against much younger people”(P9).

Participants felt that employers would not hire them because of their age or because of other inaccurate stereotyping including misconceptions of their levels of drive, energy, skills and abilities and would overlook the broad based knowledge and experience of the older worker.

4.7 Life after Mid-Career Change

As this study was conducted on individuals who voluntarily made the decision to change careers in mid-life and who were currently working in their new career areas for various lengths of time, this researcher felt it was important to include the implications of mid-life career change had on the participants as it would reinforce the foremost drivers of mid-career change revealed in this study. The most noteworthy of reflections resonated by all participants, including how participants felt in more control of their lives having taken ownership and “*became responsible for my own career journey*”(P2), and that while work remains an important part of their lives they have “*prioritised and regained life outside of work*”(P6). Feelings of being more confident and a sense contentment was spoken about “*I found the old me again*”(P8). Some participants indicated that they are actually working harder than they had in their previous career but they were enjoying their work and reclaiming a sense of satisfaction that they lacked in their previous career.

All participants implied that although they have come through the mid-career transition process, it was not “*plain sailing*”(P3). All participants mentioned someone who, regardless of the inevitable sacrifices, continually encouraged the participants “*to forge ahead*”(P9) with their career change. Encouragement and backing especially in the form of emotional support and counsel from their ‘career cheerleaders’ seem to be a significant element endorsing their mid-career change. Other crucial components which in hindsight played a part to ease the mid-career transition included sampling the career in a part-time capacity or in a volunteer mode, discussing your intention with people working in that particular profession whether an individual or a professional body, networking with community and local business groups, consulting a career specialist, attending college open days and speaking with course directors if applicable.

4.8 Analysis of Findings

Mid-life has been noted in literature as a significant time for change and the questions participants asked of themselves at this period in their lives reflect recognition of and an engagement in, a transitioning process to “reconsider where they are going and what they are doing with their lives” (Barclay et al., 2011, p.3). While the length of these mid-life self-reflection periods varied, these findings are similar to studies reporting that individuals in mid-

life were raising several questions about their future personal and vocational purposes, trying to uncover a more meaningful future (Oplatka et al., 2001; Williams and Savickas, 1990; Riverin-Simard, 1988).

As the participants evolved, shaped by personal and life experiences and circumstances, there was a realisation at mid-life that their self-concept and value base, and by extension their professional ideals, had also altered. Values that were once deemed important to them no longer held the same significance, nonetheless they found themselves stuck in work roles that were now incongruent. As this uncoupling of values became apparent, difficulties arose propelling participants to reflect and question the purpose of their personal and professional lives. In order to realign their adjusted values, participants engaged in critical personal and professional soul searching resulting in a re-evaluation and self-management of their occupational life necessary to obtain “personal fulfilment with a satisfying work life” (Kuchinskas, 2017; Duberley et al. 2007; Super, 1990).

There was an overall regard from participants that their occupation was an important segment of their life, with a clear desire to dovetail both their personal and career values together in a harmonious manner for a renewed successful and fulfilling future (Phanse and Kaur, 2015; Hind, 2009; Wise and Millward, 2005; Holmes and Cartwright, 1993). This objective appears to reflect the main thrust of mid-career change supporting Green et al. (2007), Ibarra (2004) and Super (1990) findings. However while there can be multiple and diverse reasons for mid-career change aiming to rebalance and integrate diverse experiences of work and life in a meaningful way to maximise personal and career satisfaction (Brown, 2015), the key intrinsic core values driving mid-career change arising from this study was the wish to attain work/life balance, job satisfaction, a sense of autonomy and an element of opportunity.

All participants described conflicts which arose due to the stringencies of their work demands. From unsociable work hours or patterns, missed family or social events and as life seemed to revolve around work it was causing tension and concern in themselves as well as with close family and friends (Hind, 2005; Holmes and Cartwright, 1996, 1994; Kanchier and Unruh, 1989). The current progressively striking and rapid changes in the nature of family and labour force has brought with it more substantial family/domestic responsibilities in addition to their work responsibilities (Allen et al., 2000). This was evident from these findings with all participants commenting that the juggling of work and life priorities was causing untold conflict and strain (Maddox-Danies, 2014). This researcher asserts that the finding of new

occupations offered participants scope to balance home and work more easily. Participants are now working for organisations that highly value family friendly work policies and have negotiated working hours that give them the breathing space and flexibility to manage and stabilise the once frantic chaotic lives that ensued prior to making their mid-career transition (Hind, 2005; Holmes and Cartwright, 1994; Kanchier and Unruh, 1989).

It was clear from the study that job dissatisfaction was also a key driver of mid-career change as there was compelling feeling of discontentment from the participants towards their former occupation which left the participants bored, uninterested, tired, stressed and “*living for the weekend*” (P7). These findings corroborate Rhodes and Doehring (1983) findings highlighting the close relationship between job dissatisfaction and career change. This study demonstrated the clear incongruence between the needs of the organisations and the participants, resulting in participants no longer being enthused or inspired by their working lives due to a lack of appreciation and work overload coupled with loyalty to their employers and organisations diminishing as participants sought to obtain more satisfaction from their jobs (Kanchier and Unruh, 1989).

The participants in this study all echoed, some more fervently than others, that the lack of independence and autonomy in their working lives was also a significant driver of mid-career change (Eaton-Walley and Lowe, 2013). It was evident that not having, the latitude or scope to work creatively and productively without the layers of bureaucracy, the input in to their own work schedule, the flexibility of how to do their work or even to elect to do it from home, became very restrictive. There was a sense from the participants that not having responsibility, choice or adaptability to manage and organise the structure, process and objectives in their working lives evoked resentment and annoyance (Green, 2008) and ultimately finding a career where they could do things that they find interesting or personally meaningful to them became very important. This researcher contends that this reflects the sense of career and job dissatisfaction and lack of autonomy felt in the workplace and for these participants at this point of their lives it was causing an amount of irritation and changing careers in mid-life proves they were willing to make the sacrifice of organisation position for self-direction (Green, 2008).

