

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

DIANNE BOWN-WILSON

Career progression in older managers:  
motivational and gender differences

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

PhD thesis  
Academic Year: 2010 - 2011

Supervisor: Dr Emma Parry  
May 2011



CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

PhD thesis

Academic Year 2010 - 2011

Dianne Bown-Wilson

Career progression in older managers:  
motivational and gender differences

Supervisor: Dr Emma Parry

May 2011

© Cranfield University 2011. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the written permission of the copyright owner.



## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores what UK managers aged 50 and over perceive as career progression at a time in life when opportunities for further promotion may have ceased. It examines motivational drivers and subjectively significant personal and organizational influences on career progression. It also investigates whether motivation for career progression is perceived to have changed over the career and the extent to which it may differ between male and female older managers.

The research adopted a qualitative, inductive approach using a phenomenological methodology. Fieldwork comprised semi-structured interviews with 27 male and 13 female managers aged 50 and over from two large, UK financial services organizations. The findings show how motivation for career progression in managers aged over 50 is driven by individually diverse patterns of career drivers, personal and work-related influences, and attitudes towards career opportunities. These can be classified into a number of career progression orientations.

The study contributes to knowledge in the area of subjective psychological career mobility in late career and the balance which individuals maintain between the organizational and personal aspects of their career. It demonstrates that motivational drivers of career progression are perceived to change over the career and that career progression is linked, on an individual basis, to past, current and future career mobility which may extend past the traditional retirement transition. It also reveals that, in general, older female managers may exhibit a greater drive for self-realisation through later life career renewal than their male counterparts.

Keywords:

career motivation, career development, career mobility, older workers, women's careers



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Undertaking PhD research is a unique challenge. Whilst the experience has been both interesting and enjoyable, the path to completion has involved crossing numerous hurdles. In overcoming these I have many people to thank.

Undoubtedly my greatest thanks are due to my supervisor Dr Emma Parry, a paragon of patience, good humour and encouragement who, in demonstrating these and many other fine qualities, has been the epitome of what I believe a good supervisor should be.

Second, my own personal sources of support, Francesca Bown-Wilson, Richard Ciechan and Annette Iles, require more thanks than there are to give. Without their selfless interest, relentless encouragement and practical assistance this project would never have been completed. Their tolerance, in respect of the time and energy this quite selfish endeavour has swallowed over several years, has been greatly appreciated throughout.

Third, special thanks are due to the older managers who participated in the study. Their interest in the project and enthusiasm for sharing their stories quite literally made the whole study possible.

Fourth, heartfelt thanks to the numerous other sources of assistance and support who have stepped up over the years. These include the academic faculty at Cranfield (including those on my review panel), the library, IT and admin staff who at times were helpful beyond the call of duty, colleagues from my PhD cohort, and in particular, Dr Deirdre Anderson who has shared time, knowledge and several very useful books! Aside from this, many other people outside Cranfield who assisted me and made the project possible also deserve thanks, especially Tarquin Bennett-Coles who was instrumental in helping me find research participants.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my mother. For her sake I wish I had done this earlier. I think she would have been proud.





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
1.1 Research aims .....	1
1.2 The research problem .....	1
1.3 Background to the research .....	2
1.3.1 The meaning of career and career progression .....	4
1.3.2 Managerial careers .....	6
1.3.3 The significance of age .....	7
1.3.4 The role of gender .....	8
1.4 Research gap.....	9
1.5 Research questions.....	9
1.6 A personal perspective .....	10
1.7 Thesis structure.....	13
Chapter 2: A review of the literature .....	15
2.1 Career theories .....	15
2.2 Career mobility, renewal and embeddedness .....	21
2.3 Career plateauing.....	25
2.4 Objective and subjective career progression.....	26
2.5 Career variables: age, occupational role, and gender .....	32
2.5.1 Age and its implications for careers .....	32
2.5.2 Managerial careers .....	37
2.5.3 Gender differences in careers.....	39
2.6 Motivation for career progression .....	42
2.6.1 Motivational theory.....	44
2.6.2 Career motivation .....	49
2.6.3 Age and motivational drivers.....	54
2.7 Summary.....	56
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	59
3.1 Research strategy .....	59
3.1.1 Philosophical approach.....	59
3.1.2 Ontology and Epistemology .....	60
3.1.3 Constructivism or constructionism? .....	62
3.1.4 Phenomenology.....	64
3.2 Research design .....	65
3.2.1 Research method .....	65
3.2.2 Exploratory study .....	66
3.2.3 Development of the research protocol .....	69
3.2.4 Sampling.....	72
3.2.5 Organizational selection .....	74
3.3 Fieldwork.....	76
3.3.1 Stage 1: Pilot study .....	76
3.3.2 Pilot study results.....	78

3.4	Stage 2: Main study.....	87
3.5	Summary.....	98
Chapter 4: Motivation for career progression .....		99
4.1	The financial services context .....	99
4.2	The role of identity.....	101
4.3	Career drivers .....	104
4.3.1	Positive drivers .....	104
4.3.2	Negative drivers.....	110
4.4	The role of remuneration.....	114
4.5	Influences on motivation for career progression.....	117
4.5.1	Personal influences .....	118
4.5.2	Organizational influences .....	127
4.6	Summary.....	132
Chapter 5: The meaning of career progression .....		135
5.1	Individual perceptions of career progression.....	135
5.2	Organizational career progression .....	136
5.3	Personal career progression .....	139
5.4	Attitudes towards career progression .....	143
5.4.1	Optimism, confidence, excitement .....	143
5.4.2	Satisfaction, happiness.....	144
5.4.3	Acceptance or resignation .....	144
5.4.4	Anxiety, disappointment, resentment.....	145
5.4.5	Vacillation or uncertainty.....	145
5.5	Attitudes towards career opportunities .....	146
5.5.1	Luck.....	146
5.5.2	Self-created opportunities.....	147
5.5.3	Job offers.....	147
5.6	Attitudes towards retirement.....	148
5.7	Summary.....	150
Chapter 6: The role of age and gender .....		151
6.1	Age-related changes in motivation .....	151
6.1.1	Age and identity .....	151
6.1.2	Age and experience.....	153
6.1.3	Age and career motivation.....	154
6.2	Male and female motivational drivers for career progression .....	157
6.2.1	Gender-related responsibilities .....	158
6.2.2	Male and female career development paths.....	160
6.2.3	Drivers for career progression .....	163
6.3	Summary.....	165
Chapter 7: Discussion of findings .....		167
7.1	Career drivers and career identity .....	167
7.2	Influences on motivation for career progression.....	172
7.3	Career attitudes and opportunities .....	174
7.4	Changes in motivation across the career .....	177
7.5	The meaning of career progression.....	179
7.5.1	Career progression orientations.....	182
7.6	The motivational drivers of older male and female managers.....	199
7.7	Extending career motivation theory.....	204

7.8	The role of expectancy theory .....	209
7.9	The significance of context .....	211
7.10	Summary.....	216
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....		217
8.1	The aims of the research.....	217
8.2	Overview of the study.....	218
8.3	Findings and conclusions .....	218
8.4	Contribution to knowledge.....	221
8.4.1	Career theory and subjective career mobility .....	221
8.4.2	Changes in motivation over time.....	223
8.4.3	Gender-related differences .....	226
8.4.4	Motivational theory.....	227
8.5	Contribution to practice .....	230
8.6	Limitations of the study.....	232
8.7	Further research.....	235
8.8	Final thoughts.....	236
REFERENCES.....		239
Appendix A Interview protocol .....		259
Appendix B: Email to prospective participants.....		263
Appendix C: Initial coding structure .....		265
Appendix D: Preliminary (online) questionnaire.....		267
Appendix E: Final coding structure .....		269

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Construction and interpretation as a means of access to the world of experience (Flick, 2004: 90) .....	62
Figure 2 - Relationships between older workers, organizational practices and context (Claes and Heymans, 2008) .....	75

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: A comparison of traditional and boundaryless careers (Sullivan 1999: 458) .....	18
Table 2: The new protean career contract (Hall and Moss, 1998: 26) .....	19
Table 3: Criteria for organizational selection .....	76
Table 4: The outcome of testing the research protocol .....	78
Table 5: HR policies and practices in organizational selection .....	88
Table 6: Distribution of participant ages .....	91
Table 7: Details of research participants .....	91
Table 8: Questions to encourage reflexivity (Langdrige, 2007:59) .....	96
Table 9: Career progression orientations .....	184

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Research aims**

The aim of this research is to investigate motivation for career progression in older UK managers and what they individually perceive as the meaning of career progression in late career. It also seeks to explore how, if at all, the motivational drivers of career progression in older managers are perceived to have changed over the career span and whether and in what ways they may differ between older male and female managers. By addressing these issues this study aims to provide a greater understanding of what motivates older managers in contemporary career environments and what is important to them in relation to career progression.

## **1.2 The research problem**

Increased longevity means that individuals now have the potential to work longer, and with The Employment Equality (Repeal of Retirement Age Provisions) Regulations 2011 abolishing the default retirement age, older employees may now potentially work on indefinitely. As a result, employers and HR professionals need to find ways to maintain and/or increase the motivation, engagement and performance of older employees whose performance may previously have been allowed to slip in the period leading up to retirement (Patrickson and Ranzijn, 2006). To do this effectively employers need to understand the motivation of older employees who may have been in their current role for several years, and what “career progression” might mean to them at a stage in life when individual circumstances may lead to a range of differing aspirations.

Alongside the challenge of managing the performance of an increasing number of older people who want or need to remain in work, employers may also be struggling to prevent key older employees from leaving the workplace prematurely, taking with them irreplaceable skills, knowledge and experience (Patrickson and Ranzijn, 2006). This involves recognizing that older employees

“have needs, values, and interests that must be met in order for them to choose to remain employed and to adapt to workplace changes” (Yeatts, Folts and Knapp, 2000:565). Yet, as Patrickson and Ranzijn (2006) indicate, not only does it appear that as yet there is no general adoption by employers of policies and practices to manage older employees and address these needs, but

*There is little evidence ... that employers are cognizant of the need to develop different policies for different groups of older employees... it is essential for employers to get away from thinking of older employees as an homogeneous group (p.734).*

Developing “different policies for different groups of older employees” requires that employers understand what those differences are in terms of what would motivate and engage different groups of older workers; little evidence exists that such information is currently available. A further, yet no less significant, aspect of the research problem is that older individuals themselves also need new sources of information and support to enable them to deal with the changing career landscape (Gibson, 2004). Although the pressures on older people to remain in work are increasing, at present there are inadequate positive role models relating to different ways of working in late career that older employees can use to fulfil their aspiration to “remain in work, but on their own terms” (Standard Life, 2009). Achieving an improved understanding of the nature and variety of extended working lives would assist both older workers and their employers to better plan and develop successful and mutually rewarding careers for those in the latter stages of working life.

### **1.3 Background to the research**

In order to understand more fully the research problem identified above it is necessary to appreciate the context in which it occurs. At a fundamental level, lower birth rates and greater longevity within the UK population have produced inexorable demographic changes. At the end of 2008 the number of people reaching state pension age (65 for men and 60 for women) overtook, for the first time, those aged under 16 (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2011).

Consequently in the future, based on current work patterns, an ever-diminishing workforce will be supporting a growing and increasingly long-lived older generation through decades of retirement. According to 2010 ONS figures the ratio of people aged 16-64 funding the state pensions, health costs, and welfare of older people was predicted to drop from a baseline of 4.6 people in 1971 to 2.7 by 2031 and only 2.1 by 2081. Prior to this, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) had made it clear that UK employees needed to work longer (OECD, 2006) and alongside this the UK government has introduced initiatives aimed at encouraging and supporting individual choice to do so (e.g. Department for Work and Pensions [DWP], 2006). Regardless of whether this has in itself directly affected later life working, statistics show that one in 12 people aged over 65 is now still employed (ONS, 2011) – a figure which is predicted to continue to rise.

According to the first Working Late Index (LV, 2010), 4.5 million of today's over-50s expect to work beyond state retirement age by an average of just over six years. The recent global recession which has led to erosion of income and falling house values, in combination with pension shortfalls in relation to greater life expectancy, has resulted in many older workers choosing to work for longer (Acas, 2011). As a result, the average retirement age for men reached 64.5 years (62.0 years for women) in 2009 - the highest since data first became available in 1984 (ONS, 2011). However, many older individuals may be working for reasons other than financial reward, such as participation in social relationships and a sense of value and contribution, with a recent UK report suggesting that some 60% of wealthy individuals wanted to continue working rather than retiring (Barclays Wealth, 2010).

To date, there is insufficient detailed knowledge to assist HR professionals in designing appropriate policies and practices to support different categories of older employees in remaining engaged and performing at optimum levels as part of an age diverse workforce (Patrickson and Ranzijn, 2006; Yeatts et al, 2000). Much research into careers has adopted a positivist perspective concentrating on measurable drivers and outcomes and an organizational/

employer viewpoint. Studies have focused on concepts such as “career”, “job satisfaction”, and “success”, all of which can have a variety of meanings across different individuals, groups and organizations, without exploring breadth and depth of meaning at an individual level. Many studies have overlooked the extent to which individuals may work to their own understanding of these terms, for example individual conceptions of job satisfaction, and the extent to which they may perceive their career and their own identity as ephemeral and changing. Changes may emanate from individuals’ personal circumstances e.g. divorce or health issues, and/or from external influences such as company restructuring or corporate policies. Understanding how these factors may influence notions of career progression and which matter most at an individual level is important for employers if they are to be able to effectively retain, manage, and ultimately successfully part company with their older employees. As Turner and Williams (2005) concluded:

*Successful organizations will be those that see employees as people with diverse plans, aspirations and skills and understand the range of possible policies and practices to support this in their own particular context (p.42).*

### **1.3.1 The meaning of career and career progression**

As indicated at the start of this chapter, this study aims to investigate motivation for career progression in older UK managers. Underpinning this topic is the fundamental issue of what is meant by “career” and “career progression” in the twenty-first century and how these concepts are perceived by older workers who may have experienced or witnessed significant changes in these areas across their working lives. Up to the final decades of the twentieth century, careers were defined in terms of a linear, upwardly directed trajectory involving a number of transitions across predictable and relatively stable career and/or life stages throughout working life (e.g. Super, 1957; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson and McKee, 1978). This notion reflected the comparative stability of the economic and social context within which such careers were being enacted,



a stability which was reflected also in uniform and predictable patterns of late working life and retirement. All this changed with the economic turbulence and increasing globalisation of the latter part of the twentieth century, leading to the emergence of new career theories such as boundaryless (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996) and protean (Hall, 1976) models. These theories proposed that careers no longer reflect employer-controlled progression along an upward path but may supersede traditional physical and psychological career boundaries to the extent that career progression becomes linked to each individual's psychological drivers.

It would appear then, in light of these changes, that today there is no commonly agreed definition of career. Having reached this conclusion following a review of the literature on careers, Sullivan and Baruch (2009) chose to define career as "An individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organizations that form a unique pattern over the individual's lifespan" (p.1543). This definition will be adopted as the meaning of career for the purposes of this study due to both its holistic approach to workers' experiences, and its acknowledgement of unique career outcomes. Such a definition, however, gives no indication of the meaning of "career progression" and as will be seen in chapter 2, no explicit and shared definition of this term has emerged from the contemporary careers literature to replace or augment traditional notions of career progression as meaning incremental promotion within defined career boundaries.

Recent studies which have considered career progression have failed to provide a comprehensive and unambiguous definition of the construct. For example, some scholars have continued to focus on objective variables with career progression being viewed as including "...salary, number of promotions, and number of geographic moves", without specifying what was not included (Stroh, Brett and Reilly, 1992: 252). Others have referred to wide ranging notions such as "career prospects and promotion" (Gammie and Gammie, 1997) or "successful work outcomes" (Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004). What is clear is that comparatively few studies so far have addressed the notion of

subjective psychological mobility in careers that is implied by the new career theories, and the capacity for individual change which underlies it (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006). In the absence of any other appropriate definition this study therefore proposes to approach career progression as meaning within an individual's career, "a gradual movement or development towards a destination or a more advanced state" (Compact Oxford English Dictionary, 2008). Such a definition allows consideration of all the underlying psychological variables which may drive careers while not excluding the role of objective factors, and all the forms that career movement or development might take.

The purpose of identifying definitions of career and career progression at this stage is to provide a clear starting point for an investigation into motivation for career progression for older individuals within today's career environments. Operationalising such a study also involves clearly identifying which older individuals will be investigated and why, which is considered next.

### **1.3.2 Managerial careers**

Studies to date have indicated that the meaning of career progression may vary across different industries, work types and roles (e.g. Goffee and Scase, 1992). In respect of the careers of older workers, research and case studies have been published in recent years focusing on older worker initiatives in retail and customer service contexts e.g. BT (Pollitt, 2009) and Tesco (Stoney and Roberts, 2003). Areas remain, however, where comprehensive information is not available, for example professional or white collar occupations and managerial and supervisory roles. In general this would seem to reflect that few practical initiatives are taking place within the workplace in relation to these groups as Turner and Williams (2005) intimated when they recommended that the next step for organizations such as ASDA would be to build on their work with shop-floor staff and consider the careers of managerial and head-office employees.

The comparative scarcity of material relating to older managers' careers is a particular cause for concern in respect of their value to organizations (Isabella,

1990). For example, managers may be considered less interchangeable and replaceable than other types of workers in terms of their contribution and the intellectual capital they represent (Patrickson and Ranzijn, 2006; Gunz and Jalland, 1996). The fact that managers also have relatively structured careers based on vertical or horizontal role development and in general have transferable skills and networks of contacts to facilitate career transitions (Reitman and Schneer, 2003) means that their conceptions of career progression may differ from those of generic “older workers”. To echo the view of Mintzberg (2009), they are a group about which much is known but little is really understood. What is clear, as Mintzberg explains, is that throughout their working lives managers are people with diverse career plans, aspirations and skills. Exploring how this diversity impacts motivation for career progression in later life requires a deeper understanding of the meaning of career for older managers and the potential significance of age and gender within careers, each of which is briefly examined below.

### **1.3.3 The significance of age**

As will be discussed in chapter 2, a lack of consensus exists around the extent to which traditional career models have been eroded. In general it is still recognised that objective progression (promotion) continues to take place within careers although the point at which it tends to slow or cease may vary by industry or job role (Heslin, 2005) and functional role requirements (Kooij, de Lange, Jansen and Dijkers, 2008). Significantly, in line with traditional career theory, it may also depend on an individual’s age although this may be relative to colleagues and to organizational norms of what constitutes “old” or “senior” in particular contexts (Lawrence, 1988). When considering the careers of older people it is important to recognise that there is no consistent definition of “older” for employees and within the literature many different ages have been used as a proxy. Unlike gender or ethnicity, older age is not an attribute that is either present or not (Sterns and Miklos, 1995) and a lack of clarity exists around what might be defined as “age-related changes” within careers. Additionally, the interrelationship between chronological age and other variables has often been

misunderstood in relation to work and careers. For example, ageist stereotypes often portray older employees as having negative attitudes towards change, whereas factors such as the influence of tenure (Bedeian, Ferris and Kacmar, 1992), or a greater concern for security in later life (Karp, 1987) may be more likely to exert an influence than age *per se*. What this means, for the purposes of this study, is that when considering motivation for career progression in older individuals the relationship between age-related factors and career decisions and choices is likely to be complex. Recognizing that chronological age does not exert a consistent influence on careers means that, in investigating motivation for career progression, this study must also investigate how individuals themselves perceive age-related changes as affecting their motivation and their notions of what career progression means.

#### **1.3.4 The role of gender**

A further aspect of the diverse nature of careers which is of potential significance for this study is gender. In fact, women's careers have been found, in general, to be quite dissimilar to men's, being characterised by breaks in continuity and concerns for non-work responsibilities (Powell and Mainiero, 1992; Isaksson, Johansson Lindroth and Sverke, 2006). Women's careers have been found also to be more relational than men's with both family and career being equally significant (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005). Although these differences relate to the entire career span, it is likely that changes in later life may generate a new range of differences. For example, women may be motivated either to expand or renew their careers (Power, 2009) in light of fewer external responsibilities (empty nests), or to reduce their career involvement due to caring responsibilities (elderly parents, grandchildren), a retired partner (Roberts and Friend, 2008) or simply their own desire to "opt-out" and achieve a more balanced life (Anderson, Vinnicombe and Singh, 2010). As a result, it seems probable that career motivation and notions of career progression in later life may also differ by gender. This aspect will therefore need to be taken into consideration in any study investigating motivation for career progression in late career.

## **1.4 Research gap**

Existing studies on later life careers have been wide-ranging and diverse in nature. They have typically investigated factors relating to older employees' abilities in later life (e.g.; Maurer, Weiss and Barbeite, 2003; Warr, 2001); their reactions to career plateauing (e.g. Evans and Gilbert, 1984; Near, 1984), or their transitions to retirement (e.g. Wang and Schultz, 2009; Vickerstaff, 2006). In careers research in general most scholars since the 1980s have focused on the changing nature of careers (e.g. Baruch, 2006; Sullivan and Arthur 2006) with investigations into work-related motivation tending to focus primarily on younger workers or undifferentiated groups of older workers (e.g. Kooij et al, 2007; Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004).

From an overview of these studies (see chapter 2 for further details) it emerges that currently little is known about older managers' conceptions of what drives their career and there is a lack of insight into subjective psychological mobility in later life. Research into related constructs, for example, career success, have shown that subjective variables such as influence and autonomy may become more important than external criteria such as promotion, as employees age (Sturges, 1999). Likewise, it has been revealed that older workers' values tend to change, particularly toward achieving greater work/life balance (Smola and Sutton, 2002). However no specific investigation has been undertaken into motivation for career progression in late career and how all the above factors, and more, may interrelate in respect of this. This study will address this gap, investigating what career progression means at a subjective level to managers aged over 50, what drives that progression, how it may change on an individual basis over the career and how it may differ between male and female older managers.

## **1.5 Research questions**

In order to address this research gap, a review of the relevant academic literature was undertaken (see chapter 2) which led to the formulation of the

specific research question and two sub-questions on which this study will focus. These are:

*What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?*

- *In what ways are these motivational factors perceived as different from earlier in the career?*
- *Do the motivational drivers of female managers aged over 50 differ from those of male managers aged over 50?*

How these questions were investigated and the resultant findings and conclusions are described in the remainder of this document, the structure of which is summarised in section 1.7 below. Prior to this, a brief outline is provided of my personal interest in pursuing this research.

## **1.6 A personal perspective**

My interest in motivation for career progression in older managers developed over a number of years and stemmed from two main sources. First, as a management consultant and executive coach I had found myself at times working with older managers who were wrestling with issues concerning their career identity and position and decisions they needed to make about their future. These challenges were usually hidden from colleagues and line managers, and sometimes even from partners and friends. These individuals considered they were at a stage in life where they felt they should have their career aspirations “sorted out” and they ought to be content with their current situation and should be happily winding down to retirement, but for many this was far from the case.

It was apparent that many older managers wanted a different working life, for example less pressure and stress, and more time to devote to other aspects of their lives such as family, or outside interests. Others, however, still wanted to progress further, either in their current line of work or by making a career

change – although in many cases individuals were unclear about what they wanted to do and how to go about it.

A few years ago I was also contacted separately by two different professional bodies and asked to deliver a talk to their older members around motivation in later life. These people, the majority of whom were in their fifties, had expressed an interest in finding a source of support to help them develop their ideas of what they wanted to do for the rest of their working and non-working lives. In the course of working with them, I achieved even greater insights into the complexity and variety of wants, needs, and aspirations of older managerial and professional people in relation to their working futures. All felt that they had much left to give and didn't feel old or prepared to stop, even though many were contemplating retirement. For them, it was a case of looking forward to "what next", rather than slowing down and withdrawing from the mainstream entirely.

This experience also indicated to me that there were potentially some very significant differences between the needs, wants and aspirations of males and females at this time of life. At a personal level, having lived through the development of feminism in the seventies, this was of great interest to me. Despite being a parent I have worked continuously, but recognise that this is not the case for the majority of women. With significant numbers of older female managers now in the workplace (Chartered Management Institute, 2011) I was interested in how career breaks and caring responsibilities had affected and continue to affect older women's motivation and prospects for their ongoing careers. Conversations with female friends and acquaintances indicated that for many, there was still a drive to achieve "something of my own, on my own terms", although often this was tempered by family commitments and pressure from a partner who wanted to slow down and retire.

My second source of interest in this area derived from the fact that at the same time I too was wrestling with what it meant to be over 50 and "older". For me, the most fascinating aspect is that, although from one's own perspective nothing appears to have changed, the world starts treating you differently. As a white, well-educated individual I had been used to most things being relatively

accessible to me. Now I was beginning to find that possibilities were less open; indeed judging by the accounts of friends and acquaintances, age discrimination really was alive and well in the twenty-first century workplace – particularly when it came to changing jobs. My interest in the restrictions imposed by ageing grew, especially in relation to white male managers who have traditionally been “pack leaders”. How did they feel being victims of discrimination? Or did they not (as I suspected) universally find this to be the case?

The introduction of Age Discrimination legislation through The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 brought a considerable amount of information about ageing and changing demographics into the public domain and with this my interest in the subject grew further. It appeared that, although the issues were clear and had long been predicted, little had been done or was being done to address them. There were comparatively few individuals working at practitioner level dealing with the challenges of the ageing workforce, yet much that needed to be achieved. This led to my decision to fulfil one of my own long-standing ambitions, to undertake PhD research at a leading university. My aim was not just my own satisfaction, but also the hope that eventually, somehow, I might be able to make some sort of contribution in this arena.

I wanted to extend the informal research I had already undertaken in relation to my consultancy work and to endow it with the gravitas and credence that I believe academic rigour bestows. I wanted to see if I could find some answers to some of the questions that had emerged from the experiences outlined above. I was keen to find out what was already known and if, as I suspected, there was much still to be investigated in this deeply important field, to identify how I might develop and add to it.

Where this work will lead me in the future I am unsure. What I do know is that I have no wish or need to retire and fully intend to continue to work for as long as I am able - which should be for many years to come. In the future the demand for clear insights and reliable information about older workers on which employers, government and other policy makers, and employees themselves,



can base strategies and make decisions is likely to grow. My hope is that through this investigation and my future work I will be able to contribute to that in some small part.

## **1.7 Thesis structure**

This section outlines the structure of the remaining chapters of this thesis:

Chapter 2 analyses the literature relating to career theory and career progression. It also examines what is known about the significance of age, job type and gender for careers, and reviews the role of motivation in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, expectancy theory, and the concept of career motivation. The chapter concludes with a summary of what is known and what remains to be discovered about the motivational drivers of career progression in older managers, providing the focus for the research topic.

Chapter 3 outlines the strategy for conducting the research in terms of both the philosophical perspective adopted and the practical methods utilised in undertaking the fieldwork. The chapter commences with a rationale for the selected philosophical approach and its implications followed by a detailed account of the research design. The three stages of the study in terms of fieldwork are then explained and described together with the selected data analysis techniques.

Chapter 4 is the first of two chapters which presents the findings relating to the main research question *What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?* The chapter commences with an examination of the influence of the financial services environment and the relationship between individual identity and motivation. It then details participants' views of the positive and negative career drivers that stimulate their career progression before explaining the nature of a number of personal and workplace influences on these drivers.

Chapter 5 explores the findings in relation to individual conceptions of the meaning of career progression. It demonstrates how conceptions of career

progression relate to managers' attitudes toward career progression itself and to their attitudes towards career opportunities. Against this background the meaning of career progression is categorized into a number of variables relating to organizational career progression and personal career progression. The chapter concludes by examining attitudes towards retirement.

Chapter 6 examines the findings relating to the two supporting research questions relating to age-related changes and potential gender-related differences. It explores perceived age-related changes in motivation from three perspectives: age and identity, age and experience and age and career motivation. Possible differences in motivation for career progression between male and female managers are considered next in terms of gender-related responsibilities, male and female career development, and drivers for career progression.

Chapter 7 discusses the overall findings, relating them back to previous studies and illustrating how and in what ways they extend, contradict, and/or differ from what was already known. An investigation into how the interrelationship of career drivers, influences (including retirement) and attitudes adds a temporal element to career motivation leads to the introduction of a series of career progression orientations which emerged from the study based on the managers' differing career aspirations. Age and gender-related differences are also discussed, together with the implications of the findings in relation to career motivation theory and expectancy theory.

Chapter 8 reprises the aims and content of the study and presents the conclusions derived from the findings. It outlines the areas of contribution to academic theory and to practice. The limitations of the study are discussed also, together with suggestions for future research. The chapter and this thesis conclude with a personal note relating to the relevance and value of this PhD.

## **Chapter 2: A review of the literature**

Over the past fifty years careers and career progression have been examined and explained from a number of perspectives. This chapter reviews and analyses this body of knowledge to ascertain what is currently known about motivation for career progression in older managers. The starting point is contextual, examining traditional and contemporary career theories and the concept of career plateauing (the absence of career progression). This leads into an exploration of the notion of internal and external careers and the interrelationship between objective and subjective career progression at an individual level. The implications of age, occupational role and gender for later life careers are considered next followed by an examination of motivational theory and the concept of career motivation. The chapter concludes with a summary of what is known and what remains to be discovered about motivation for career progression in older managers, leading to the formulation of research questions to provide the focus of further investigation.

### **2.1 Career theories**

As explained in chapter 1, the starting point for exploring the meaning of career and career progression in contemporary employment contexts is understanding the changing nature of career theory. Until relatively recently traditional career models were paramount due to the economic and social conditions within which they operated. These were exemplified by career-stage and life-span theories such as those of Super (1957) and Levinson et al. (1978) which explained career progress as upward movement through a number of hierarchically ordered stages relating to developmental stage and/or age (Adamson, Doherty and Viney, 1998). In general, employees worked for one or a few employers over the course of their working life and progression and tenure were seen as employer-created and controlled. These theories were based on a pattern of full-time male employment and situated within a framework of comparative economic stability (Reitman and Schneer, 2003; Scase and Goffee, 1990).

Super's (1957) Career Stage theory proposed that as people progressed through their careers they experienced four different psychological stages: *exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement*, representing different levels of interest, satisfaction, motivation and commitment. Career stage was determined by a person's perceptions and circumstances in relation to their career with age as a secondary and, some maintain, an unintended determinant (London and Greller, 1991). The model also included the concept of *recycling* i.e. going back to an earlier stage as a result of a job change, although as Sullivan (1999) maintained, older individuals' ability to keep 'recycling' their careers could be restricted. Super's theory was also criticized for its lack of relevance to female careers (Arnold, 1997; Ornstein, Cron and Slocum, 1989).

Later, Levinson et al.'s Life Span model (1978) which emerged from interviews with 40 men, proposed four sequential age-related life stages: *childhood, and early, middle, and late adulthood*. Development varied between stable and transitional states and involved different key activities and psychological adjustments. The model was founded on the notion of a consistent structure of lockstep progression relating to shared age- and experience-related norms. As such it has been criticized for its rigidity, lack of flexibility in relation to age and, significantly, the extent to which it too failed to reflect the reality of women's working lives (Arnold, 1997; Powell and Mainiero, 1992). Also, the main focus was on early to mid-career; although Levinson later proposed additional stages for those over 50, these were never fully developed (Arnold, 1997).

A fundamental difference between these two theories is that Super's model was more concerned with individuals' *job attitudes*, whereas Levinson et al.'s related more to *career decisions* (Ornstein et al., 1989). This said, both theories have been heavily criticised for their blurring of distinctions between psychological development, age, and tenure (Reitman and Schneer, 2003). For example, although Super's theory assumed that career development passed through distinct psychological phases (trial/exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline) studies have shown that not only was age frequently substituted for

psychological adjustment but few differences occurred between individuals after the trial stage (Isaksson et al., 2006). Similarly, although Levinson et al.'s theory proposed the existence of three post-midlife stages (growth, continuity, and decline) each marked by critical changes, further studies found that such transitions were more likely to result from individual shifts in identity rather than commonly experienced changes (e.g. Greller and Simpson, 1999). Other scholars (e.g. Bedeian et al., 1992) indicated that within these models the effects of age and tenure may lead to very different outcomes.

While these limitations are significant, perhaps the greatest restriction of these models in terms of their usefulness for understanding career progression in contemporary contexts is that both were founded in a work environment in which, it was proposed, individuals were employed in one line of work for one employer with no significant conflicts with family or other roles, i.e. they represented white, US, middle class, male career experiences of the time (Isaksson et al., 2006). To counter this, as the economic and social circumstances of the last decades of the twentieth century underwent radical change, a number of alternative career theories emerged. These theories saw career progression increasingly described in terms of self-managed careers and horizontal movement – often across a number of roles and employers.

*Boundaryless* (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996) and *protean* (Hall, 1976) theories were the two most significant career models which emerged to reflect the changing nature of career environments. Boundaryless careers are those that transcend the boundaries of a single employer and reflect the career experiences of individuals who may change employers many times in a series of lateral or even downward career moves (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). A summary of the ways in which boundaryless careers differ from traditional linear careers is provided in Table 1 below. For the purposes of this study the most significant differences are that under boundaryless career theory the individual takes greater responsibility for his or her own development and career progression and seeks psychologically meaningful work, rather than career progression being measured solely by incremental pay, promotion and status.

**Table 1: A comparison of traditional and boundaryless careers (Sullivan 1999: 458)**

	<i>Traditional career</i>	<i>Boundaryless career</i>
<b>Employment relationship:</b>	<i>Job security for loyalty</i>	<i>Employability for performance</i>
<b>Boundaries:</b>	<i>One or two firms</i>	<i>Multiple firms</i>
<b>Skills:</b>	<i>Firm specific</i>	<i>Transferable</i>
<b>Success measured by:</b>	<i>Pay, promotion, status</i>	<i>Psychologically meaningful work</i>
<b>Responsibility for career management:</b>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Individual</i>
<b>Training:</b>	<i>Formal programmes</i>	<i>On-the-job</i>
<b>Milestones:</b>	<i>Age-related</i>	<i>Learning related</i>

The protean career (Hall, 1976) is a related but not identical model to the boundaryless career. It focuses on the psychological attitude of an individual towards the management of their own career to the extent that, as demonstrated in Table 2 below, individual psychological mobility and success, and career progression may be synonymous, leading to a new type of career contract between the employee and their employer (Mirvis and Hall, 1994). Of particular interest for this study is that a protean career is seen as a lifelong series of experiences, skills, learning, transitions and identity changes such that “career age” rather than chronological age becomes important.