Opportunity as a prevailing mid-career driver is somewhat unique, and was an unanticipated finding of this research as it has not been emphasised as robustly in previous research. Kanicher and Unruh (1989) views career change as an occupational opportunity and this researcher

extends this notion proposing that by taking charge and purposefully pursuing careers it offered the participants of this study the chance to reinvent their professional persona while concurrently meeting their personal needs. This researcher maintains it also opened up additional opportunities to augment competencies and skills, to build confidence and to maintain and elongate their employability in this changing economic landscape. All participants demonstrated an openness to learning and willingness to seize this opportunities whether it was educational, training and vocational courses or to take up voluntary/part time roles in a particular career that were not available or availed of previously and these were now being targeted with the objective of rebalance and enhance work and life priorities.

The structure of the participants mid-career change did occur in a less linear traditional fashion, challenging rigid traditional models of vocational developmental which are highly reliant on prescriptive stages of age, neglecting gender, culture, disability, market changes and other external events as possible determinants for change. This researcher asserts while mid-life is an imperative time for change, how mid-career transitions unfold has as much to do with different life experiences, histories and circumstances than being solely determined by age or gender. In addition highlighting the importance the impact of context has on mid-career decisions holds a more holistic view of career development, reflected in Super's (1990) revised Life Span, Life Space Theory. While this researcher will concede that women's careers may by nature often be less linear (Sugarman, 2001; Kerka, 1992), it was the case in this study, that all participants regardless of gender, reflected a less rigid traditional career journey opting instead for a more contemporary protean career, a versatile career transitional path that was more relevant in the current dynamic climate (Maddox-Daines, 2015; Wise and Millward, 2005; Ibarra, 1999; Mallon, 1999).

The innate personal values outlined in this study are inherently linked to how participants now wanted to be defined in a professional role and that these internal motives rather than external factors had a greater influence for mid-career change (Green et al., 2007; Ibarra, 2004; Super, 1990). "Career success" (Hind, 2005, p.273) is now gauged against aligning value systems and attaining balance particularly when the intrinsic elements are unified (Noe, 2017b, p.8; Green et al., 2007; Hind, 2005). The participants in this study were indeed pioneers of the new career paradigm with a protean career orientation, willing to manage their own careers, less concerned with organisational recompenses and more driven by motives of "autonomy, personal values and psychological success" (Noe, 2017b, p.8).

There was an overall acknowledgement and consensus from the participants that the notion of job for life has radically diminished (Brushfield, 2016; O'Donoghue, 2015; Osborne, 2014; CIPD, 2010; Coutinhi et al., 2008; Wise and Millward, 2005; Hall, 1996, Mallon, 1991) and that the mid-career change phenomena has become more socially accepted as personal fulfilment and meaning is now more highly regarded (Barclay et al., 2011; Khapova et al., 2007; Wise and Millward, 2005; Teixeira and Gomez, 2000; Mallon, 1999; Kerka, 1991;).

This research illustrated similar findings to previous studies regarding the potential constraints and challenges faced by those brave enough to switch career in mid-life, including the financial sacrifices, the possibility of age discrimination and the negative impact of significant others (Holms and Cartwright, 1993; McGolderick and Arrowsmith 1997; Ibarra 2003, 2004; Duberley et al., 2007; Savickas 2012; Brown, 2015; World Health Organisation, 2017). Notwithstanding these findings, this study also learned that the foremost obstacle which the participants faced was confronting their own reservations and fears concerning their mid-career transition. These participants were fortunate to have the resilience and resolve to endeavour with their mid-career changes despite the evident challenges that they were destined to confront. This researcher contends that this highlights the crucial need for agencies to provide enhanced career services and workforce development in a wide range of settings in an effort to dispel and ease these fears by providing accurate, current and local information on different occupations, routes, choices and financial supports available to manage a self-directed mid-career change.

The constitutes of the mid-career change catalysts for each participant was absolutely exclusive to their particular set of circumstances and were all relatively major life occurrences, including family deaths, divorce, illness and job-loss (Howes and Goodman-Delahunty; Brown, 2012), and did act either immediately or as part of process to stimulate career change. This sentiment was echoed by most participants and for some reaching the 'the critical point' was gradual, for others it was more immediate but reflects previous studies that theses 'trigger', 'rupture' or 'turning points' experienced by participants did appear to act as a catalyst for their mid-career changes, giving them the impetus to take ownership and management of their mid-career transition (Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2014; Zitton, 2009; Duberley, et al. 2006; Ibarra, 2003; 2004, Teixeira and Gomes, 2000).

4.9 Summary of Findings

Evidence emerged indicating that participants had taken command of the management of their own career path challenging the established traditional linear, objective, organisational steered career journey. Challenges were confronted and opportunities grasped highlighting the resilient nature of participants who undeterred seized upon the versatile protean career attitude. These contemporary mid-career changers driven by the necessity to adjust and realign their vocational world to reflect their intrinsic core values used their vast amount of individual knowledge, knowhow and experience together with an amount of transferable attributes and skills, enhanced their education, mobility and employability to make their mid-career transition a reality. This multifaceted contemporary career process undertaken by the participants, driven by internal values, was evidently the keystones for mid-career move (Duberley et al., 2007; Wise and Millward, 2005; Mayrhofer and Iellatchitch, 2005; Kidd, 2004).

All participants concurred that the notion of the job for life is a thing of the past and that the era of the organisational career is more or less gone. Participants also acknowledged due to the current global economic uncertainty marked by organisation changes, the demise of the psychological contract coupled with longer life expectancy and fluctuating estimates on retirement ages, that going forward contemporary career paths driven by the individual are becoming customary (Noe, 2017; CIPD 2016; Hall, 1996; Zikic et al., 2005; Hall, 1996; Kanter, 1990). This dynamic switch of career responsibility, indicated in this research sends out a clear signal to organisations of the risks of non-engagement in meaningful career management could be massive in terms of current and future business needs (Noe, 2017).