**Table 2: The new protean career contract (Hall and Moss, 1998: 26)**

<b>The new “protean” career contract</b>	
<p>1. The career is managed by the person, not the organization.</p>	<p>5. The ingredients for success change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From know-how to learn-how</li> <li>• From job-security to employability</li> <li>• From organizational careers to protean careers, and</li> <li>• From “work self” to “whole self”</li> </ul>
<p>2. The career is a lifelong series of experiences, skills, learning, transitions and identity changes (“career age” counts, not chronological age).</p>	<p>6. The organization provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging assignments</li> <li>• Developmental relationships</li> <li>• Information and other developmental resources</li> </ul>
<p>3. Development is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous learning</li> <li>• Self-directed</li> <li>• Relational, and</li> <li>• Found in work challenges.</li> </ul>	<p>7. The goal: psychological success.</p>
<p>4. Development is not (necessarily)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal training</li> <li>• Retraining, or</li> <li>• Upward mobility</li> </ul>	

Essentially, both boundaryless and protean models shift the responsibility for career development from the employer to the individual who creates and develops their own career identity by moving between employers and maintaining allegiance to themselves rather their employer. The essential difference between the two models is that whereas a boundaryless career relates essentially to the career environment, a protean career is more closely linked to notions of individual adaptability and identity (Lips-Wiersma and

McMorland, 2006). Confirming this, a study by Briscoe, Hall and Frautschy DeMuth (2006) found no relationship between physical mobility and a boundaryless mindset, the latter being linked instead to a proactive personality, career authenticity, openness to experience and a goal orientation towards mastery.

A key criticism which has emerged relating to the development of new career theories is the theoretical over-simplification of career contexts which has resulted. As Pringle and Mallon (2003) indicate, traditional careers tend to be seen in the literature as linear, stable, predictable, and secure in organizations with rigid hierarchical structures, whereas contemporary careers are presented as the opposite of this; multi-directional, insecure and unpredictable in situations that are constantly changing. Nevertheless, as Baruch (2006) maintains, many organizations still adhere to relatively traditional systems within comparatively stable environments with employers continuing to exert considerable influence over managing their employees' careers. For example, in a recent interview in the UK press the Chief HR Officer of Shell was quoted as saying:

*Our company is still predominantly one where people join young, leave old and follow a pathway through the organization. (People Management, 2010:20)*

This being the case, assumptions about the ubiquity of career models cannot be made and any study into career progression must take into account the organizational context within which individual careers are enacted and the impact this may have on employees' motivation (Rousseau and Fried 2011, Latham and Pinder, 2005).

Further theories such as *Kaleidoscope* (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005), and *Authentic* (Svejenova, 2005) careers have been developed subsequent to boundaryless and protean models to explain different organizational career paths and their implications. However, together with boundaryless and protean theories, these too focus on careers in which individuals are employed by an organization. Peiperl and Baruch's (1997) concept of *post-corporate* career



sees careers as taking place outside large organizations (although individuals may continue to do work for an organization that previously employed them), leading individuals to identify more with an industry sector or profession and involving greater individual independence and flexibility. Peiperl and Baruch proposed that post-corporate careers may be an increasingly prevalent and attractive option for many older individuals who may have difficulty in obtaining a new job, a suggestion which may be reflected in recent UK statistics showing that at least one person in six in the 50-64 age cohort has considered starting a business (Prime Initiative, 2009).

## **2.2 Career mobility, renewal and embeddedness**

Recent studies reveal that there are still large numbers of older individuals in the workplace for whom objective career progress has ceased, even though with self-directed careers in boundaryless situations one would no longer expect to find this situation (e.g. Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser, 2008). This adds weight to Baruch's (2006) point above that contemporary careers are not as ubiquitous in practice as might be thought from their place in the academic literature. In part this situation may result from ageism creating general barriers to job mobility for older employees (Daniel and Heywood, 2007) thereby inhibiting them from developing boundaryless careers. A further factor may be the extent to which older individuals themselves no longer seek further progression (Loretto and White, 2006). This latter factor is particularly pertinent in light of Sullivan and Baruch's (2009) conclusion in their review of advances in career theory and research, that:

*Increasingly, individuals are driven more by their own desires than by organizational career management practices. Thus while organizational leaders are struggling to identify positive strategies and practices to tackle the changing work environment and workforce... individuals are ... taking more responsibility for their own career development and employability (2009:1543).*

What this may mean is that regardless of the nature of the career context within which they operate or the objective form of their career, individuals may be adopting a protean mindset (Hall, 1976) and seizing the initiative for achieving their own career outcomes. If so, there is no reason why such behaviours should not also extend to older employees, even those who may have commenced their career in traditional career environments. One way in which this may be achieved is through career recycling or career renewal. Career recycling, a concept devised by Super (1984) to explain the process of going back to an earlier stage in the career as a result of a job change, was expanded by Sullivan, Martin, Carden and Mainiero (2003) to mean a process by which individuals re-examine career choices and take action to change some aspect of their career. Power's (2009) concept of career renewal took this further still by suggesting that this relates to individuals who take some action to improve their career position having "perceived a decrease from previous levels in their feelings of positive work involvement and/or subjective career success" (p.115). Power saw mid-career renewal as being particularly pertinent to the careers of older workers who are now staying in the workforce longer. In line with Peiperl and Baruch's (1997) model of post-corporate careers (outlined above), she also saw the concept as encompassing changes that resulted in new careers outside the organizational work environment, e.g. becoming self-employed. The significance of this is that it raises the question of the extent to which the boundaries relating to career progression in later life may be moving such that career progress may now relate to career moves outside the organizational context, and even possibly post-retirement.

Whilst it can be argued that there are subtle differences in meaning between the constructs of career mobility and career progression, it is nevertheless the case that the two are closely related in their focus on some sort of movement. Under traditional career theories this mobility followed an inherently upward trajectory. Now mobility can take many different forms, objective and subjective, although knowledge about how, why and in what ways subjective mobility occurs and is enacted is still scant. Following their review of the nature of contemporary

careers and the recent directions in which careers research has developed, Sullivan and Baruch (2009) concluded:

*Few studies have been conducted on the less prevalent types of mobility, such as downward movements as well as why certain types of mobility occur more often than others... Relatively little research has been conducted on changes in psychological boundaries... defined as "the capacity to move as seen through the mind of the career actor". (p. 1551)*

Increased insight into the complex relationship between internal and external careers and the implications this may have for career mobility was provided by Feldman (2007) who maintained that career stability and mobility are a function of both the "*motivation* to change careers and *ability* to change careers" (p.179). In explaining this he used the concept of *career embeddedness* which predicts that career mobility and stability are a function of four main groups of variables: an individual's networks and their links to their current career; the career path/person fit; predicted sacrifices that would result from making changes; and barriers to making changes. Feldman used career embeddedness to understand factors operating at different levels - individual, group, job, and occupational - that influence older workers' career stability, although his research focused on radical career change rather than changes within current careers. Feldman found that work skills and personal values developed early in the career may play a major role in career decisions throughout life and indicated a need for future research to investigate how much individuals are willing and able to overcome career embeddedness and change careers, taking into account how far away from their current career they are prepared to move. He suggested such an approach might aid understanding of older managers' motivation for career progression in light of the fact that it acknowledges the role of external constraints and facilitators on an individual's *ability* to move as well as their own internal motivation to *want* to. One of his key contributions in terms of the focus of this study was to question whether career stability represents a desirable state of personal stability (as was traditionally thought) or the more

negative state of lack of ambition resulting from such factors as poor decisions made earlier in the career and/or lack of training.

The relevance of this review of career theory is that it has shown that today employees are likely to be taking greater responsibility for their own career progression regardless of the traditional or boundaryless nature of the organizational context surrounding them, and accordingly will be motivated by individually significant variables. In light of decreased job security this may extend to individuals reassessing what “career” and “career progression” mean to them in terms of their own boundaries between work and the remainder of their life. This was accentuated by Wilson and Davies (1999) who proposed that a career now represents:

*the long-term accumulation of education, skills and experience that an individual sells to an employer (or employers) to try and provide the lifestyle that they want for themselves and their dependents (p.102)*

This definition moves away from the achievement of purely employment-related success as a career driver and focuses instead on the attempt to achieve an individually rewarding lifestyle. From Wilson and Davies’ study (which focused on the changing career strategies of individuals with at least 15 years managerial experience) three key aspects of careers emerged as being individually important: first, work-related events, second, an individual’s relationship to work, and third their overall lifestyle, with individuals focusing on achieving and retaining equilibrium across all three. Investigating what is known about how this might be enacted at an individual level involves examining the role of both objective and subjective career variables in career progression. But, before doing so, the role of *career plateauing* will be reviewed in order to provide insight into which variables have been seen as impacting the meaning of career progression thus far, and their ongoing relevance to contemporary careers.

## 2.3 Career plateauing

Career plateauing is “a situation where upward career progression ceases” (FERENCE, Stoner and Warren, 1977: 602) as employers no longer develop or incrementally reward certain employees. Although plateauing can occur at any stage in an individual’s career it is more likely to occur in older individuals (Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser, 2008) and is generally regarded as a negative phenomenon (Near, 1984). A significant body of work focusing on career progression in terms of career plateauing was undertaken in the 1970s and 80s reflecting the economic changes and flattening organizational structures at that time which were impacting employees’ career prospects. As a result, much of the theoretical focus on career progression to date has been on explaining it in terms of physical factors largely external to the employee, and/or examining the consequences of plateauing (e.g. Ettington, 1998).

Definitions of career plateauing such as FERENCE et al.’s (above) tended to restrict the meaning of the concept simply to cessation of further hierarchical progression under traditional career models. For the purposes of this study, more recent approaches may better explain the reality of career plateauing for older employees. For example, ALLEN, RUSSELL, POTEET and DOBBINS (1999) introduced the notion of *job content plateauing*, which occurs when there is no longer scope for growth within an individual’s job and it has ceased to be personally challenging. APPELBAUM and FINESTONE (1994) chose to represent this situation as a distinction between *organizational plateauing* and *personal plateauing*. Organizationally plateaued individuals are those with the capability to progress and perform well, but who are held back by lack of job opportunities or management attitudes; personally plateaued individuals are seen as not desiring a higher level job due either to lack of ability or motivation. Although this appears to represent a clear dichotomy there is one aspect of career plateauing where further clarification is still required. CHAO (1990) suggested that individuals saw organizational career plateauing as a continuum from “a little bit plateaued” to “completely plateaued”, but was unable to ascertain whether they regarded plateauing and progression as one concept or separate

concepts, and whether career progression was the result of doing certain things and career plateauing the result of a failure to do those things. If plateauing and progression *are* different concepts it raises the question of which variables need to be present or absent for individuals to cross from one state to another and what part is played by individual motivation and feelings about what constitutes progression and plateauing.

Although this question requires further investigation, what these studies have made clear is that career plateauing and career progression can be both objective (employer-controlled and judged) and subjective (controlled and judged by the individual). This is potentially significant for how older individuals, in particular, may still see their career as progressing even though, in objective terms, further development has ceased. The implications of this are considered further below.

## **2.4 Objective and subjective career progression**

Understanding how objective (employer-controlled and judged) and subjective (controlled and judged by the individual) career progression differ and potentially overlap is important when considering what motivates career progression. Numerous studies have examined the role of objective career factors (pay and promotion) in career progression (e.g. Near, 1984; Veiga, 1981), tending to take the approach that individuals share the same concerns about the objective success they attain. As outlined above, in terms of *objective* progress, motivators such as promotion and increased pay and status have long been recognised as primary drivers. However more recent studies have shown that, in fact, people judge their careers and their position according to a wide range of individually significant, subjective variables, e.g. influence, job satisfaction and peer recognition (Heslin, 2005). This approach sees careers as reflecting a wide range of psychological factors such as individuals' innate disposition, career experiences and current career context (Greller, 2006; Armstrong-Stassen and Cameron, 2005). This said, as Sullivan and Arthur (2006) confirmed, few studies have been undertaken into subjective

components of career progression such as those relating to personality, values, self-image and individual motivational drivers.

Several authors such as Chao (1990) and Arnold (1997) have made the point that an individual's own perceptions and interpretations about their career and their experiences, including contextual factors, are equally, if not more important than objective factors. Type of career (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006), age-related factors – including the exact conception of age which is being applied (Kooij et al., 2008) and gender perspectives (O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005) are also key variables. Additionally, at a fundamental level the extent to which particular variables are either relatively stable within the individual, such as personality and values (Judge, Higgins, Thorenson and Barrick, 1999), or subject to change over time and in respect of context, as with motivation and attitudes (Sturges, 1999; Sterns and Miklos, 1995; Near, 1984), emerges as an important distinction when considering career progression. Whilst not providing definitive answers thus far, such studies may partly explain why some older managers continue to climb the career ladder achieving ever greater status and position whereas others cease to progress (Nicholson, 1993).

Schein (1978) differentiated between “*external career* – the (objective) opportunities provided by employers for individuals to follow a development path during their time with an organization and *internal career* – the (subjective) path followed by individuals pursuing an occupation in order to meet their own needs” (p.1). Almost twenty years later, against a background of changing career environments and flattening career structures, Schein (1996) concluded that in light of the breakdown of traditional career contexts, individuals would have to become more self-reliant and innovative in determining how to achieve the realisation of their internal career needs. He predicted that self-knowledge would become increasingly important, as would the ability to analyse and pursue job opportunities. This view was reinforced in a study by Sturges (2004) who concluded that the increasing individualization of careers had led to a greater focus on the development of individual career competencies to enable improved personal marketability and mobility. She maintained that as

individuals became increasingly responsible for managing and developing their own careers, they may find themselves faced also with greater responsibility for managing the relationship between work and the non-work aspects of their lives. Sturges concluded that understanding individual career orientations in today's career contexts could both help individuals to pursue different kinds of career paths reflecting their own inclinations, and assist employers to cultivate a more diverse range of skills and capabilities within their workforce. Sturges was considering Schein's career anchor orientations, but her point may also apply to the influence of other orientational categories, a topic that will be revisited later in this document.

If responsibility for career progression is shifting from employer to employee and objective factors are becoming less important in some careers, the next question which arises is which motivational drivers, i.e. factors that lead an individual to undertake or persist in an activity (Amabile, 1993), are most likely to affect individuals' career progression? In respect of this the literature reveals that three main concepts have been used as a proxy for career progression: career success, personal development, and job satisfaction. But analysis of relevant studies has also accentuated that, although these constructs may be equally or even more important in career progression than objective variables, it is not fully appreciated how they act as motivational drivers. These are now, therefore, considered in turn to establish what is already known about the role of each.

#### **2.4.1.1 Career success**

Career success has been defined as the accumulation of individuals' real or perceived achievements relating to their work experiences (Judge et al., 1999) and studies (e.g. Baruch, 2006) have revealed that this involves a wide variety of individual career goals, vocational drivers and psychological perspectives. Under traditional career models career success was associated with the achievement of objective rewards such as advancement by promotion and incremental pay increases linked to ever higher levels of performance (Arnold, 1997). Today, however, as objective career progression, i.e. success by



advancement may be less available than it was in the past (Sturges, 1999) it is likely that employees will be increasingly investigating what success means from their own perspective, focusing on more attainable and potentially more valid models. Heslin (2005), for example, proposed that accomplishment, expertise and personal achievement may be the best means of measuring career success for managers who believe their career to be boundaryless.

Notions of what constitutes career success also may shift over time (Baruch, 2006), a point which provided a focus for a study by Sturges (1999) into the meaning of career success and how this changes with age (although her study did not extend to managers aged over 50). She considered criteria for success in the context of three dimensions: internal (accomplishment, personal achievement, enjoyment/job satisfaction, integrity, balance), external (reward, status), and intangible (personal recognition, influence). She found that, for a number of reasons, describing success purely in external terms does not actually match what many managers feel about their own achievements, a conclusion shared by Judge, et al. (1999).

#### **2.4.1.2 Career and personal development**

Traditionally it has been maintained that employees must keep developing in terms of the acquisition or improvement of skills in order to remain promotable and such development has been considered and measured as a form of career progression (e.g. Warr, 2001). This said, “development” is often judged objectively in terms of work context and demands and may be focused on those things that the employer values rather than what is valued by employees. Such development may even act as a de-motivator for individuals if they perceive themselves as in a plateaued situation or if they see no need for skills development. Studies (e.g. Maurer, 2001) show that career development and learning can be motivated both by factors relating to development outcomes (extrinsic factors) and by elements inherent in the development process itself (intrinsic factors). In contrast, personal development, by definition, solely involves growth that is meaningful to the individual and pertinent to what they perceive is valuable and relevant. Expectation of outcomes is also important;

while under traditional organizational career models those who did not undertake training and skills upgrading would expect to face reduced promotional opportunities, in new career contexts employees may still fail to progress regardless of willingness and participation. Personal development then may be important as a motivator for career progression in that if individuals perceive that they are continuing to develop personally they may consider, even in the absence of promotion, that their career is continuing to progress.

#### **2.4.1.3 Job satisfaction**

A third concept which has been closely aligned to subjective career progression in the literature is job satisfaction. Some studies suggest that it may be a key motivator for individuals who may invest considerable effort in its pursuit in the absence of more tangible prizes such as further pay and promotion (Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004; Sterns and Miklos, 1995). Others scholars have seen job satisfaction and career success as being inextricably intertwined (Janson and Martin, 1982), while yet others have viewed *job satisfaction* as a temporal situation concerned only with satisfaction with the current role, preferring to focus on *career satisfaction* as a long term state reflecting fulfilment and contentment with the career overall (Maurer et al., 2003). This latter point is important in that some employees may be satisfied with their overall career achievements even though they may perceive that their current role lacks further opportunities (Ettington, 1998). This may lead to disaffection, but it appears more likely that career satisfaction may ameliorate job satisfaction (Feldman and Weitz, 1988). It may also help to explain why numerous studies have shown that even long-term plateaued managers seem happy with their situation and tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction than colleagues who are still upwardly mobile (Janson and Martin, 1982; Near, 1980). That said, these individuals may in part be changing their attitudes and perceptions in relation to the reality of their situation in order to maintain feelings of worth and to protect the position they have already achieved (Warr, 2001).

From the literature then it appears that “job satisfaction” is a dynamic concept that comprises a range of different attributes which vary according to what is

important to each individual in a certain context at a particular point in time, and may help explain how employees react once objectively plateaued. Perhaps the key point is that it provides a construct for measuring the extent to which plateaued employees view their situation as a positive experience, for example those with high levels of career and/or job satisfaction may still see their career as progressing in these terms. However although career success, personal development and job satisfaction have all been linked to subjective career progression, to date existing studies provide no clear guidelines as to how, if at all, these concepts interact in respect of motivation for career progression. For example, although studies concerning personal development and career success incorporate subjective notions of forward career movement they fail to provide sufficient detail about how these translate into motivation for career progression. Similarly, although the achievement of job satisfaction may be a benchmark for career success (Janson and Martin, 1982) there is little to clarify how this is subjectively translated into career progression in those who no longer seek career success in objective terms.

The review of traditional and contemporary career theories and career plateauing undertaken above has demonstrated that, although career progression can no longer be evaluated purely in objective terms, career context is still a significant factor. It has shown that careers can be evaluated in both external/organizational terms and internal/personal terms. Furthermore, not only does the absence of ongoing objective rewards not necessarily mark the end of career progress, but individuals may choose not to pursue such rewards if they are available. What is clear from this analysis therefore is that much remains to be explored about subjective career progression in contemporary contexts. This being the case, the next stage is to investigate the potential significance of particular variables such as age, occupational role and gender to any future study in order to clearly define a specific group for investigation.

## **2.5 Career variables: age, occupational role, and gender**

If, as has been demonstrated above, all careers are not identical then it may be presumed that notions of progression within those careers may also differ for different groups of people. This section therefore explores in turn the implications of age for motivation for career progression and the extent to which certain career and individual variables may remain constant or change over time, the rationale for choosing to focus on managerial careers, and potential gender differences.

### **2.5.1 Age and its implications for careers**

As explained earlier in this chapter, career plateauing in traditional career environments is more likely to occur in older employees (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008) with mobility under boundaryless and protean career models being restricted for those aged 50 and over by age-related barriers to new employment (Daniel and Heywood, 2007). Thus it is important to consider in some detail the relationship between age and careers and specifically, age and career progression. Whatever their form, careers do not exist in a vacuum and are subject to employer policies, practices and decisions that continue to reflect objective variables such as pay and promotion. But, as Greller and Stroh (1995) suggested, these may have greater importance to individuals earlier rather than later in their lives. Employee policies and rewards also may be based on the assumption that all older individuals share the same motivation towards career progression (Evans and Gilbert, 1984) and thus will respond in the same way. In fact, studies have shown that not only will the extent to which policies and rewards act as positive motivational drivers differ, but negative reactions may result. Some older individuals will be unreceptive to what they perceive as irrelevant or unobtainable rewards, while others may become de-motivated and leave the workplace as a response to inappropriate development challenges (Greller and Stroh, 2004; Duncan, 2003).

Older studies examining the relationship between age and careers suggested the emergence of age norms and the idea that as individuals age they become

more similar (e.g. Neugarten, Moore and Lowe, 1965). In fact, this appears to be far from the case. Greller and Simpson (1999) maintained that with age individual differences increase because older individuals have lived longer and experienced more, a view reinforced by scholars such as Caprara, Caprara and Stecca (2003) who proposed that changes in personality across the lifespan exert a greater impact at an individual level than external change itself.

Although an increasing body of research now focuses on issues relating to “older workers”, in fact ageing is an individual process and older people do not consistently, if at all, view themselves as part of a group defined primarily by their age (Bytheway, 1995). An individual’s view of themselves may not match the ageing identity (and its implications) bestowed upon them by others to the extent that they may even be motivated, in some cases, to actively disprove what they perceive as stereotypes (Sherman, 1994). One of the difficulties in considering the impact of chronological age upon careers is that “older age” is not an attribute which is either present or not as with gender or ethnicity; its meaning relies heavily on both context and individual self-image. As Sterns and Miklos (1995) acknowledged, “Relatively little research has addressed the quite basic question of how workers will perceive themselves, or be perceived by others as old” (p256). In fact, the relevance of age to careers - which for the purposes of this study refers specifically to older rather than younger or middle age - can be considered from a number of different perspectives. Those of particular significance for this study are the influence of individual conceptions of ageing, the lack of distinction between the effects of age and the effects of tenure on careers, the interrelationship between age and career contexts and models, and the influence of retirement.

### **2.5.1.1 Individual conceptions of ageing**

Research into what it means to be “older” thus far has been largely quantitative and somewhat diverse. For example, studies have chosen to focus variously on subjective age identity (e.g. Desmette and Gaillard, 2008); identification with a particular age group (e.g. Bultena, and Powers, 1978); and the extent to which

an ageing identity applies to younger or older age or to ageing in general (e.g. Freund, 1997).

In order to demonstrate how perceptions of age may vary in later life, Sherman (1994) conducted a qualitative study into self-perceptions of age identity interviewing 101 people aged between 41 and 96. What her study revealed overall was that different people were aware of feeling older at different times, and that some never felt “old” even in the latter stages of life. It also established that the acceptance or rejection of age-related expectations was by no means standard. Likewise, a study by Kooij et al. (2008) proposed that at least five different conceptualisations of the meanings of age affected the direction and termination of older individuals’ motivation to continue to work.

#### **2.5.1.2 Age and tenure**

The second perspective on the relationship between age and careers relates to the link between age and tenure with the boundary between the two frequently being relatively indistinct. Often individuals have the ability to “make a job their own” particularly after a long period of tenure (Warr and Fay, 2001) and clarification of the motivation for progression for individuals in long-tenure situations may be significant. Questioning whether and how age and tenure might be linked to job satisfaction, Bedeian et al., (1992) found that whereas age-job satisfaction relationships were weak, tenure-job satisfaction models were stronger. This study made an important contribution in highlighting the distinction between the two concepts which many other studies overlook, a distinction which may be potentially significant for this study. The concept of career embeddedness (Feldman, 2007) mentioned above, may be particularly pertinent to the link between age and tenure in the way in which it examines both individuals’ *motivation* to change careers and their *ability* to change careers. For some older employees, long tenure may be symptomatic of an inability to change rather than lack of motivation to want to progress.

### **2.5.1.3 Age and career contexts and models**

The third perspective on the link between age and careers is that of the significance of age in relation to career contexts and models. Many older managers who now operate in the type of contemporary career environments outlined earlier in this chapter will have commenced their careers under traditional hierarchical promotional systems (Goffee and Scase, 1992). This may set them apart from younger managers in terms of both experience and expectations and place them in a situation where they are at a disadvantage and unable or unwilling to compete according to these new norms.

### **2.5.1.4 The influence of retirement**

The fourth and final perspective relates to the influence of retirement, an age-related process, on career progression. As mentioned earlier, retirement today appears to have become a prime example of the more widespread social process of deinstitutionalisation, by which many aspects of life and traditional life patterns are breaking down and becoming individualised (Vickerstaff, 2006:456). Although the focus of this study is not on retirement, it may be regarded as an influencing factor inasmuch as generally it is thought of as a significant age-related milestone traditionally representing the end of working life and by definition, the end point of career progression. The extent to which personal circumstance impacts ideas about this end point may depend on individual perceptions regarding variables such as expected or acceptable 'retirement age' within and outside of any organizational norms; the extent to which individuals see themselves as ready to retire; health; family and life stage situation; type of job; how satisfying they find their work; and whether they have adequate financial means to allow them to retire (Flynn, 2010; Maestas, 2010; Wang and Schultz, 2009).

Although the word is commonplace, 'retirement' is a vague concept which is essentially socially constructed. Traditionally, in common discourse retirement has been conceptualized as a short period of leisure before death; an abrupt cessation of work marked by receipt of a pension leading to a future of non-

work (Beehr, Glazer, Nielson and Farrer, 2000). The extent to which longevity and social change have now overturned this concept of retirement, such that it is no longer a transition that is experienced similarly by all older people, has been examined in a number of studies (e.g. Flynn, 2010, Maestas, 2010, Vickerstaff, 2006) along with variables that are linked to different retirement models. In the twenty first century what constitutes and prescribes 'retirement activities' is increasingly unclear, as is the nature of the retirement role (Savishinsky, 2000). Traditional concepts fail to take into account the complexity of ways in which retirement actually occurs today, the influence of context, the factors underlying the retirement process, and the degree of control individuals themselves may or may not have over the decision. In line with this a number of authors have commented on the shift from retirement as a 'cliff-edge' experience whereby individuals move from working one day to being retired the next to becoming a more gradual or staged process (e.g. Maestas, 2010; Gobeski and Beehr, 2009).

In light of the fact that numerous people are now continuing to work or returning to work post-retirement, Greller and Richtermeyer (2006) suggested that the work-retirement distinction may be oversimplified, overlooking person-specific combinations of work, leisure, family and community roles. What is clear however is that the ability to afford to leave a paid career role and retire to a lesser paid or unpaid lifestyle continues to be a key factor underpinning retirement decisions and the amount of control individuals are able to exercise over making the retirement choice. For example Vickerstaff's (2006) investigation into retirement decisions suggested that "paid managers and professionals were most likely to have the understanding and financial wherewithal to be able to negotiate a preferred retirement option for themselves" (p.470).

A further factor connected to retirement is the increasing emergence of "bridge employment" (i.e. employment that 'bridges' the gap from pre-retirement employment to full retirement) reflecting the fact that retirement is moving away from the traditional "cliff edge" experience to a more graduated withdrawal from



work (Maestas, 2010; Gobeski and Beehr, 2009). In terms of career theory some scholars view such bridge employment as simply another career cycle within boundaryless careers, reflecting the fact that under such models individuals repeatedly move through a number of career cycles encompassing exploration, establishment and maintenance-disengagement, rather than prolonging the maintenance part of the cycle (Mirvis and Hall, 1996). Changes to career patterns in late career, for example moving to part-time work in a different arena post-retirement, simply become a continuation of this pattern. Post-retirement work may then become a continuation of career progression for those individuals who have developed the psychological mobility to transfer skills across career boundaries. In practice it remains to be discovered how the erosion of the boundaries surrounding work and non-work in retirement may impact individuals' own conceptions of career progression and at what point they now see their career ending.

This section has explored some of the implications of older age for careers. By investigating individual conceptions of age, the relationship between age and tenure and age and career contexts and models it has demonstrated that there is much existing evidence to suggest that the careers of older individuals may differ from those of their younger colleagues and even their younger selves. The influence of retirement as an endpoint or milestone in late career may also affect career motivation. From these studies it is clear that further investigation is required in order to achieve an understanding of the motivational drivers of career progression in older individuals in today's career contexts and what career progression may mean to them on an individual basis. For now, two further variables – organizational role, and the potential significance of gender in relation to career progression, will be considered next.

### **2.5.2 Managerial careers**

As explained above, when considering motivation for career progression it is essential to recognise that on a number of levels careers are not experienced similarly by all older individuals. If older workers inherently have little in

common (Kooij et al., 2008) it is important to clarify specifically *which* group of older individuals is under investigation in any study of the careers of older individuals if greater insight is to be gained. To date most age-related workplace initiatives and studies have focused on non-managerial workers, a group which constitutes the majority of the working population. Although a vast body of research continues to be undertaken into managers and management it is still the case that “We have yet to come to grips with the simple realities of... be [ing] a regular manager” (Mintzberg, 2009:1). Similarly definitions of “manager” abound focusing variously on their duties, status, or position. For the purposes of differentiating managers from other workers, this study has adopted Mintzberg’s (2009) definition of a manager as “someone who is responsible for a whole organization or some identifiable part of it” (p.12), in this way separating the concept from specific managerial types or supervisory activities.

In respect of differences between older managers and the remainder of the older workforce, there appears to be a number of reasons why each group may require a different approach. First, managers tend to have relatively structured careers based on vertical or horizontal role development, unlike generic “older workers” whose careers may be simply a series of individual unrelated jobs, or represent movement in the same job role across employers (Reitman and Schner, 2003). In itself, “career” is an independent and context-specific construct, different from “job” or “occupation” by virtue of a cumulative process of skills development and experience over time (Baruch and Rosenstein, 1992). Second, managers represent a significant function within the contemporary workplace being involved in a number of operations which are fundamental to the successful performance of the organization. The significance of managerial responsibilities such as supervising, monitoring and delegating is that in order to be implemented effectively each involves some degree of knowledge, experience and personal insight which, it may be proposed, could extend to older managers’ own careers. Third, managers are generally better rewarded, and regarded as less interchangeable and replaceable than generic “older workers”. On an individual basis they may be highly valued for their specific functional and managerial skills, experience and insider knowledge (Gunz and

Jalland, 1996). A fourth distinction, which in light of the constraints on older individuals' ability to change roles or employers described above is arguably the most significant, is that, in general, managers are more likely to have transferable skills and networks of contacts to facilitate career transitions, and more exposure through the nature of their role and experience to opportunities such as skills development or retraining (Reitman and Schneer, 2003).

Having explored the argument for focusing on a specific group of individuals when considering motivation for career progression, one further category of difference also requires investigation – that relating to potential gender differences.

### **2.5.3 Gender differences in careers**

A range of scholars across several disciplines has long since established that gendered career differences do exist (e.g. O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005; Ornstein and Isabella, 1990; Powell and Mainiero, 1992), and women's career needs and drivers are quite dissimilar to those of men (Sturges, 1999; Gallos, 1989; Roberts and Friend, 1998). However, relatively little is known about the careers of older women (Armstrong-Stassen and Cameron, 2005; Still and Timms, 1998; Gallos, 1989) and, in particular, how the career motivation of older female managers may differ from that of their male counterparts. Understanding this involves, in part, examining how male and female careers differ across the lifespan and what implications this may have for the careers of older women.

Numerous explanations have been given for the career challenges women face throughout their careers including the influence of the work/family interface (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005), women's differing definitions of career success (Sturges, 1999), and achievement (Wilson and Davies, 1999), and discrimination against women (Stroh, et al., 1992). In examining the career progression of male and female managers Stroh et al. found that although women had done "all the right stuff" in terms of what was needed to ensure career advancement – for example, not moving in and out of the workforce, and being as available as men for transfer and relocation, they still significantly

lagged behind their male counterparts in terms of salary progression and frequency of geographic transfers. Other studies have shown that women still perceive they have fewer advancement opportunities than men and their careers may become plateaued sooner than men's (e.g. Allen et al., 1998).

As Alban-Metcalfe (1989) pointed out, women have to make decisions regarding marriage, relationships and family life that men do not seem to have to make; for women home life can be a source of additional stress, strain and further hard work rather than the relaxing refuge it represents for men (p.103). Whilst it must be recognised that neither men nor women adopt a single approach to managing the roles required by work and family life, it has been acknowledged that, in general, women's careers are more complex than men's involving many choices and balances (O'Neil, Hopkins, and Bilimoria, 2008). Although juggling roles can mean that women are able to benefit from and avoid the worst aspects of each, it can also mean increased stress and personal and work-related sacrifices (Powell and Graves, 2003).

O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) saw women's careers as comprising three sequential developmental stages: idealism, endurance and reinventive contribution which they viewed as being different in their focus to male career patterns in which, in line with traditional development theories, late career is seen as a time of maintenance and decline. They saw reinventive contribution as characterising the later years of women's careers, commenting that women in this phase of their careers "will be more likely to work in arenas that provide them with an opportunity to contribute meaningfully through their work" (p. 184). Whilst this may be an accurate summary, it must be questioned how the breakdown in traditional career models is impacting male careers and whether they too may now be undergoing some type of late career renewal as a result.

Also in 2005, Mainiero and Sullivan developed their Kaleidoscope career model in response to what they saw as a need to provide context for the study of careers and a model that puts gender at the foreground (p.113). It provides three parameters for studying the changes that occur over a woman's lifespan: Authenticity (Can I be myself?); Balance (Can I adequately manage the various

parts of my life?); and Challenge (Am I sufficiently stimulated by this option?), each of which assumes predominance at different stages in life. Within their study Mainiero and Sullivan found that women in late career were primarily concerned with authenticity, encompassing a desire for self-realisation and putting their own needs and desires before those of others (somewhat in contrast to O'Neil and Bilimoria who saw this as a time when women became more involved in meaningful contribution).