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Mid-life career transitions can be both a stimulating and a daunting prospect. While the motives driving mid-life career change may be entirely different from when initial career choices were made, the stakes are evidently higher with mid-life career transitions often interspersed with various different challenges likely to impede the process along the way. Nonetheless, the purpose of this research was to uncover the specific key drivers that make individuals in mid-life question their occupational choices and decide to make a career change. It has been widely acknowledged through previous literature that this area of career development has received limited attention (Maddox-Daines, 2015; Teixeira and Gomes, 2000; Mallon, 1999; Holms and Cartwright, 1993; Brown, 1985,). The intent of the research therefore was to examine the experiences of ten Irish mid-career changers, regardless of gender, previous occupation or sector, and to identify the central drivers that motivated their decision to switch careers in mid-life. While some limited studies have been carried out on mid-career transitions, few have been researched in an era of global economic uncertainty and none specifically in an Irish context.

5.2 Discussion

While it is reflected in previous literature that there can be several diverse reasons why people make mid-career changes, the findings of this study seem to point to mid-life being a period when the participants realised that their self-concept and value base, and by extension their professional ideals, have evolved and changed. Consequently the results suggest that the overarching driver of mid-career change was the resolve to realign these values with the intent to achieve personal fulfilment with a satisfying work life. The predominant intrinsic core values requiring substantial attention arose from the desire to attain work/life balance, job satisfaction, a sense autonomy and an element of opportunity. All but one of these core values support various assertions in previous literature, however it was the emergence of the element of opportunity that was somewhat unique as this had not been emphasised as vigorously in previous research. This researcher contends that the findings of this study not only contributes to, but also extends the understanding and recognition of mid-career change as a valued life/occupational opportunity. A chance for individuals to not only seize missed opportunities

but also to take charge and purposefully pursue new careers while enhancing their employability, skills and knowledge. The study also reflected, although contenting with various challenges, a self-directed contemporary career transitional path more relevant in the current dynamic climate (Maddox-Daines, 2015; Wise and Millward, 2005; Ibarra, 1999; Mallon, 1999).

These findings are broadly in concurrence with previous research on mid-career change (Kuchinskas, 2017; Duberley et al. 2007; Teixeira and Gomes, 2000; Holms and Cartwright, 1993; Kerka, 1991; Super, 1990) suggesting that the impact of professional and personal identity cannot be ignored. Thus signifying that as an individual refines their self-concept over time this may also affect and reshape their career identity, often expressed by a transformation of career choices. The findings also echo Kerka's (1991) notion that as personal fulfilment has become more highly regarded, the 'phenomenon' of mid-career change is a more socially acceptable occurrence. This study also highlights Hind (2005) assertions that career success is now gauged against finding fulfilling work and building valued congruent relationships with organisations. Indications that participants in this research developed their careers independent of organisations by designing their own career paths to suit and align their personal and professional values is reflective of Ibarra (2004). As the myth of a 'job for life' has diminished, Hall's (1996) predictions of a changing career environment appear to be borne out in this study by the prevailing indication of the demise of the linear organisational career, with the individual willing to manage and shape the trajectory of their own versatile protean career.

This study not only ascertained what exactly propelled the decision to switch careers in mid-life but also provided an reflective view of mid-career change and this researcher asserts that these findings provide a useful contribution to "the unfolding career theory" (Khapova et al., 2007). However insights from a longitudinal study on this process, considering extending the scope and focus of future research to a more diverse group or to particular industries or occupational groups, would offer a more comprehensive understanding. This researcher agrees with Ibarra (2004) that there is a need for further research in this area, particularly new theories to clarify how people identify new career options and what provides the impetus in this process, especially as the impact of rapid globalisation, changing expectations and the increasing attention to values and personal development are liable to considerably alter the meaning of careers in years to come.

5.3 Implications of the Study

The findings of this research provide imperative insights into the motives of self-directed mid-career transitions and have significant implications for both individuals and organisations. The notion of career has been transformed to a more mobile, multidirectional versatile concept with the responsibility for managing career shifts now firmly with the individual. In order to maintain employability and adaptability, individuals need to keep current with innovation and constantly update knowledge and skills. Life-long learning is an essential requirement to maintain a highly skilled workforce and it can also have positive effects on “motivation, social interaction, general wellbeing and life satisfaction” (Manninen and Meriläinen, 2011, p.122). As the world of work is changing at an exorbitant pace, keeping connected and building up a good network of relationships is necessary for successful career management. Becoming aware of the demands of the knowledge economy by engaging in continued practice of learning, taking ownership of their career direction by making social connections and networks and investing fully in one’s own career management will enable individuals, despite the challenges they may encounter, to make mid-career transitions more smoothly (Noe, 2017).

Organisations can cease the opportunity to match the ambition and interest while offering the individual a sense of personal fulfilment and wellbeing by providing appropriate career direction and development leading to a more motivated and less frustrated employees - the “value proposition” (Noe, 2017b, p.5). Rethinking organisational approaches to career management has become imperative and needs to keep pace with the rapid change in the world of work (CIPD, 2016). Engaging in strategic career management programmes would offer impetus and motivation for employees to plan their career and in turn reduce potential turnover and maintain and enrich the talent and succession pool within an organisation.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

It is acknowledged that the participant’s interviews reflect a ‘snapshot in time’ view of their mid-career change. Nonetheless this is considered unavoidable in light of the on-going nature of career formation and the input from a longitudinal study would provide an understanding of the mid-career change process over time is recognised.

It is noted that all participants had completed their mid-career transition however some were in the early stages of their new career and others were several years working in their new

careers. It was hoped that the diversity of outlooks would add depth to the data with ‘local truths’ uncovered. However due to the different lengths of career transition timelines involved for each participant, the freshness and accuracy of the re-call of the career narratives may have been compromised.

This study relied on interviews of mid-career changers as the primary source of data for this research however additional interviews or focus groups conducted with adult career guidance counsellors, human resource managers and with significant others may have offered a broader scope to this study. The qualitative approach was used solely in this research and while it uncovered rich information, a mixed method approach may have been beneficial in reaching a larger population and unearthing other idiosyncrasies, patterns and themes not revealed in this research. A more robust methodology and the triangulation of such results may have been an effective approach lending wide ranging support to insights of the mid-career transition experience and may be a valuable approach to be adopted in a future study.

The researcher has acknowledged previously that the case study approach has the shortcoming of not providing generalisation to a larger population. While there is an equal number of both men and women represented in this study, the sample is relatively limited in terms of size. All participants are from white, middle class backgrounds and are based on the eastern side of the country, within one hour from Dublin. It would be appropriate in future research to extend the study to a more diverse group, including individuals of varying ethnicity, nationality, disability levels and geographical locations.

5.5 Conclusion

Mid-career change is an aspect of career development that has received comparatively limited attention to-date. In this era of intense globalisation with an ever evolving work landscape, mid-life career transitions have become a viable option for individuals and employees whose needs are not being met. It is also a prime opportunity for organisations to re-think and transform their current career management strategy into a sustainable valued commodity.

With mid-life career transitions becoming more of a prevalent ‘phenomenon’ coupled with the demise of the career or ‘job for life’ this researcher asserts that it has never been more evident that effective discourse regarding careers and career management has become necessary. While the weight of responsibility for the management of careers is with the individual, it is

imperative that organisations look to encourage and support a partnership of endeavours aiming to meet both organisational and individual needs. With the marked uncertainties in the world of work, led by increased globalisation and the growth of knowledge workers, the need for organisations to have an integrated and aligned career management strategy is critical.

The invaluable insights from this research enhance not only the understanding and awareness of mid-career change to the individual by “developing a new knowing why” (Mallon, 1999, p.358) but also has wide reaching significances for organisations in relation to the need to promote several clear navigable pathways and opportunities for career management and learning throughout the lifespan, particularly in this era of rapid change and development (B-Hert, 2001, p.2). A successful contemporary career management strategy, led by an effective Human Resource department, would create the context aiming to connect organisational strategies and policies while engaging and motivating employees, with the objective of enhancing organisational resilience and remaining competitive.

5.6 Recommendations

Career management is a core element of Human Resource Management but is often overlooked (Noe, 2017). Attracting, recruiting, engaging, developing and retaining a workforce can strengthen the resilience necessary to withstand and compete in these increasingly turbulent economic times. Traditional and antiquated approaches to career management are continually under pressure facing issues around ineffective discourse, visibility and support structures all pointing to organisations having a “lopsided focus” on career management (CIPD, 2016; Forbes, 2012). Although individuals have now taken over the management of their career pathways, there is still a significant role for a strategic, innovative and contemporary career development process, led by an effective and dynamic Human Resource department, focused at generating the benefits for organisational ‘buy in’. A solid career management strategy incorporated appropriately, effectively communicated and delivered intentionally would align both organisational and individual needs as well as dovetailing with other organisational policies and strategies.

Career Management – Conduct an employee engagement survey. Review delivery of career management at all levels. Redefine the organisations definition and placement of career development if necessary. Partake in formal career conversions to

communicate the prospects, opportunities and alternate career tracks, including dual and/or multiple, to motivate and retain employees. Ensure personal delivering career oriented programmes are qualified in effective career guidance procedures and this can be enabled partly through an innovative performance management approach. Develop an organisational culture of the understanding and responsibility for self-direction and ongoing learning. Establish diverse methods and strategies to assist and support employees to manage their own career paths. Assess the financial and resource requirements. Develop a detailed timeline and a strategic budget requirement proposal to maximise organisational and in-house capability to reflect cost effectiveness.

Career management strategies can be embedded into and through other strategic elements and policies:-

Workforce Planning - Initiate a detailed analysis into workforce patterns, trends, functions, roles, gaps and needs. Create job descriptions for every position with clear career track and skills maps for each role. Combine with Organisational Development to update options and strengthen the organisation for the future.

Performance Management – Evaluate how performance management is being conducted. Develop an ongoing delivery of performance management guided by role profiles, career guidance discourse as well as consistent and timely feedback. Monitor and upgrade capabilities of managers frequently to ensure the delivery is focused and effective.

Learning and Development - Invest in an inclusive learning and development policy with blended learning approaches with measurable outcomes for all. Embed a robust support system in terms of life coaches, mentors, advisors and career workshops. Offer challenging development and experience opportunities throughout the organisation including stretch projects, job rotations, work shadowing and international exposure. Instil a culture life-long learning within the organisation.

Succession Planning – Cultivate a succession plan to meet future requirements and remain competitive. Stock the talent pipe-line from and with a mobile, wide-reaching broad group.

Recruitment - Review policy towards the recruitment of older workers and advocate a recruiting culture of innovation and inclusivity.

Work/Life Balance - Identify and consider work and life needs of employees. Review the viability of the introducing flexible work arrangements and schedules. Examine and implement initiatives and policies which support an organisational attitude that respects, assists and integrates the needs of the employee, family and career.

5.7 Personal Learning Statement

The undertaking of this research study has been a significant personal learning experience. As well as gaining an understanding as to the relevance and complexity of the nature of the research process, the researcher have experienced first-hand the ups and downs of an intense but rewarding application of research.

In hindsight there are particular elements this researcher would have approached differently, and in retrospective may have made the work less laborious. The data analysis and interpretation component may have benefitted from using a qualitative computer aided programme to assist in analysing data, as hand coding was painstaking and time consuming. Also this study may have benefitted from a mixed blended methods approach would have also added another aspect to the findings. Time management and a strict adherence to a structure timeline is extremely important as is the support and guidance of an effective supervisor.

The study has also provided the researcher with some key ideas and important insights into personal professional values and highlights aspect of what is really important for a future career management plan. This researcher has taken inspiration from the invaluable insights provided by the participants of this research process and has already begun the processing of assessing career choices and decisions in light of this study. Finally the researcher hopes that this study and its findings can profit future research in to the phenomenon of mid-career transitions and career development.