A full summary of the disparities identified between male and female managerial careers and the reasons for these differences is outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that differences do exist, for example when compared with men, women's careers have been shown to fail to progress at the same rate and to the same levels (Stroh, et al., 1992). As the past few decades have seen female managers leaving organizational life mid-career in relatively high numbers (Anderson, et al., 2010), relatively little is known about how the career experiences of female managers may differ from those of their male colleagues in late career. A clearer understanding of the motivational drivers of older women's careers could be beneficial in helping employers improve their engagement and retention (Armstrong-Stassen and Cameron, 2005; Gallos, 1989).

Alban-Metcalfe (1989) in her extensive survey of managerial attitudes and needs found that there was little evidence to support the popular notion that women are less ambitious and career oriented than men. In respect of motivation for career progression it appears more likely that women may have different motivational drivers than their male colleagues, rather than lacking them entirely. For example, Sturges (1999) showed that women managers were more likely than men to describe what success meant to them in terms of internal criteria whereas for men, position, pay and status were seen as indispensable to career success. Although in Sturges' study the "older" group were only in their forties, there is little to suggest that this would change for women in later years. Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) concluded that in comparison with a typical male career, a woman's career does not dictate her

life but rather she shapes her career to fit her life in accordance with her current circumstances (p114). Recognising what those circumstances may be and which are most important in later life may help female managers in early to mid-career better plan their future career options. A further implication of this finding is that, in line with the suggestion that in later life factors such as outside interests and family and other responsibilities may exert greater and more diverse influences on individual motivation than in earlier life (Sterns and Miklos, 1995), it is possible that in later life men's career identity might alter to more closely mirror women's (Powell and Mainiero, 1992).

This section has examined the relevance of gender to motivation for career progression in older managers. It has shown that in general throughout the career span, women's careers are different in form and content to male careers with women having quite different career needs and drivers. As there is little evidence to support the notion that women are less ambitious and career oriented than men it remains to be discovered how the motivational drivers of older female managers differ from those of their male counterparts, albeit that little is known about this also. Exactly what is known about career motivation in older managers, male or female, and where exactly the focus of this study should be located therefore forms the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

## **2.6 Motivation for career progression**

From the current state of knowledge about career progression outlined in the early part of this chapter, three questions emerge concerning the role of career attributes, decisions and motivators (Bown-Wilson and Parry, 2009): first, who decides the nature of older individuals' careers? Do employers continue to play the greatest role in decisions about the physical form and progress of their older employees' careers? Or does the career progression of older individuals mainly depend upon them creating and following their own path which may involve them in both instigating positive action and resisting external pressure for progression? Second, how desirable is career progression for older employees and their employers? Do older individuals still want career progress in objective

terms and, if so, how much does that progress depend on employer actions (circumstance) or individual employee decisions (choice)? The third question relates to understanding what matters most to older employees in forming individual conceptions of career progression: are they primarily motivated by continuing extrinsic rewards characterized by promotion and status or do they increasingly seek intrinsic psychological satisfaction?

What is currently known about the first and second questions has been briefly discussed above. Although there is still more to be learnt in these two areas it is nevertheless apparent that it is in the area of the third question - what motivates older employees in terms of career progression - that the greatest gap in knowledge lies. This study will therefore focus on this specific issue within the context of what is already known about the other two. It is an area that is important for both employers and individuals themselves in terms of understanding the ways in which older managers perceive incentives, rewards and numerous other variables relating to their employment (Kooij et al., 1998) and how these perceptions and other influences may affect their motivation and engagement. To date, research has failed to clarify whether different outcomes may emerge depending on the proactive or reactive nature of employers in relation to career progression or the active or passive stance of older workers themselves and the form that these outcomes might take. The extent to which variables such as age and gender influence individuals' career aspirations, and the role played by how people anticipate the eventual endpoint of their career, is also not clear. It may be that typologies of different career plateaus that have already been identified, e.g., hierarchical vs. job content plateaus (Allen et al, 1999), and individually- vs. organizationally-defined plateaus (Appelbaum and Finestone, 1994) could be extended. For example, new typologies may include categories based on the importance to groups of individuals of particular aspects of their careers in later life. Most significantly, it is not clear what is meant by "career progression" for older individuals in contexts in which objective rewards such as promotion and salary increases are no longer available at the same time as working lives are lengthening. For the purposes of

this study, these issues can be encapsulated in the following research question and sub-questions:

*What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?*

- *In what ways are these motivational factors perceived as different from earlier in the career?*
- *Do the motivational drivers of female managers aged over 50 differ from those of male managers aged over 50?*

The starting point for investigating the concepts relating to motivational drivers and their implications for the careers of older male and female managers is an examination of relevant motivational theory, a brief review of which now follows.

### **2.6.1 Motivational theory**

The concept of motivation refers to internal factors that impel action and to external factors that can act as inducements to action (Steers et al., 2004). It has been used both as an independent and dependent variable (Kooij et al., 2008) and can exist both as a state - a transient function of an immediate situation, and a trait - an ongoing behavioural orientation (Amabile, 1993). Motivation can affect not only the acquisition of people's skills and abilities but also how and to what extent they utilise them; it can direct three aspects of action: direction (choice), intensity (effort) and duration (persistence) (Locke and Latham, 2004). Numerous theories have evolved to explain work motivation - "a set of energetic forces that... initiate work-related behaviour and determine its form, direction, intensity and duration" (Latham and Pinder, 2005: 486). For the purposes of this research it is important to make a clear distinction between this process-related area of theory and the content related concept of career motivation which "applies motivation theory to understanding career plans, behaviours and decisions" (London, 1993: 55). The distinction is significant in that the focus in career motivation is on *what* motivates individuals in respect of their careers not on *how* they are motivated.



Researchers continue to examine the relevance of various motivational theories both to work and career motivation in the contemporary workplace and to the motivation of older workers e.g. the meta-studies of motivational theory of Locke and Latham, 2004 and Kooij et al., 2008. However, there remains a notable absence of papers specifically studying either motivation for career progression, or the related topic of subjective career motivation and its role for older managers. Understanding the potential complexity of this area involves exploring three aspects of motivation; first, examining *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivators as independent variables in driving behaviour (Maslow, 1954); second, the role of motivational variables in terms of their positive and negative influence on motivation; and third, the influence of previous experience in terms of expectancy theory. Each of these topics is considered below.

#### **2.6.1.1 Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators**

Traditional motivational theories such as Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's motivation-hygiene factor theory (1966) tended to focus on motivators as independent variables in driving behaviour, distinguishing between *intrinsic* variables such as achievement, meaning, and autonomy and *extrinsic* variables exemplified by pay, benefits, and status. This notion was further developed by scholars such as Locke and Latham (2004) who saw internal (intrinsic) factors as driving action and external (extrinsic) factors as prompting action. Following Maslow and Herzberg they viewed *extrinsic* motivators as those that arise from the desire to obtain outcomes that are separate from the work itself, e.g. pay and benefits, profile and status, and working conditions, whereas *intrinsic* motivators are those derived from the value and interest inherent in the work itself, e.g. achievement, meaning, autonomy (Amabile, 1993). Quigley and Tymon (2006) in their study of how intrinsic motivation can influence career self-management maintained that:

*Intrinsic motivation is the key motivational/psychological component of employee empowerment (p.523)... (it) is about passion and positive feelings that people get from their work. These feelings reinforce and*

*energize employees' self-management efforts and make work personally fulfilling (p.527).*

Although Maslow (1954) and Herzberg (1966) maintained that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators operated exclusively and hierarchically, meaning that extrinsic motivators needed to be satisfied before intrinsic motivators could operate, subsequent studies have shown that individuals can be motivated by both, for example by money and personal challenge (Amabile, 1993). This means that objectively plateaued employees can still be driven by intrinsic motivators even though extrinsic motivators have been removed. Whilst this is a useful insight into how an individual's own search for self-fulfilment may impact career decision-making, it raises other questions relating to what drives or contributes to work-related passion and positive feelings. A further question is the extent to which some variables may act as motivators or de-motivators on an individual basis at different times in the career.

#### **2.6.1.2 Motivators and de-motivators**

It has long been established (e.g. Herzberg, 1966) that aspects of employment can act on an individual basis as motivators and de-motivators. At any age, motivation can be both *towards* rewards and accomplishment such as promotion or *away from* unwanted experiences or feelings such as stress (Amabile, 1993). Motivators may operate primarily as de-motivators if they are not present, for example plateaued individuals who have previously been motivated by promotional opportunities may be de-motivated by the absence of promotion in later life (Carlson and Rotondo, 2001). Beehr et al., (2000) investigated both the influence of various push and pull factors associated with retirement (e.g. finance, health, disliking work) across both work and non-work related dimensions as predictors of employees' retirement ages. Their results led them to conclude that little is really known about how jobs and outside activities affect retirement decisions, although a range of variables may be at work on an individual basis. They also concluded that in the contemporary workplace the boundaries between work and retirement are now unclear, suggesting the need for future research. Although this study focused on

retirement ages and retirement decisions, its findings also clearly related to decisions made by older employees not to retire, i.e. to continue to progress in their careers, whatever this progression may mean to them.

Regardless of the motivating or de-motivating factors underlying it, a lack of objective progression does not necessarily signal the end of an older individual's career. Although some older people may lack the desire, motivation, or ability to continue to progress, others may decide they have done quite well and do not want to go further, while a third category may develop revised aspirations and want to do something else (Near, 1980). Many older employees who lose motivation with respect to their current position nevertheless may be highly motivated to continue working through, for example, changing careers, operating as consultants or setting up in business. However evidence continues to show, as indicated earlier, that changing jobs over the age of 50 may be difficult (Daniel and Heywood, 2007) which may cause some older individuals to adjust their expectations in line with what they come to realize is and isn't possible or likely in terms of future career options. What this means is that in considering the role of motivational drivers in career progression it is not only important to assess the relative importance of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators at various points in an individuals' career, but also to consider how, and for what reasons, these may change *over time* (Amabile, 1993; London, 1993). As Bailyn (1989) maintained, "careers must be viewed dynamically since needs and orientations change over a person's life span in response to changing personal and family circumstances" (p.484).

In order to better understand why older managers may favour some career decisions over others and what factors may impact their choices it may be helpful to consider expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964). Although expectancy theory now encompasses a range of derivative approaches, Vroom's original conceptualisation of the way in which choices and decisions are affected at an individual level by experience-related perceptions of possible outcomes may potentially offer much of relevance to understanding the value of certain motivational drivers in career progression.

### 2.6.1.3 Expectancy theory

As explained above, motivational drivers can take the form of both positive motivators and/or negative de-motivators. In general, career progression and its connotation of forward progression operates within a framework of positive motivation and associated pull factors such as improved status and reward; in short, in motivational terms career progression relates to a desire to progress. From this perspective, expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) with its focus on how previous experience leads to the presence or absence of certain responsive behaviours in reacting to certain stimuli (in this case career-related opportunities) becomes an appropriate lens through which to understand older managers' career decisions and choices. Expectancy theory is "an attempt to identify reasons for the choice of one act or behaviour when provided with alternatives" (Baker, Ravichandran and Randall, 1989:1). It is predicated upon the notion that:

*People's behaviour results from choices amongst alternatives and that these choices (behaviours) are systematically related to psychological processes, particularly perception and the formation of beliefs and attitudes. The purpose of the choices generally is to maximise pleasure and minimize pain. (Pinder, 1992:90)*

In respect of older managers, expectancy theory may help explain the basis on which they make decisions relating to career aspects such as a drive to seek further promotion or increased responsibility, or to take part in training and development activities. Such decisions can relate to both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of the career. If, for example, based on their own experiences or those of colleagues, individuals can see that those over a certain age are never selected for promotion even though there is no formal policy governing why, they may decide that it is better not to lose face by applying. Their expectation of what they believe will happen means that further promotion ceases to become an attractive goal in which to invest energy. Similarly, if an older manager has seen that an outwardly more desirable role in terms of interest and responsibility means more travel and longer hours, the potentially negative

outcome of this at a time in life when he or she may have decided to pursue better work/life balance may affect its desirability.

Although expectancy theory has been subject to much critical evaluation over the years, for example, for its lack of sufficient explanation of the additive nature of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Gagne and Deci, 2005), it remains relatively robust and continues to be “an intuitively appealing and popular theory of motivation” (Snead and Harrell, 1994:502). Over many studies it has been used to explain a wide variety of career related attitudes and behaviours, for example Ettington (1998) used it in a study of successful career plateauing to explain the significance of the need for plateaued employees to replace promotion as a valued work outcome with other valued motivational drivers. A greater understanding of the way in which expectancy theory may operate within older managers’ careers might be gained through considering it in relation to London’s (1983) career motivation framework which addresses the key constructs of motivational theory - direction (choice), intensity (effort) and duration (persistence) of action – in relation to careers.

### **2.6.2 Career motivation**

Career motivation is a multi-dimensional construct which differs from work motivation in including a wide variety of career-related behaviours associated with an individual’s personality, needs and interests (London 1983). In their investigation into the correlates of career motivation Noe, Noe and Bachhuber (1990) found all three aspects - career identity, insight and resilience - to be significantly related to the perceived presence of motivating job characteristics and the importance to individuals of work and career. Aside from this, at a fundamental level they found no evidence to support the notion that career motivation may be higher in managers than non-managers, or any differences between male and female managers, although in a later study London (1993) maintained that changes in later life can result in either reduced or enhanced career growth. Understanding career motivation thus requires an investigation into the constructs which underpin it – those relating to *career identity* – the

extent to which people define themselves by their work, *career insight* - how realistic people are about themselves and their careers and how accurately they relate these perceptions to career goals; and *career resilience* – the extent to which people resist career barriers, obstacles or disruptions to their work (London, 1983). Each will be examined in turn below in order to better appreciate the ways in which career motivation may be relevant to investigating motivation for career progression in older managers.

### **2.6.2.1 Career identity**

The degree to which an individual's identity is bound up in their work and the specific areas of their work to which their motivation relates is a vital foundation for understanding motivation for career progression. Unlike vocational, professional or organizational identity, career identity is not tied to a particular work or organizational role or position but derives its meaning from a sequence of work-related experiences. Career identity is more than merely the sum total of a person's work experiences over the years; it is a structure of meanings in which the individual links his or her own motivation, interests and competencies with acceptable career roles (Meijers, 1998:191). Part of career identity is the extent to which individuals define themselves in relation to their work and how central their work identity is to who they feel they are (Noe et al., 1990); it may also guide how they should act (LaPointe, 2010). Thus each individual's own creation and perception of their career identity drives the actions and decisions that they may or may not take in relation to their career. Meijers (1998) proposed that each individual must "learn consciously to define that part of the world of work that fits in with his [sic] own identity" (p.194) and having done so he (or she) must then be able to recognise and articulate what that identity is and what it means to them. Extending this further, Goffee and Scase (1992) suggested that in traditional career contexts managers' sense of identity did not derive solely from their job, but also from a sense of progression between jobs which provided meaning to their past and future career experiences.

Over the years several different approaches have been taken to pinpointing and enabling the assessment and measurement of the key components of identity.

One of the most well-known is Schein's construct of career anchors which he later defined as *"that one element in our self-concept that we will not give up, even if forced to make a difficult choice"* (Schein, 1987:158). The career anchors framework relates motivation to fundamental work orientations based on individual abilities, needs, motives and values which develop over time. Ettington (1998) used career anchors in her study of successful career plateauing in middle managers. Although she found that career anchors may play a significant role in terms of individual predispositions to pursue certain goals, career orientation did not correlate with successful plateauing indicating that other factors may be more important in career progress overall (although she was not able to specify the nature of those factors).

Within the context of changing career models which imply greater individual responsibility for career development, questions must be asked about the validity of a system of fixed orientational categories such as career anchors as a means of accessing rich data concerning career identity. Underlying issues include the extent to which career anchors or any other inherent career orientations are consciously recognised and acted upon by the individual concerned, and to what degree they remain stable over time. Evidence from a number of recent studies has also suggested that the current nature of career identities may be evolving in response to changing social and career contexts. For example, changing social structures may be leading to a greater evidence of Schein's Lifestyle career anchor which focuses on the integration of work and family issues (Marshall and Bonner, 2003). A number of moderating variables between career anchors and career outcomes also may be pertinent including availability of alternative jobs, personal life constraints, career anchor-occupation fit, and career anchor-organizational culture fit (Feldman and Bolino, 1996).

Whilst some scholars (e.g. Carlson and Rotondo, 2001) continue to reinforce Schein's (1996) view that career anchors remain fairly stable across a person's lifetime, others postulate that they may change (e.g. Feldman and Weitz, 1988). Much of the problem inherent in the argument is connected with the difficulty in

undertaking longitudinal research to determine the stability of subjectively based career orientations (career anchors or any others) over time. Meijers (1998) saw the individual's perception of their own career identity as an ongoing task requiring the person to constantly compare different aspects of their identity against experience to see whether they remain "logically consistent" (1998:193). In part this is driven by the fact that, unlike in the past where career roles and boundaries were relatively constant, now they are much more fluid and shifting, creating a need for establishing and maintaining a balance in identity terms between work, family and leisure. How this might be achieved in motivational terms is examined below in relation to London's two other constructs of career motivation: *career insight* and *career resilience*.