References

- Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E. L., Bruck, C. S. and Sutton, M. (2000) 'Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: A review and agenda for future research'. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5(2): pp. 278-308.
- Amos-Wilson, P. (1996) 'Accomplishing career development tasks: are there gender-related differences?'. *Librarian Career Development*, 4(1): pp. 25-32.
- Antonesa, M. (2006) *Researching and writing your thesis: A guide for postgraduate students*. Maynooth: NUI Maynooth.
- Armstrong-Stassen, M. and Cameron, S. (2005) 'Factors related to the career satisfaction of older managerial and professional women'. *Career Development International*, 10(3): pp. 203-215.
- Arrowsmith, J. and McGoldrick, A.E. (1997) 'A flexible future for older workers?'. *Personnel Review*, 26(4): pp. 258-273.
- Arthur, M.B. and Rousseau, D.M. (eds.) (1996) *The boundaryless careers: A new employment principle for a new organizational era*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bahr, T.A. (2009) *Midlife career change and women: A phenomenological examination of the process of change*. PhD Thesis. California: University of California [Online] Available at: <http://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu> [Accessed 16 July 2017].
- Barclay, S.R., Stoltz, K.B. and Chung, Y.B. (2011) 'Voluntary Midlife career change: Integrating the Transtheoretical model and the life-span, life-space approach'. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 59(5): pp. 386-399.
- Barritt, L. (1986) 'Human sciences and the human image'. *Phenomenology and Pedagogy*, 4 (3): pp. 14-22.
- Baruch, Y., Szűcs, N. and Gunz, H. (2015) 'Career studies in search of theory: The rise and rise of concepts'. *Career Development International*, 20(1): pp. 3-20.
- B-Hert, (2001) *The Critical Importance of Lifelong Learning - BHERT*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bhert.com> [Accessed 16 July 2017].
- Bimrose, J., Barabasch, A., Brown, A. and Mulvey, R. (2015) 'Mid-career changes symposium'. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 43(3): pp. 255-262.
- Blustein, D.L. (2006) *The psychology of working: A new perspective for career development, counselling, and public policy*. United States: Routledge.
- Breeden, S.A. (1993) 'Job and occupational change as a function of occupational correspondence and job satisfaction'. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 43(1): pp. 30-45.
- Bridges, W.E. (1995) *Transitions: Making sense of life's changes*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

- Brown, A. (2015) 'Mid-career reframing: The learning and development processes through which individuals seek to effect major career changes'. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 43(3): pp. 278–291.
- Brown, D. (2002) *Career choice and development*. 4thed. California: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Brown, A., Bimrose, J., Barnes, S.-A. and Hughes, D. (2012) 'The role of career adaptabilities for mid-career changers'. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 80(3): pp. 754-761.
- Brown, D. (1995) 'A values-based approach to facilitating career transitions'. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 44(1): pp. 4-11.
- Brushfield, A. (2016) *Is the concept of 'job for life' slowly dying?* [Online] Available at: <http://www.roberthalf.com.au> [Accessed 29 October 2016].
- Burnard, P. and Morrison, P. (1994) *Nursing research in action: developing basic skills*. Houndmills: MacMillan.
- Charmaz, C. (1995) 'Grounded Theory', in Smith, J.A., Harre, R. and Van Langanhove, L. (ed.) *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Chen, C.P. (2003) 'Integrating perspectives in career development theory and practice'. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 51(3): pp. 203–216, [Online] Available at: doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2003.tb00602.x [Accessed 04 November 2016].
- CIPD (2016) *Career Pathing: the new path forward* [Online] Available at: <https://www.cipd.ie> [Accessed on 18 July, 2017].
- CIPD (2010) *Career and Development Report* [Online] Available at: <https://www.cipd.co.uk>. [Accessed on 13 November, 2016].
- Coe, T & Stark, A (1991) 'On the Move: Manager Mobility in the 1990's London'. *British Institute of Management*, p. 4.
- Coutinho, M.T., Dam, U.C. and Blustein, D.L. (2008) 'The psychology of working and globalisation: A new perspective for a new era'. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 8(1): pp. 5–18.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014) *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 4thed. California: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 2nded. California: Sage.
- Dodge, P.R. (2011) *Managing school behaviour: a qualitative case study*. PhD Thesis. Iowa: Iowa State University [Online] Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu> [Accessed 15 October 2016].

- Duberley, J., Mallon, M. and Cohen, L. (2006) 'Exploring career transitions: Accounting for structure and agency'. *Personnel Review*, 35(3): pp. 281–296.
- Eaton-Walley, T. and Lowe, M. (2013) 'The importance of work and job autonomy and independence to professional staff employed in local government at different career stage'. *International Journal of Applied HRM*, 2(3).
- Engels, D.W. (1995b) 'Common themes in Midlife career transitions'. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 44(1): pp. 83–88.
- Feldman, D (2002) 'Second careers and multiple careers' in Cooper, C.L. and Burke, R.J. (eds.) *The new world of work*. Blackwell: Oxford Press.
- Forbes (2012) *No Career Path, No Retention* [Online] Available at <http://www.forbes.com> [Accessed 30th June 2017].
- Fredrickson, R. H., Macy, F. U. and Vickers, D. (1978) 'Barriers to adult career change' *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 57(3): pp. 166–169.
- Fruner, J. F. (2013) *Transition from late career displacement to Employability*. Masters Thesis. Chicago: North American Management Society [Online] Available at <http://www.academia.edu> [Accessed 30 June 2017].
- Green, L., Hemmings, B. and Green, A. (2007) 'Career change and motivation: A matter of balance'. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 16(1): pp. 20–27.
- Green, G. (2008) *The Career Change Handbook: How to find out what you are good at*. 4thed. London: Robinson.
- Hall, D.T. (2004) 'The protean career: a quarter-century journey'. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 22(6): pp. 595-618.
- Hall, D.T. (1996) 'Protean careers of the 21st century'. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 10(4): pp. 8–16.
- Hall, D.T. and Mirvis, P.H. (1996) 'The new protean career: Psychological success and the path with a heart' in Hall, D.T. (ed.) *The career is dead - Long Live the career: A relational approach to careers*. California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Handy, C.B. (1994) *The empty raincoat: Making sense of the future*. London: Random House.
- Hennekam, S. and Bennett, D. (2015) 'Involuntary career transition and identity within the artist population'. *Personnel Review*, 45(6): pp. 1114–1131.
- Heppner, M.J., Fuller, B.E. and Multon, K.D. (1998) 'Adults in involuntary career transition: An analysis of the relationship between the psychological and career domains'. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 6(3): pp. 329–346.
- Hind, P. (2005) 'Making room for career change'. *Career Development International*, 10(4): pp. 268–274.

Hirsh, W. and Jackson, C. (1996) 'Strategies for Career Development – Promise, Practice and Pretence'. *The Institute for Employment Studies*, Brighton: UK.

Holloway, I. (1997) *Basic concepts for qualitative research*. Oxford: Blackwell Science.

Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2000) *Doing qualitative research differently: Free association, narrative and the interview method*. California: Sage.

Holmes, T. and Cartwright, S. (1996) *Midlife career change: Desire or necessity?* United Kingdom: Tudor Educational.

Holmes, T. and Cartwright, S. (1994) 'Mid-Career change'. *Employee Relations*, 16(7): pp. 58–72.

Holmes, T. and Cartwright, S. (1993) 'Career Change: Myth or Reality?'. *Employee Relations*, 15(6): pp. 37-53.

Hosty, M. (2017) *How to navigate a career change over 50* [Online] Available at: <http://lookthebusiness.ie>. [Accessed 23 July 2017].

Houghton C, Murphy K, Shaw D. and Casey, D. (2015) 'Qualitative case study data analysis: an example from practice'. *Nurse Researcher*, 22(5): pp. 8-12.

Howes, L.M. and Goodman-Delahunty, J. (2014) 'Life course research design: exploring career change experience of former school teachers and police officers'. *Journal of Career Development*, 41(1): pp. 62–84.

Ibarra, H. (2004) *Career Transition and Change, INSEAD - Working Paper Series* [Online] Available at: <https://flora.insead.edu> [Accessed 06 January 2017].

Ibarra, H. (2004b) *Our many possible selves: reworking our identities to reinvent our career, INSEAD - Working Paper Series* [Online] Available at: <https://flora.insead.edu>. [Accessed 06 January 2017].

Ibarra, H. (2003) *Working identity: Unconventional strategies for reinventing your career*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Ibarra, H (2002) 'How to stay stuck in the wrong career'. *Harvard Business Review*, 12: pp. 40-47.

Ibarra, H. (1999) 'Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(4), p. 764.

Iellatchitch, A., Mayrhofer, W. and Meyer, M. (2003) 'Career fields: a small step towards a grand career theory?'. *International Journal of Human Resources Management*, 14(5): pp. 728-750.

Janghorban, R., Latifnejad Roudsari R. and Taghipour, A. (2014) 'Pilot Study in Qualitative Research: The Roles and Values'. *Journal of School of Nursing and Midwifery*, 19(4): pp. 1-5.

- Kanter, R. M. (1990) *When Giants Learn to Dance: Mastering the Challenges of Strategy, Management and Careers in the 1990s*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Kerka, S. (1991) 'Adults in Career Transition'. *Adult Career and Vocational Education*, 115: pp. 2-7.
- Kerka, S. (1992) 'Life cycles and career development'. *Adult Career and Vocational Education*, 119: pp. 2-6.
- Khapova, S.N., Arthur, M.B., Wilderom, C. and Svensson, J.S. (2007) 'Professional identity as the key to career change intention'. *Career Development International*, 12(7), pp. 584-595.
- Kidd, J.M. (2004) 'Emotion in career contexts: Challenges for theory and research'. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 64(3): pp. 441-454.
- Kanicher, C. and Unruh, W.R. (1988) 'The Career Cycle Meets the Life Cycle'. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 37 (2): pp. 127-137.
- Kuchinskas, S. (2017) *How values inspire midlife change* [Online] Available at: <https://www.americanexpress.com> [Accessed 15 May 2017].
- Lawrence, B.S. (1980) 'The myth of midlife crisis'. *Sloan Management Review*, 21(4): pp. 25-44.
- Lloyd, B. and Bereznicki, C. (1998) 'Careers for the new millennium'. *Career Development International*, 3(6): pp. 266-270.
- Lyons, S.T., Schweitzer, L., Ng, E.S.W. and Kuron, L.K.J. (2012) 'Comparing apples to apples'. *Career Development International*, 17(4): pp. 333-357.
- O'Donoghue, P. (2015) 'Job for life is gone, it's time to switch', *Irish Independent*, 25 October [Online] Available at: <http://independent.ie> [Accessed 06 January 2017].
- Oplatka, I., Bargal, D. and Inbar, D. (2001) 'The process of self-renewal among women headteachers in mid-career'. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 39(1): pp. 77-94.
- Maddox-Daines, K. (2016) 'Mid-career as a process of discovery'. *Career Development International*, 21(1): pp. 45-59.
- Mallon, M. (1999) 'Going "portfolio": Making sense of changing careers'. *Career Development International*, 4(7): pp. 358-370.
- Manninen, J. and Meriläinen, M. (2014) *Benefits of Lifelong Learning in Europe: Main Results of the Bell-Project Research Report* [Online] Available at: <http://www.bell-project.eu> [Accessed 5 August 2016].
- Mason, D.J. and Zuercher, S.L. (1995) 'Pilot studies in clinical nursing research'. *Journal of the New York State Nursing Association*, 26(11).

- Maxwell, J.A. (2005) *Qualitative research design; and integrative approach*. 2nded. California: Sage.
- Mayrhofer, W. and Iellatchitch, A. (2005) 'Rites, right? The values of rites of passage for dealing with today's career transitions'. *Career Development International*, 10(1): pp. 52-66.
- McAdams, D.P. (1996) 'Personality, modernity, and the storied self: A contemporary framework for studying persons'. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7(4): pp. 295–321.
- McAlpine, L., Amundsen, C. and Turner, G. (2014) 'Identity-trajectory: Reframing early career academic experience'. *British Educational Research Journal*, 40(1): pp. 952–969.
- McGinley, S., O'Neill, J., Damaske, S. and Mattila, A.S. (2014) 'A grounded theory approach to developing a career change model in hospitality'. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 38: pp. 89–98.
- McGinley, S. (2012) *Towards an Integrated Career Change Model in the Hotel Industry: A Grounded Theory Approach*. MSc. Thesis. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University [Online] Available at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com> [Accessed 05 January 2017].
- Merriam, S.B. (2002) *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. California: Jossey-Bass.
- Motulsky, S. L. (2005) *Snails, gazelles, and elephants: a qualitative examination of identity and relational processes of midlife women in career transition*. PhD Thesis. Massachusetts: Harvard University [Online] Available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com> [Accessed 23 June 2017].
- Murtagh, N., Lopes, P.N. and Lyons, E. (2011) 'Decision making in voluntary career change: An other-than-rational perspective'. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 59(3): pp. 249–263.
- Noe, R.A. (2017) *Employee Training and Development*. 7thed. New York: McGraw/Hill.
- Noe, R.A. (2017b) *Career Management Commentary Notes*. New York: McGraw/Hill.
- Noe, R.A. (2010) *Employee Training and Development*. 5thed. New York: McGraw/Hill.
- Palinkas, L.A., Horwitz, S.M., Green, C.A., Wisdom, J.P., Duan, N. and Hoagwood, K. (2013) 'Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research'. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5): pp. 533–544.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 3rded. California: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990) *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage.