### **2.6.2.2 Career insight**

The construct of career insight refers to how realistic people are about themselves and their careers and how accurately they relate these perceptions to their career goals (London, 1983). It links closely to the concept of career identity outlined above in that, as Erickson (1963) in his seminal work on identity maintained, the formation of a person's identity relies on them achieving and maintaining consistency between what they perceive themselves to be, and what they perceive others think and expect of them. Within the specific context of career insight, this means that career identity develops as the result of a learning process by which individuals consciously link their own motivations, interests and competencies with acceptable career roles (Meijers, 1998: 200). These acceptable career roles are shaped by insight relating to what is or isn't likely or possible which may involve, for example, the possibility of older workers having diminished expectations of success due to their overall greater knowledge about the likelihood of effort paying off (Sterns and Miklos, 1995). Career insight then involves an individual in a search for explanation and meaning. Insight relating to goal achievement is particularly relevant to this study and has been shown to increase with age (London, 1993). This is the process in which expectancy theory is founded and relates people's experience of how often and in what ways they have achieved, or failed to achieve, career



goals to improved knowledge about what to do in the future. For some, this insight may lead to adopting different strategies; others may cease striving to achieve career goals. Both of these scenarios link to the construct of career resilience.

### **2.6.2.3 Career resilience**

Career resilience is the extent to which people are able to resist or overcome career barriers, obstacles or disruptions to their work and their ability to continue to function in an unsupportive career environment (London, 1983). Developing and applying resilience means building on experience, using insight, to make future choices in line with career identity. According to London, the three key dimensions of career resilience at an individual level are self-efficacy, risk-taking, and dependency, with those who are high in career resilience likely to “take risks, be independent of others, create their own structure, and thrive on situations in which outcomes are contingent on their behaviour” (1983:621). At once it can be seen that not only may these variables link to career identity, they are also reflective of what now may be thought of as a protean career orientation (Hall, 1976). In terms of considering behavioural outcomes relating to career resilience for the purposes of this study this arguably once again can be best understood within the framework of expectancy theory in terms of the way in which motivation is affected by past experience.

In a study into motivation in late career, London (1990) highlighted the significance of what he called “frame-breaking changes” on people’s career identity and goals. He maintained that such changes, which could emanate either from within the individual or the work environment, may lead to individuals questioning their goals or their abilities leading to damage to their career identity, confused career insight and challenged resilience. In terms of what these frame-breaking changes might represent, he included being turned down for promotion for the first time, having to face a changing organizational culture as result of a merger, and having to learn new technology, all of which may be encountered by those in late career. More positively, events such as promotion or marriage may also have a significant impact. London concluded that how well

people adapt depends on factors such as self-confidence and general resilience, but that having experienced such challenges some never achieve a renewed sense of direction. Although London acknowledged that late career presents “decreasing opportunities for work achievement” (1990:59) his focus was on factors which he saw as enabling and supporting career motivation in general. As a result, the connection between London’s career motivation theory and conceptions of career progression in older managers in today’s career environments remains unclear and is open to further investigation.

### **2.6.3 Age and motivational drivers**

The review of the literature undertaken into age and its implications for career progression undertaken in section 2.5.1 above revealed a complex relationship between age and motivational drivers. Adding to this, Sterns and Miklos (1995) identified three sets of factors which they saw as affecting behavioural change in older individuals. The first two were shared: biological factors which are strongly linked to chronological age, and historical influences which have affected most members of a cohort in similar ways. The third set comprised unique career and life changes. They proposed that with age, factors such as health, outside interests, and family and other responsibilities may exert greater and more diverse influences on individual motivation than in earlier life. Additionally, they suggested that older adults may have a different perspective on work from younger adults with survival needs likely to be less urgent and job satisfaction more dependent on intrinsic work variables.

This view was given greater credence by Sturges (1999) who proposed that aspects of employment such as innate meaning, quality of relationships, inclusion, stimulation and continuing opportunity to contribute may assume a greater motivational significance for older individuals than earlier in the career. Sturges found that, with increasing age, material criteria for success generally reduced in importance and was often replaced by an emphasis on influence and autonomy. She also identified those who were motivated by a concern for leaving a mark in some way by creating something which was theirs. Although

this study only included managers under the age of 50 it nevertheless may go some way to explaining the motivational drivers of older managers and the relationship that may exist between their drivers for career progression and aspirations for continuing career success. Yet attempting to predict future continuing career success in later life is a complex operation (Daniel and Heywood, 2007) not least because older individuals may differ in their feelings about what they have accomplished and this may be reflected in the way they persist or desist in seeking further results: “If I believe I have achieved success, or as much success as I require, I may stop seeking more. If I haven’t achieved enough, then I will keep striving” (Heslin, 2005:116).

In seeking to explain the drive for individual development in plateaued employees, Maurer concluded that voluntary participation in development activities by ageing employees is an increasingly crucial behaviour to understand, although he also questioned how much it is understood in younger employees if the link to direct reward is removed. Overall, Maurer found that age negatively affects individual and situational variables that predispose a person toward development although many other variables may seemingly counteract this:

*A person who is oriented toward employee development will be someone who has participated in development activities before, perceiving themselves as possessing qualities needed for learning, having social support for development at work and outside of work, being job involved, having insight into his or her career, and believing in the need for development, in his or her ability to develop skills, and to receive intrinsic benefits from participating (Maurer, 2001: 718).*

This seems to underline that, as with many other psychological determinants, a propensity for personal development in later life will depend much on an individual’s earlier career and personal experiences or existing attributes; it does not operate within a vacuum on older managers as clean slates. It also may indicate the significance of job type or role in relation to individuals’ exposure to these requirements and ability to respond to them. As Sturges

(1999) showed, older managers' interest in development may relate to increasing their influence or authority, developing a legacy to pass on, or simply to the social rewards which they feel they may obtain from participation in development activities. It may also relate to developing others through formal or informal mentoring (Maurer et al., 2003).

However, little appears to be known about the extent to which in later life motivational drivers are context specific and dependent on individual interpretations of external variables (Latham and Pinder, 2005). For example, it may be assumed that for many older individuals approaching retirement, financial rewards (pay and bonuses) may be valued in terms of how much they contribute towards future financial security (savings and pensions). But for those who may have had less financially rewarding careers or may be part of the increasingly widespread "sandwich generation" who financially support children as well as parents, pay may represent what is needed to fund their day to day commitments. A further example relates to the concept of job satisfaction and the extent to which in older individuals this may be a reflection of an individual's assessment of their position *as they want it to be* rather than how it is perceived by others. This may mean that plateaued older managers report being very satisfied with their job because it represents a state that currently matches their own subjective needs and aspirations – perhaps for lack of further progress and challenge. It may also represent a shift in aspirations to reflect perceived realities or an unwillingness to lose face by admitting lack of satisfaction with an unchangeable situation.

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of what is currently known about motivation for career progression in older managers. Taking as a starting point the meaning of career, it has demonstrated the potential significance of changing career contexts on the careers of older managers. As the influence of traditional career stage (Super, 1957) and life span (Levinson et al., 1978) theories has waned, contemporary models such as boundaryless (DeFillippi

and Arthur, 1996) and protean (Hall, 1976) careers have emerged shifting, to some degree, career ownership and responsibility for career progression from the employer to the individual. Studies have also shown that under new career theories career boundaries may be breaking down to the extent that careers can continue outside the organizational context (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997) and even post-retirement (Maestas, 2010). Both of these developments may have implications for older managers who, facing a lack of advancement opportunities within their current career context, may decide to define career progression in these terms.

Studies have shown that career progression can be both objective and subjective in nature and can be viewed from both the organizational and personal perspective (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006). This being the case the question arises as to what career progression means in subjective terms and how the related constructs of career success, job satisfaction and personal development, which in the literature have been used as proxies for career progression may, along with other subjective variables, become increasingly important in late career. Studies showing that career renewal (Power, 2009) and career recycling (Sullivan et al., 2003) may now also be common throughout careers raises further questions about the extent to which these become attractive options and motivational drivers for older managers in the absence of objective career variables such as further promotion. If, as it appears, subjective aspects of the career such as meaning and influence may be at least as important as objective aspects to some people in respect of career progression, it becomes important to clearly identify exactly whose careers are being investigated in any study of this topic. For example, those with managerial careers are possibly more likely to have more access to fulfilment of subjective aspirations such as influence than those in less influential positions.

To date, little research has been undertaken into the relationship between age and either work-related or career-related motivation to the extent that this could be considered “a serious gap in our knowledge” (Kanfer and Ackerman: 2004:440). A further question therefore relates to the extent to which aspects of

career motivation remain stable within individuals or change over time and which variables stimulate or affect such changes. Within this framework career progression also may be influenced by factors relating to gender. While numerous studies have been undertaken into gender differences in careers, few studies have examined the careers of older females and even fewer have examined the career aspirations of older female managers.

The body of knowledge described above has shown that career progression in older managers may result from decisions relating to both organizational and personal variables operating within a context which is jointly influenced by both employers and employees themselves. What is not known is what matters most to certain groups of older individuals in terms of motivational drivers relating to their career, and it is this question which most clearly summarises the gap in knowledge in this arena as identified by the literature review. Exploring this subject involves formulating an appropriate research question, and for the purposes of this study it is proposed that this will take the following form:

*What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?*

- *In what ways are these motivational factors perceived as different from earlier in the career?*
- *Do the motivational drivers of female managers aged over 50 differ from those of male managers aged over 50?*

Having decided the exact focus of this study, the methodology which was adopted for investigating these questions and the findings which resulted will be described in the remainder of this document.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter outlines the strategy adopted in conducting the research in terms of both the philosophical perspective adopted and the practical methods utilised for conducting the fieldwork, providing the rationale for these choices and an explanation of limitations. The first section considers the philosophical approach and its implications, followed by an outline of the research design, and a description of the two stages of the fieldwork.

### **3.1 Research strategy**

#### **3.1.1 Philosophical approach**

All research, as Blaikie (2007) acknowledged, harbours an inherent dilemma when it comes to deciding an appropriate research method. A tension exists between the nature of what is to be investigated and the researcher's own position in terms of their view of the world. Fortunately this struggle is not insurmountable. In this instance my view of the world undoubtedly led me to adopt a particular focus relating to the nature of what I wished to investigate. Thereafter, this focus seemed to lead to what appeared to be relatively clear methodological decisions.

My belief is that the world is made up of "representations that are creations of individual minds" (Blaikie, 2007:16) rather than founded on the existence of independent truths. In consequence, to obtain knowledge about reality, I maintain that its meaning must be approached from the viewpoint of the individual as only they can provide the evidence needed from which to construct a theoretical understanding. In respect of this study my intention was to adopt what Blaikie termed a "bottom up" approach using an abductive strategy, an iterative process which derives social scientific concepts and theories of social life from social actors' everyday conceptualisations and understandings (Blaikie, 2007:8). Through this it is then possible to generate a technical account of research results from participants' own accounts, using their own words.

### 3.1.2 Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology is concerned with “how you choose to define what is real” while epistemology is concerned with “how you form knowledge and establish criteria for evaluating it” (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006:12). Unlike positivists, who maintain that knowledge lies in the objective measurement and classification of an independent external reality, my position is diametrically opposed and subjectivist taking the view that “something exists only when you experience it and give it meaning” (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006:12). My epistemological approach is interpretivist proposing that knowledge can only be created and understood from the point of view of the individuals who experience the phenomenon under investigation.

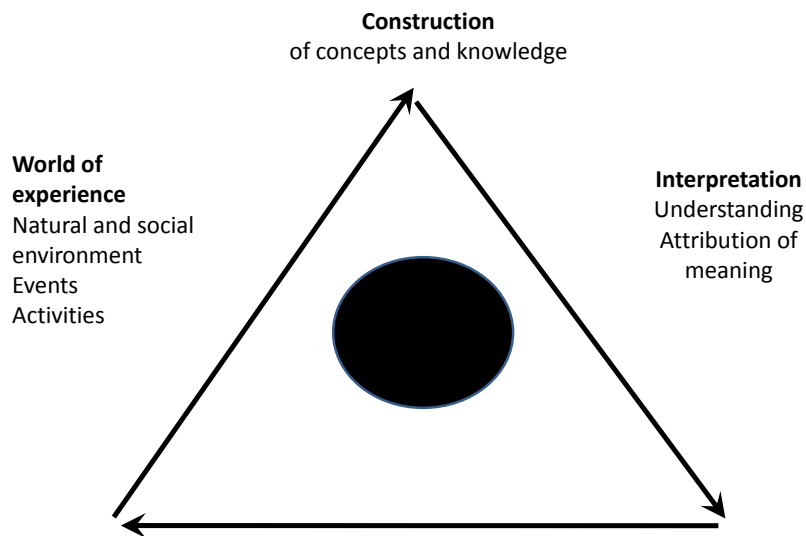
Edmondson and McManus (2007), examining the issue of methodological fit in management field research, emphasised the importance of an appropriate methodology for ensuring quality field research. They recommended that the best fit could be achieved through pairing methods with the state of theory development at the time of the new study, suggesting that “the less that is known about a phenomenon in the organizational literature, the more likely exploratory qualitative research will be a fruitful strategy” (2007:1177). Within the phenomenological field investigated here, it can be argued that although both careers and motivation are mature areas of focus, very little is known – as my literature review revealed – about motivation for career progression in older managers in contemporary career contexts. This being the case, it appeared that exploratory qualitative research should be the most potentially fruitful approach.

Adopting an interpretivist epistemology would, I felt, allow me to focus on the individual manager’s lived experience and understanding of his or her career, within their past and current work and personal contexts. The role of context is significant within this study. Gunz, Jalland and Evans (1998:22) likened organizational career management systems to “jungle gyms, in which the shape of managers' careers derives from the overall shape of the organization and the



way in which it has grown.” The challenge of this study is therefore to understand the ways in which this “jungle gym” may constrict, challenge, empower or otherwise influence how each individual may enact their career within that organization. At the same time it is important to be true to the fundamental tenet of this approach - a belief that clarity is not obtained from understanding an object or situation and then independently understanding the meaning of that object or situation to an individual. An interpretivist seeks to understand the qualitatively different emotional, intellectual and behavioural aspects of individuals *in interaction with their world* in contexts relating to that object or situation. This approach is particularly relevant to the broader context of this study, i.e. the ageing workforce, where demographic change has created a research problem. The key to understanding its implications lies in examining its effects as they are encapsulated in the “intricacies of individual lives” (Gerson and Horowitz, 1992: 201).

In adopting an interpretivist approach, the researcher works as both a learner and an interpreter and as such becomes more than just an observer. Reflexivity is required; although the focus is on individual knowledge derived from lived experience, that experience does not take place in a vacuum. As actors we experience the world we live in as “*a world both of nature and culture, not as a private but as an inter-subjective one*” (Schutz, 1963: 236). Interpretation and construction of concepts and knowledge are interrelated and used to access experience, as is demonstrated in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1 - Construction and interpretation as a means of access to the world of experience (Flick, 2004: 90)**

For the purposes of an exploratory study such as this any proposed method needed to be able to generate “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), a term that is used to cover the generation of detailed knowledge through the process of relating significant subjective experiences and views to object-related knowledge (Flick, Von Kardoff and Steinke, 2004:7). In terms of this study that thick description relates to subjective individual conceptions of the meaning of the concept of “career progression”. It also relates to individual conceptions of how motivational drivers may influence career progression throughout the duration of the career and into the future, the way that gender may have influenced or impacted individual career progression, and how age or age-related subjective and objective factors may have influenced or impacted career progression

### **3.1.3 Constructivism or constructionism?**

As outlined above, for the purposes of this study and in consequence of my own ontological position I was not interested in obtaining or creating a concept of “career progression” as an external, socially shared reality derived from

individual accounts of meaning (the pure social constructionist view), rather I wanted to investigate the meaning and experience of the concept of career progression as it is individually experienced (constructivism). This distinction is important; as Young and Collin (2004:375) point out there is continuing confusion about the precise meanings of the terms such as constructivism, constructionism, constructionist and constructive as evidenced by their usage in the literature such that, “even the experts seem befuddled”.

In essence, a key point to recognise is that constructivism differs from positivism in maintaining that the world cannot be known directly but must be accessed as a construction of the individual mind. However, like positivism, constructivism represents a dualist epistemology and ontology i.e. there is a separation between the knower and what is known. Young and Collin (2004) view a career as representing “a unique interaction of self and social experience” (p.381) and because of this, a constructivist approach is particularly relevant to studying that interaction from the point of view of the individual. A major criticism of constructivism has been that as an individualistic approach it fails to account for shared understandings of meaning. Whilst this is a valid point the problem can be overcome in part by recognising the extent to which construction is an active process with individuals jointly and constantly constructing and re-constructing the world in which they live through communicating and bringing together individual perceptions.