- Phanse, R. and Kaur, R. (2015) 'An Exploratory Study on "Self-Renewal" in Mid-Life Voluntary Career Changes for Managers'. *Journal of Management Research and Analysis*, 2(3): pp. 204-213.
- Perosa, L. M. and Perosa, S. L. (1997) 'Assessments for use with mid-career changers'. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 5(2): pp. 151–165.
- Perosa, L.M. and Perosa, S.L. (1984) 'The mid-career crisis in relation to Super's career and Erikson's adult development theory'. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 20(1): pp. 53–68.
- Power, S. J. and Rothausen, T. J. (2003) 'The work-oriented Midcareer development model: An extension of Super's maintenance stage'. *The Counselling Psychologist*, 31(2): pp. 157-197.
- Rhodes, H. (2000) *Mid-life career change to home based self-employment in a group of women*. Graduate Thesis. British Columbia: Simon Fraser University [Online] Available at: <https://www.telusplanet.net> [Accessed 06 October 2016].
- Ritchie, J and Spencer, L, (1994) 'Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research' in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. (eds.) *Analysing qualitative data*. London: Routledge.
- Riverin-Simard, D. (1988) 'Phases of Working Life and Adult Education'. *Institute of Education Sciences*, 12(2): pp. 24-26.
- Rhodes, S.R. and Doering, M. (1983) 'An Integrated Model of Career Change'. *Academy of Management*, 8(4): pp. 631-639.
- Rodrigues, R. and Guest, D. (2010) 'Have careers become boundaryless?'. *The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations*, 63(8): pp. 1157-1175.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2003) *Research Methods for Business Students*, London: Prentice Hall.
- Savickas, M. L. (2012) 'Life Design: A Paradigm for Career Intervention in the 21st Century'. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, 90(1): pp. 13-19.
- Savickas, M.L. (2000) 'Renovating the psychology of careers for the twenty first century' in Young, R.A. and Collin, A (eds.) *The Future Career*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Seidman, I. (1998) *Interviewing as qualitative research*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shropshire, J. and Kadlec, C. (2012) 'Where Are You Going? A comparative analysis of job and career change intentions among USA IT workers'. *Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce*, 17(2): pp. 1-20.
- Smith, J. (1995) 'Semi structures interviewing and qualitative analysis' in Smith, J., Harre, R. and Van Lengenove, L. (eds.) *Rethinking Methods of Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Stake, R.E. (1995) *The art of case study research*. London: Sage.

- Stake, R. E. (1994) 'Case Studies' in Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. California: Sage.
- Sterret, E. A. (1999) 'A comparison of women's and men's career transition'. *Journal of Career Development*, 25(4): pp. 249–259.
- Sugarman, L. (2001) *Life-Span Development Frameworks, accounts and strategies*. New York: Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis.
- Sullivan, S. (1999) 'The changing nature of careers: A review and research agenda'. *Journal of Management*, 25(3): pp. 457–484.
- Super, D. E. and Savickas, M. L. (1996) The life span, life space approach to careers cited in Brown, D., Brooks, L. and Associates, *Career choice and development*. 3rded. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Super, D.E. (1980) 'A life-span, life-space approach to career development'. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 16(3): pp. 282–298.
- Teixeira, M. and Gomes, W. (2000) 'Autonomous Career Change among Professionals: An Empirical Phenomenological Study'. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 31(1): pp. 78–96.
- The World Health Organisation (2017) *Ageing and life-course* [Online] Available at: <http://www.who.int> [Accessed 5 August 2017].
- Usborne, S. (2014) 'Why a career is no longer for life', *The Independent*, 01 January [Online] Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk> [Accessed 29 October 2016].
- Vander Zanden, J.W. (2000) *Human development*. McGraw-Hill College: Boston.
- Van Teijlingen, E. and Hundley, V. (2001) 'The importance of pilot studies'. *Social Research Update*, 1(35).
- Walsh, T. and Ryan, A. (eds.) (2015) *Writing your thesis: A guide for postgraduate students*. Ireland: MACE (Maynooth Adult and Community Education).
- Whymark, K., and Eilis, S. (1999) 'Whose career is it anyway? Options for career management in flatter organisation structures'. *Career Development International*, 4(2): pp. 117-120.
- Williams, C. P. and Savickas, M. L. (1990) 'Developmental tasks of career maintenance'. *Journal of Vocational Science*, 36(2), pp. 166-175.
- Wise, A. J. and Millward, L. J. (2005) 'The experiences of voluntary career change in 30-somethings and implications for guidance'. *Career Development International*, 10(5): pp. 400–417.
- Woolfe, R., Dryden, W. & Strawbridge, S. (2003) *Handbook of counselling psychology*, London: Sage.