Young and Collin propose that several features of constructivism make it a useful approach for studying career as a construct in theory and practice, including its concern with the social, historical and cultural contexts in which individuals operate and its acknowledgement of the ways interaction takes place between the individual and society, as observed by people themselves. It is also helpful in respect of its focus on the match between internal traits and occupational characteristics and for the insights it can provide into the processes by which the career develops, such as decision making and social and developmental processes. Therefore, for the purposes of this study with its prime focus on careers, constructivism would seem to have much to offer.

### 3.1.4 Phenomenology

As a method through which to implement my epistemological approach, phenomenology “an orientation that is predicated upon the idea of a pure and unmediated experience of phenomena” (Chia, 2002) appeared highly appropriate as a means of exploring individuals’ own conceptions of career progression. As the starting point for knowledge phenomenology returns to what Chia refers to as “the immediacy of pre-linguistic lived experience” (2002: 10) encapsulated in Husserl’s well-known phrase “a return to the things themselves” (cited Langdrige, 2007:4). Phenomenology is a psychological approach that focuses essentially on the lifeworld of individual research subjects in order to find out more about how the topic under investigation is experienced and the meaning it has for those individuals. As an approach it moves away from a pure subject/object dualism to comparing the *what* and the *how* of experience (Landgridge, 2007:85). In practice phenomenological methods represent a range of different approaches according to either their historical roots or their suitability for different research topics but are regarded by Langdrige and others as “providing insight into human nature in a way that few other [approaches] can match” (p.168).

The researcher’s challenge in phenomenological investigation is both to assist the research participant in producing a coherent and pertinent account of their experiences, and thereafter to translate the individual’s own words into relevant outputs through selection and analysis (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). Smith and Osborn (2003) described this as a double hermeneutic with the researcher facing the challenge of attempting to make sense of the participant’s own sense-making activities. An increasingly popular version of phenomenology is template analysis (King, 2004) which is considered by Langdrige (2007) as the approach which is most focused on pragmatic concerns and generating empirical findings that can usefully contribute to real life social concerns. The main distinguishing feature of template analysis that sets it apart from other types of interpretative phenomenological analysis is its general tendency to use predetermined themes in coding and organising research data rather than

letting all themes emerge from the data itself. In phenomenological studies data is usually collected through the use of semi-structured interviews encompassing as many individuals as may be needed to gain access to a suitably wide range of personal experiences relating to the topic under investigation. The use of semi-structured interviews and template analysis therefore seemed a potentially appropriate method for conducting this study; the way in which these were utilised is described later in this chapter.

## **3.2 Research design**

Designing the research strategy involved both choosing a method, and deciding on an operational framework for conducting the research. In light of the inherent inconsistencies in the interrelationship between chronological age and other variables, Greller and Simpson (1999) chose to use the concept of “late career” to study the choices and reactions of workers aged 50 to 70 and the economic social and organizational factors that influence them. This study will follow this precedent and use the parameters of “late career” to identify research participants. Compared with focusing purely on chronological age the notion of a temporal career state is likely to be helpful for understanding the potential range of individual factors, including participants’ differing life stages, which may be involved.

### **3.2.1 Research method**

My concern in choosing a method for this research was to find a way to explore, reveal, examine, and start to understand the meaning of career progression for individual older managers, what they saw were their motivational drivers, and how they recognised and accounted for motivational changes which may have occurred over their career span. As I needed to generate rich data concerning individual perceptions and insights relating to these issues, interviews were chosen as the best means of doing so compared with, for example, using a questionnaire (Bartholomew, Henderson and Marcia, 2000). Similarly, semi-structured interviews were utilised as they allow “a certain degree of standardisation of interview questions and a certain degree of openness of

response by the interviewer” (Wengraf, 2000). Semi-structured interviews combine focus with flexibility by providing a framework within which participants can respond to various issues relating to career progression and allowing new concepts to emerge which may not be addressed within the interview protocol. They also enable the researcher to prompt participants to elaborate on and explain areas of particular interest and relevance as they emerge. This is particularly important in situations such as this study where outcomes essentially depend on individual recall and interpretation (Kvale, 1983).

Having decided on the method, two exercises then needed to be undertaken prior to the main study. These were first, an exploratory study to inform the questions to be included in the research interview protocol, and second, a pilot project to test its suitability and validity as a research tool. The remainder of this section on research design explains the development of these exercises and their application.

### **3.2.2 Exploratory study**

As a phenomenological study, it was not appropriate or possible to pre-determine detailed questions for the research protocol from the existing literature although this did identify general areas of focus e.g. the role of retirement. Devising questions involved determining relevant themes relating to the research question from the perspective of a selection of older managers themselves. To do so required an exploratory study; this involved interviewing six managers aged over 50 (age range 51 – 62), of whom four were male and two were female. These managers were from different business sectors but all had worked in managerial roles for the majority of their career. Although they represented a convenience sample in that they were acquaintances or ex-colleagues, there was also a purposive element to their selection relating to criteria in terms of age (50-65 years) and managerial role (any managerial position within any business sector) and a mix of gender. Participants were informed in advance (verbally or by email) that the interview would focus on

“issues relating to older managers in today’s workplace”; participation was entirely voluntary.

Interviews (four face-to-face interviews held at locations near to the participants’ work, and two telephone interviews) lasted an average of 40 minutes each. During this time individuals were asked a number of broad questions such as “What is your main motivation for continuing to work?” and “What does “career progression” mean to you at this stage in your working life?” with the purpose of encouraging them to talk in general terms about their career and their career motivation. They were also asked about their perceptions of the careers of *other* managers aged over 50 in order to include views and incidents outside their personal experience. These interviews were then recorded, transcribed and analysed using content analysis (Holsti, 1969) in order to identify the key themes that emerged. This analysis involved investigating both the content of what was said, e.g. “How long I decide to continue will really depend whether or not the organization is restructured again”, and indications of the internal processes people went through and feelings they accessed to describe their career motivation, e.g. “I love what I do and wouldn’t want to do anything else right now. But then... one day I’m going to have to find something else that matters as much”. From these interviews a number of topic areas emerged which contributed towards the interview questions (which are attached at Appendix A):

1. **Conceptions of career progression:** this related to individual meanings that people gave to the term and how this may change at different stages of their lives, and in different ways for women (Q.3. in the protocol). This topic also revealed a common theme relating to the unpredictability of career progression (Q. 2. and Q. 11). The issue of the boundaries between ‘work’ and ‘retirement’ and the intention of most participants to continue to do some sort of work in late career was also related to this subject, leading in part to Q.4.

2. **Drivers of career progression:** this related to what motivated people in terms of career choices and decisions and could be subdivided into past and current drivers and future plans. These drivers included money, self-fulfilment, hierarchical promotion, work/life balance, status, interest, development (self and others), loyalty, job satisfaction. Q.2 and Q.6 relate to this theme.
3. **Influences on career progression:** this theme related to those things which had exerted an influence on people's career choices and decisions over the span of their careers and the variables which they saw as affecting their ability or willingness to progress. Sub-themes which emerged included spouse and family, boss/employer/peers, financial considerations, status, increased responsibility/stress, skills and development opportunities, role models, health. Q. 7 and Q.10 relate to this theme.
4. **Attitudes towards career progression:** this topic comprised two sub-themes: first, people's attitudes towards their own careers and second, the attitudes that they perceived from others – particularly in relation to age and gender. Q.8 and Q.9 relate to this theme.
5. **Feelings about career progression:** this related to how emotionally attached people were to their career, and their feelings concerning future career development. It reflected participants' views that their career was very much a part of who they were rather than a separate aspect of their life. Q.11 in the protocol relates to this theme.

Topics 1-4 above related to already evident issues from the literature review; the fifth was a new theme which emerged from the way older managers related to their life and their career; the effect of these feelings upon motivation for career progression appearing to be a significant factor. These themes were used to design appropriate questions for the draft research protocol. This process involved grouping and analysing respondents' statements in terms of their topic focus (e.g. promotion, identity, relationships) and devising a long list



of questions relating to these topic areas. This list was then refined and reduced to a number of key questions and prompts designed to elicit information relating specifically to these topic areas. The number of questions was then further refined by estimating the time that would be needed for respondents to answer each question, and incorporating additional time for other unanticipated participant comments. This stage also involved revisiting key papers from the systematic literature review to check extant knowledge.

In chapter 2 it was explained how work skills and personal values developed early in the career may play a major role in anchoring life long career decisions (Feldman, 2007:184). This conclusion built on the work of Schein and his notion of a career anchor which he defined as *“that one element in our self-concept that we will not give up, even if forced to make a difficult choice”* (Schein, 1987, p. 158). The career anchors framework relates motivation to fundamental work orientations based on individual abilities, needs, motives and values which develop over time. Feldman’s study concluded by suggesting a need for future research to investigate how much individuals were willing and able to overcome career embeddedness and change careers, taking into account how far away from their current career they would be prepared to move. In order to investigate how much of an influence fundamental elements of the self-concept, skills and values would be on motivation for career progression, it was decided to use Schein’s Career Anchors Self-Assessment inventory (1985) as a tool to help explore this influence. This would involve incorporating the Schein’s Assessment procedure into the interview protocol. The development and testing of the protocol overall is described in the following sections.

### **3.2.3 Development of the research protocol**

Having devised the interview questions from the exploratory exercise outlined above, my next step was to compile a full interview protocol (see Appendix A). The interview protocol is a detailed summary of the steps to be followed in conducting the interviews. It was developed by listing all the information that would need to be gathered through the interview process and compiling a

detailed and extensive checklist of each step involved, from the initial contact with companies through to face-to-face interviews with research participants and the provision of follow-up information. The methodological, practical and ethical aspect of each stage was considered, and any particular concerns, e.g. the need to be aware of interviewer bias, were noted. This schedule and my accompanying notes were kept together and formed the basis of an ongoing journal which I kept throughout the research interviews, noting down thoughts, reflections, and particular observations about the process as it was enacted. In respect of the protocol, three aspects may require further explanation. These are:

1. **Initial on-line questionnaire:** Potential research participants were asked via email to complete an online questionnaire. They were provided with a link to a survey which was hosted by Cranfield School of Management's IT server. The questionnaire comprised a number of questions relating to demographic variables. Its use was both to establish the eligibility of volunteers in terms of their age, career status and health, and to gather personal details relating to job role, tenure, family situation, etc. prior to the interview. The purpose of this was to save time covering such points in the interview itself. The questionnaire also included the questions which are part of Schein's Career Anchors self-assessment tool. These were included here so that each participant's career anchor type could be established in advance of the interview with the results discussed with them as part of the interview. A hard copy version of the assessment tool was available as a back up in case it was required.
2. **Interview warm up:** A research interview is generally conducted between two strangers, within a constrained period of time. In a study such as this the interviewer wants the interviewee to divulge a great deal of personal and possibly sensitive information. Given this pressure it is important when conducting interviews that rapport is established as quickly as possible between the interviewer and research participants and that they are put at ease as quickly as possible. They must also be reassured and any doubts

and fears they may have, for example about confidentiality, dissipated (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002). Warm up comments in my interviews covered a concise reminder of the project's aims, reassurance of confidentiality/anonymity, affirmation of the time the interview would take, a request for permission to tape the interview, an explanation of what would happen to the interview data and my commitment to provide them with a summary of the overall research outcomes at an appropriate future date. Finally participants were given an opportunity to ask questions prior to the commencement of the interview. As mentioned above, much of the purpose of this introduction, which lasted some minutes, was to give participants a chance to relax, although a second equally important reason was to cover several points relating to research ethics – a subject which will be covered in greater depth in section 3.4.1.3 below.

- 3. Use of Timelines.** The time line is a simple device that allows people to tell their own stories in their own way in terms of those things that are important to them, albeit within an imposed structure (Mason, 2002). It enables the interviewer to learn as much as possible about people's own feelings, perceptions, thoughts and reactions relating to the issue under investigation (Isabella, 1990). This approach emanates from the view that it is easier for individuals to be able to recollect feelings, beliefs and experiences if they can place them in a context that represents an unfolding of events and allows for a variety of perceptual dimensions (Gerson and Horowitz, 1992). Within this study, individuals were asked, immediately following the warm up, to describe their career to date and the main career decisions they had made in terms of drawing and annotating a time line from when they had left school to the present day. The aim of this was to provide them with a vehicle through which they might explain how and why they made certain career decisions and what those decisions meant in terms of their career progression. Participants were also asked to use the time line to think about likely future developments relating to their working life to help them focus on what the concept of career progression meant for them and also how their

motivational drivers may have changed over time. Completed time lines were taken away for reference.

Having created the interview protocol the next step was the selection of research participants.

### **3.2.4 Sampling**

Selection procedures are influenced by the need to identify research participants with certain characteristics relevant to the issue/s of interest (Merkens, 2000). As the unit of analysis within this research was the individual manager this involved first, defining the characteristics of participants and the number which would be required, and second, any relevant or significant parameters relating to the organizational context within which they would be located. Sampling inherently entails potentially restricting the extent of possible disparity in respect of specified variables (Rousseau and Fried, 2001:3); within qualitative research it can be problematic. Although certain criteria can be set at the outset in terms of participant characteristics, e.g. individuals must be of a particular age, gender, and role, their deeper characteristics will only become apparent in the course of the investigation (Merkens, 2000). This being the case, ensuring adequate and sufficient participant numbers to elicit a sufficient amount of disparate information ultimately depends on the extent to which new information is generated by additional interviews to a stage where theoretical saturation is reached, i.e. when no new categories or properties are found and additional data merely adds to already identified categories (Partington, 2002: 151). To a large extent this cannot be known in advance and in practice sampling in all qualitative research is heavily influenced by issues regarding accessibility, practicality and time constraints (Silverman, 2006).

As explained in chapter 2 managers were chosen for a number of reasons not least of which is that they tend to have transferable skills and networks of contacts to facilitate career transitions, and more exposure through the nature of their role and experience to employment-related opportunities such as re-training (Reitman and Schneer, 2003). Studies have shown that across public

and private sectors there appear to be sector-related differences between managers with far greater similarity of attitude being demonstrated across gender than sector (e.g. Alban-Metcalf, 1989). Also there was a concern that final salary pension provision in the public sector (a diminishing reward in the private sector) would exert an overriding influence on public sector older managers' career mobility and their motivation for career progression. This being the case a decision was taken to focus on managers within private sector organizations.

As indicated also in chapter 1, age 50 to 70 was chosen as an appropriate age range as it represents what Greller and Simpson (1999) conceptualised as the stage of "late career". As an alternative to focusing purely on chronological age, examining the experiences of those who shared a temporal career state appeared more helpful for understanding the range of individual factors which may be involved. Having established these parameters it became obvious that a purposive sampling approach was required in order to meet these requirements. In practice, individual qualifying characteristics were established through the circulation of an initial email to those who were likely to meet the sampling criteria and the completion of the on-line questionnaire. Having examined the potential impact of a wide range of variables it was decided that the only disqualifying characteristics would be the wrong age, a non-managerial role, or poor health (to the extent that it prevented future career progression). In the event, no one was disqualified for the last two reasons although several potential participants were too young.

The number of participants to be included in the study was determined by two factors. First the issue of the quality and quantity of data likely to be generated from each participant in line with the view that an inverse relationship exists between the number of participants and the amount of usable data that can be obtained from each participant (Morse, 2000: 4). In essence this means that if a large amount of relevant data is generated by each participant then fewer participants will be required. The findings of a meta-analysis of participant numbers in 49 qualitative studies using interviews (Thomson, 2005) revealed an

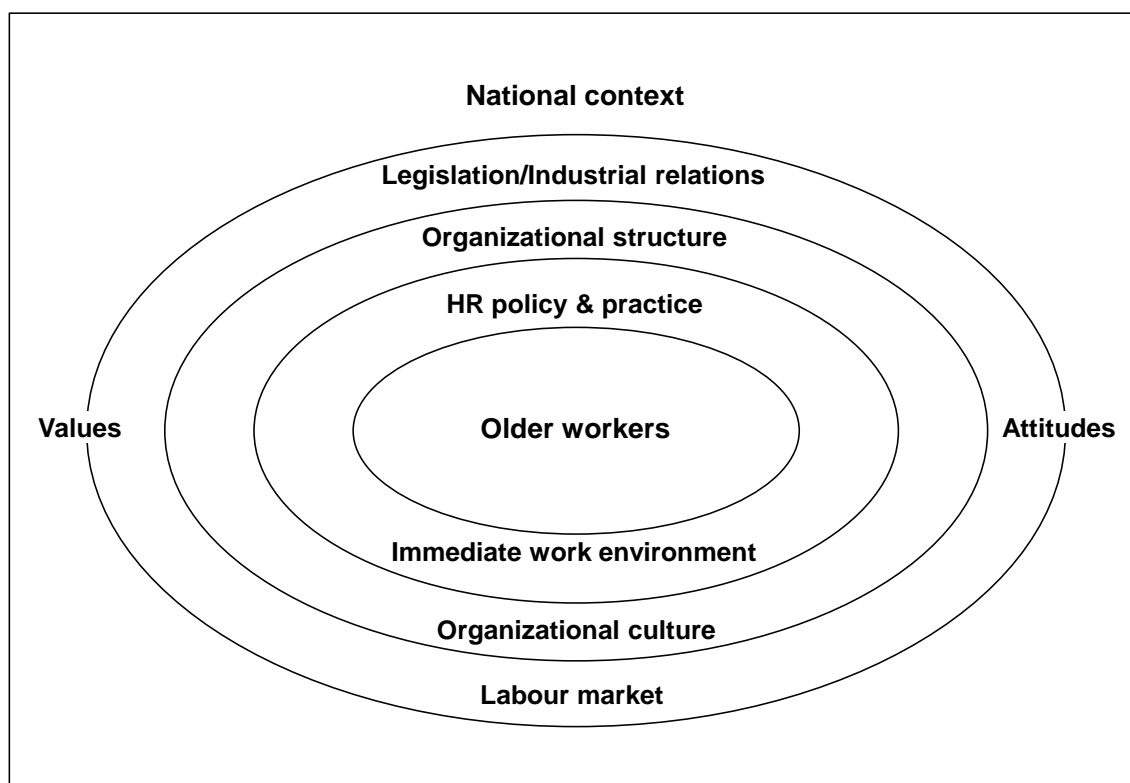
average sample size of 24 (range from 5 to 93). Findings from the exploratory study reported previously and the pilot study undertaken to test this research method (reported at section 3.3.2 below) revealed that it did generate large amounts of rich data. Unlike the straightforward mathematical approach of positivist research, there can never be one “right” number in respect of a qualitative research sample, but in light of the fact that a gender comparison was also involved, it was important to ensure access to a sufficient amount of data. Although this was not a quantitative study, the aim was – for purely comparative reasons - to interview equal numbers of male and female participants within a total sample size of 40 older managers.