- Yin, R. K. (2009) *Case study research: design and methods*. 4thed. California: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (1984) *Case study research: design and methods*. California: Sage.
- Zainal, Z. (2007) 'Case study as a research method'. *Jurnal Kemanusiaan*, (9): pp. 1-6.
- Zikic, J. and Hall, D.T. (2009) 'Toward a more complex view of career exploration'. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 58(2): pp. 181–191.
- Zikic, J., Novicevic, M.M., Harvey, M. and Breland, J. (2006) 'Repatriate career exploration: A path to career growth and success'. *Career Development International*, 11(7): pp. 633–649.
- Zittoun, T (2009) 'Dynamics of life-course transitions: a methodological reflection' in Valsiner, J. (ed.) *Dynamic process methodology in the social and developmental sciences*. New York: Springer Science.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. You have had a significant career change in mid-life, would you outline what was it that led you to make the change?
2. Was there any trigger or rupture points that acted as catalysts for the career change decision?
Or was it a gradual build up the decision?
Was there a time delay from when you started thinking about changing careers to when you actually first started taking action?
3. What were your main concerns/considerations prior to making the decisions?
4. What did you know about the career you were choosing to move into? Who if anyone, did you consult with prior to changing careers and even during the transition?
5. Could you explain any support you relied on or had during your career transition?
From where did this support come and in what form?
6. What barriers and obstacles did you have to face to make the career change happen?
7. Having made the career change do you feel any differently about yourself, your outlook on work, relationships etc.?
8. Has your work/life balance changed? Are you more in control of your working life?
9. What have been the positives and negatives so far of the mid-career change for you?
10. If you were to give someone advice when managing a career change what main things would you tell them?
11. Due to the way our educational structure works, whereby school leavers make important college/career choices at an early age, do you feel this had any influence on your career choice decisions?
12. It is becoming an ongoing point of discussion that the job for life is “thing of the past” – what are your comments on this?

Appendix B

Interview Consent Form

Title of Research: Mid-Career Change - the Irish Experience

Researcher: Laura Humphreys, School of Business, National College of Ireland

Supervisor: Dr. Julius Nyiawung, National College of Ireland

Research Objective: To identify of the key drivers of mid-career change.

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary
- I may withdraw from this study at any time
- I may refuse to answer any of the questions
- There will be a maximum of one interview and a follow up consultation if required
- The interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes
- Confidentiality will be strictly respected and my identity will be protected throughout the study
- Following completion of the study all interview recording will be destroyed
- I will have access to the findings study through the interviewer
- The interviewer will address all concerns and questions about this study at any stage of the process
- If I have further queries that I may contact, Laura Fallon, Programme Co-ordinator (01-4498617) or Dr. Colette Darcy, Vice Dean Postgraduate Studies & Research, School of Business at the National College of Ireland (01-4498538).

I have read and understood the information provided and I **Agree/ Do Not Agree** to participate in this research study.

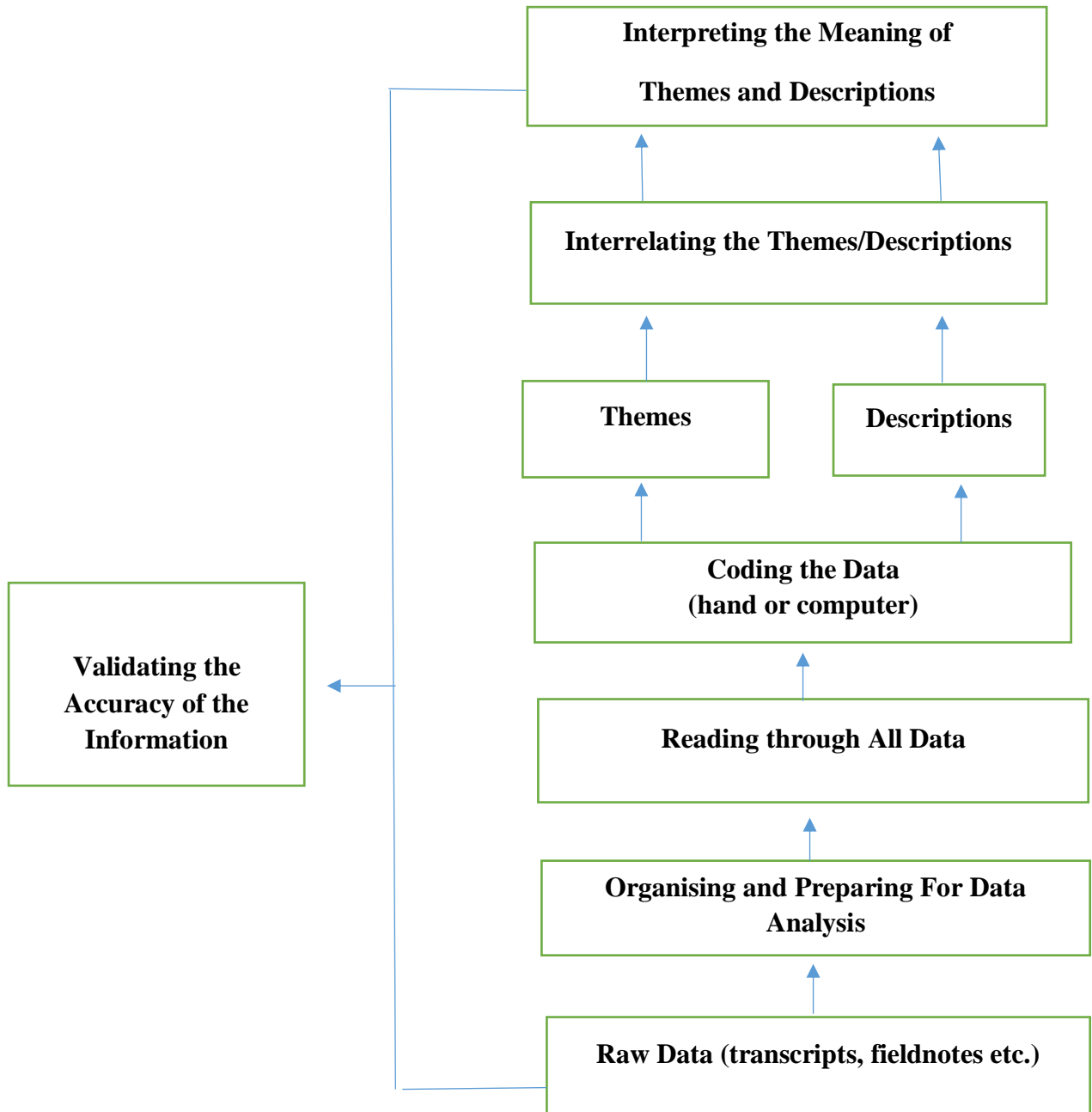
Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Creswell (2014)

Six Step Data Analysis in Qualitative Research



Creswell, J.W. (2014) *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 4thed. California: Sage.