### **3.2.5 Organizational selection**

Although the focus of this study was the individual manager, the setting within which careers are enacted is potentially a significant factor in relation to career progression. Across organizations today there may exist a wide variety of career structures and career paths. Despite the academic focus on the development of new self-managed, boundaryless career forms, in reality – as indicated in chapter 2 - many organizations still adhere to relatively traditional systems with employers continuing to exert considerable influence over managing their employees’ careers (Baruch, 2006). Thus culture, career opportunities, training and development programmes, and HR policies and practices are likely to exert a significant influence on the career circumstances of participants (Claes and Heymans, 2008) both in terms of their current role, how they came to achieve it, and future career opportunities. As the aim was to investigate individual subjective motivational drivers it was important to reduce and/or control the potential influence of these differing objective factors.

Organizations themselves shape the nature of careers conducted within their own environment; reflecting Rousseau and Fried’s comment that “Our choice of research settings shapes the variability that we can potentially observe” (2001:3). It must also be remembered that organizations themselves operate within a wider context. The potential range of environmental and organizational

influences which may affect participants is illustrated in Figure 2 below. These may vary widely across sectors (e.g. public sector vs. private sector), nature of business (e.g. manufacturing vs. media), or geographical location (e.g. Scotland vs. South East), all of which may be controlled for in the research design.



**Figure 2 - Relationships between older workers, organizational practices and context (Claes and Heymans, 2008)**

As the aim of this study was to investigate differing individual motivational drivers, the concern was to reduce extraneous objective influences as much as possible. Having considered the possible implications of the factors presented in Figure 2, the following selection criteria for participating organizations emerged, presented in table 3 below:

**Table 3: Criteria for organizational selection**

Organizational variable	Perceived requirements and reasons
Number	Two organizations would be required to allow some (albeit limited) analysis of the influence and interaction of different contexts on respondents without this element becoming unmanageable.
Sector	Both organizations to come from the private sector in order to avoid the potential disproportionate influence of pensions provision which may be found in the public sector. Ideally both organizations should also come from the same industry to enable some understanding of the influence of what may be considered “industry norms” particularly in terms of retention policies and practices (Claes and Heymans, 2008).
Stability	In order to avoid some of the problems being experienced by ailing industry sectors as a result of the economic recession at the time of the research (e.g. large scale redundancies) the issue of stability of particular market sectors is a consideration. Judgment to be based on a review of economic performance data taken from government and sector bodies.
Size	The chosen sector and organizations to be of a size that enabled them to retain a comparatively large number of functional managers at different levels (e.g. finance, HR, research, sales, etc.). Interviewing managers at a roughly similar level in terms of status and position across different functions should help reduce bias related to particular roles. The organizations should also be large enough to have sufficient numbers of male and female managers aged 50 and over to allow a comparison.
Location	Organizations to be located anywhere in the UK.

Having created a research protocol, defined the sample size and characteristics, and identified criteria for selecting organizations it was then possible to proceed to the fieldwork. This was, as described below, a two stage process which involved first, an initial pilot project followed by the main research study.

### **3.3 Fieldwork**

#### **3.3.1 Stage 1: Pilot study**

A pilot study was undertaken in advance of the main study in order to identify any problems or difficulties inherent in the research protocol; to check that the questions and the language used were appropriate for the intended participants;



to test whether the time allowed was sufficient for the proposed procedure; and to assess the overall suitability of the entire procedure to generate subjective information and rich description and avoid unwanted repetition. The pilot project involved interviewing six managers aged over 50 – three male and three female ranging in age from 50 to 61 years. Following a study of industry sectors in terms of the selection criteria outlined above in section 3.2.5 the pharmaceuticals industry appeared to be a good match with the aims of this project in terms of its apparent relative economic stability and the fact that the sector included a number of comparatively large organizations. At the time of planning the pilot study I also had a means of gaining access to individuals in this sector through a contact who was a Director of a large pharmaceuticals recruitment consultancy. Although this meant that all participants were from different organizations, it also provided me with some insight into the influence of organizational career frameworks.

Data collection for the pilot project was undertaken in five stages:

1. Having briefed my contact as to my requirements he sent an initial email to potential participants who appeared to meet my selection criteria describing the study and requesting that they email me if they were interested in taking part.
2. I then emailed those who responded to confirm their agreement to participate and to ensure they were clear about what the project involved. In this email participants were also sent a link to the on-line questionnaire described above comprising a number of questions relating to demographic variables.
3. Once they had completed the online questionnaire I then emailed each participant to arrange the details of our meeting, to thank them for their involvement and to remind them of what to expect in the interview.

4. A face-to-face interview with each participant then took place at each participant's place of work or a convenient location nearby. All the interviews were recorded.
5. At the end of each interview I asked participants for their feedback about the interview process.

### 3.3.2 Pilot study results

The findings of the study were analysed from two perspectives: the extent to which the research strategy and interview protocol were valid, and the outcome in terms of research findings. The results of the pilot in terms of the variables it was intended to test were as follows:

**Table 4: The outcome of testing the research protocol**

Challenge	Outcome
Identify any problems or difficulties inherent in the research protocol	All participants found the online questionnaire easy and straightforward, completed all questions, and did so within the estimated time. All participated enthusiastically in the interviews and understood and responded appropriately to all questions.
Test that the questions and the language used were appropriate for the intended participants	All the participants reported that they had enjoyed the interview and found it interesting. Some commented that they thought "the questions were very good" and that the researcher was "easy to talk to".
Test whether the time allowed was sufficient for the proposed procedure.	The time allocated for interviews had been accurately estimated.
Assess the suitability of the procedure to generate information and rich description, and to avoid repetition.	The participants found the career anchors inventory intriguing. The use of timelines as a means of recounting career experiences worked well in terms of enabling participants to describe their careers in their own terms. Using the timeline at the outset of the interview enabled participants to relax and become increasingly comfortable and forthcoming as they spoke. Overall, the interviews generated rich data based on deep thought and reflection.

Challenge	Outcome
	There was little repetition of information. Frequently participants admitted that there had been generation of new insights with individual comments such as “I’ve never really thought of it like that before”, or “I’ve only just realized that now I’ve told you about it”.

Additional specific feedback on the interview protocol caused me to amend my original approach. The first was a comment from my second interviewee who said that in order to ensure easier access to future participants I should make it clear that I was a mature student as he had been doubtful about talking about his career to a young researcher. Another stressed that when trying to recruit future participants it would be helpful to state that this was an important study that may help shape future policy. I incorporated both these revisions into the draft email provided to HR contacts of each organization (see Appendix B.)

As can be seen from table 4 above, few changes were required to the main interview protocol. The greatest change was the decision not to continue with the use of Schein’s Career Anchors Inventory as a research tool as not only did it add little to the generation of useful data but the quantitative basis of this tool did not seem to sit well with this study’s otherwise exploratory approach. The only real contribution made by the Career Anchors element was that, as it was completed on line, it had encouraged participants to think about aspects of their career prior to the interview. As this aspect seemed to have been beneficial, it was decided to replace Schein’s inventory questions in the online questionnaire with the following request to participants:

- *Please think about the main career decisions you have made which have exerted the most impact on your overall career progression, and your motivation for making these decisions.*
- *Consider whether you feel you have any underlying career/vocational identity or driver which has influenced your career choices and decisions over the length of your career.*

The wording of this request was tested with several individuals from the earlier exploratory study to ensure that they understood what was required and that they felt they would be able to respond if presented with such a request. In the event, this approach worked well for the main study with participants coming to the interview clearly having given some prior thought to these issues.

### **3.3.2.1 Coding and analysis of pilot study results**

Each of the pilot interviews was recorded. They were then transcribed and analysed using template analysis, a concept that, as described previously, relates to a range of techniques for thematically organising and analysing textual data using NVivo data analysis software. Template analysis involves developing a coding structure which is initially based on themes of importance within the participant interviews as identified by the researcher (King, 2004: 256). Subsequently these are added to, amended, refined and hierarchically ordered as further data emerges. As a procedure, template analysis ultimately reflects the idiosyncrasy, variability, and novelty within participant responses.

A coding structure based on the pilot interviews is at Appendix C. The initial coding structure was based on the five themes of career progression which emerged from the exploratory study: conceptions, drivers, influences, attitudes and feelings. Sub-categories of these were identified by individually analysing interview transcripts, reading through them first to highlight major themes and then going through them again line by line allocating a theme to each statement. I then repeated the latter process to see if any different themes emerged. Themes were initially grouped under the above five categories, plus an “other” category. Each category was then revisited to identify sub-themes which emerged from individual statements or themes which linked strongly with others. This process was also carried out with the “other” category. From this, two further coding categories were created “Change” and “Future”. Statements were allocated to these and again broken down into sub-themes according to content. Finally, a review of the overall structure and interrelationship of codes and clusters was undertaken. This revealed that there was some overlap between “Conceptions [of career progression]” and other categories (in

particular, “Drivers”), so the few statements which had initially been coded as “Conceptions” were re-coded into other categories/clusters e.g. the statement (in response to the question “What does the phrase ‘career progression’ now mean to you?) that “It does get harder as you get older ... you have to decide what’s important to do ... it’s no longer a matter of doing it all” was re-coded from “Conceptions” to “Drivers / ageing.”

### **3.3.2.2 Discussion of pilot study findings**

In order for the pilot project to have been successful the findings from the study needed to provide insight into the main research question and the two sub-questions, and additionally had to be able to be explained using the chosen theoretical frameworks. The findings relating to each question are discussed briefly below:

#### ***What are the motivational drivers for career progression?***

Interview transcripts showed that the drivers for career progression in the pilot study were individually diverse and differed greatly over the career span. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators including such factors as family situation, interest levels, need for financial or job security, recognition, status, confidence, health, and caring responsibilities, were important at different levels at different times. In terms of drivers for future progression, intrinsic factors such as continuing challenge and interest appeared to be important; status continued to be so, but financial reward was less significant.

Participants tended to see themselves and their careers as now representing a single identity and therefore considered progression in terms of their lives rather than their working lives. The majority of older managers were motivated to do “something different” in their latter years of work, with aspirations of doing something completely new being common. All older managers believed that they had developed a great deal of useful knowledge and experience over their careers and lives and wanted to use this for the benefit of others and their own satisfaction.

Older managers did not appear to identify with being “old” per se, but did consider their careers in terms of what they felt they still wanted or needed to do within the framework of the remaining time available to do it, as expressed in this statement: “You can either decide you have one more job left in you or you can decide to stay put until you draw your pension” (Female1, age 57)

***In what ways are these motivational factors perceived as different from earlier in the career?***

The majority of older managers saw their earlier careers as being focused on earning a living, providing security and making their way in the world: “The concept of a long career, well-paid and then a great pension at the end. That was what I wanted. It was only when I was forced to make a change that I did” (male1, age 61). However, all participants, even those older managers who still had to work for financial reasons no longer saw their current motivation as relating primarily to financial gain, security, or increased status. Much of this related to managers’ feelings that they had already achieved what they wanted in terms of extrinsic rewards so were now focused on intrinsic aspects of work. But, this was not universal. Some managers, those who were younger (age 50), were still planning the way forward and saw the future in terms of career changes that would build on their existing achievements:

*I’m looking at options. I might retrain...a PhD. I’m even looking into retraining as a medical doctor – they’d still get 20 years out of me [laughs] (female 2, age 50)*

The majority of older managers reported that they were no longer prepared to “play the game” (i.e. office politics) in the way they had when they were younger and now were motivated by autonomy and being able to use their experience and skills.

***Do the motivational drivers of female managers aged over 50 differ from those of male managers aged over 50?***

Despite the small sample size the findings of the study affirmed that the protocol was effective in eliciting information relating to this topic. For example, both male and female older managers took the plans of their partners and family into

account when considering future career options and both valued time spent with grandchildren and wanted to build this into their future career structures. The issues of childcare and dual career families were raised by participants of both genders in relation to the challenges that differentiated male and female managerial careers. However, as the female sample comprised one single (never married) woman, one married with no children, and one married with one child, it was difficult to draw out a range of experiences relating to each of these scenarios (although it was felt this would be possible in the wider study).

Female managers indicated that they were aware they were in a minority position within their sector and were aware of gender discrimination but reported that they had developed strategies for dealing with it much earlier in their careers to the extent that they could recognise certain advantages to being female.

In summary, aside from uncertainty about future health, all the managers were optimistic about their future careers and stated that they intended to keep working in some capacity even post-retirement as evidenced by comments such as: “I couldn’t do nothing; I’d go mad” (female1, age 57), and “The future? It’s interesting, exciting; I’m looking forward to it” (male 1, age 61).

### ***Expectancy theory and career motivation theory***

Within this study Vroom’s expectancy theory was used to help understand these findings in terms of older managers’ motivational drivers alongside London’s (1983) career motivation theory which relates motivational theory to career identity, career insight and career resilience. The findings of this study showed the following:

**Identity:** Participants themselves did not see their careers as being driven by an underlying career identity in terms of Schein’s career anchors. Rather, career identity – who they were in terms of their career – was seen as being formed as a result of workplace experience and linked to resilience.

**Insight:** Older managers saw their careers and their lives as being closely interwoven and had clear insight into the many influences which had affected

their career decisions and progression as well as insight into future motivational drivers. Career insight could be understood through expectancy theory inasmuch as throughout their careers participants realised that effective career outcomes were dependent on a balance of achievable goals combined with the effort they would expend. The value of career outcomes over time in terms of diminishing extrinsic motivators could also be accounted for by expectancy theory.

**Resilience:** resilience in terms of coping strategies, and attitudes and behaviours was evident. Although participants still held important roles, their concern was increasingly with carrying them out in a way that was meaningful to them and that would reduce stress and time commitment. In terms of expectancy theory, motivation for achieving what they now wanted from their existing situation was reduced, with participants' focus tending to shift toward new goals and new ways of doing things within different arenas in the future. *Positive* resilience and persistence was particularly reflected in older managers' determination and optimism about their own ability to create career opportunities in later life in the face of both ageist attitudes from others and changes to their own motivational drivers (e.g. a reluctance to participate in office politics).

### ***Career: meaning and context***

One of the advantages of using semi-structured interviews was that it allowed participants to focus on those aspects of questions that were important and relevant to them. A key part of the structure of this interview protocol involved the use of a timeline at the outset as a conduit through which each participant could describe their career to date. The effect of this was that it encouraged individuals to take a longitudinal approach to reflection, describing the drivers, causes, circumstances and outcomes of career transitions in a linear fashion. From the outcomes it appeared that this enabled them to take a more balanced view than that which may have emerged had they been asked to describe different aspects of their career e.g. "What was the most important transition in your career in terms of your overall progression?" in an ad hoc fashion. An



interesting outcome of this was that it also caused most participants to evaluate their careers holistically at the outset in relation to a self-imposed question along the lines of, “Does this add up to a career and how did it come about?” This was revealed by such initial and unprompted comments as “This is more a series of random events than anything I ever planned” and “Mine is an example of a not-planned career”. Comments such as these and the general way in which individuals recounted their career experiences suggested that inwardly they were measuring them against their own benchmark of what they believed a “good” career would be, i.e. planned, upwardly progressive, and able to be satisfactorily rationalised. There was no evidence that participants subsequently selectively presented the facts in order to demonstrate this, more that they were prepared to admit that they felt that their career in many ways had not lived up to what perhaps they felt “was expected”.

Similarly, although again it was not clearly expressed, there was a feeling that in talking about their earlier career experiences, individuals felt that their motivation was heavily influenced by societal norms of what one “ought to do” at certain life stages, e.g. buy a house, take on a mortgage, provide a settled life for children. For many, the immediacy or relevance of these drivers had now passed, leaving them in a position where, perhaps for the first time in their career, they were facing having to make choices based much more on their own wants and needs, both current and into the future. In terms of looking towards the future, again an implied yardstick of “retirement” as meaning total cessation of work was used by participants, generating comments such as “I couldn’t just do nothing”, “I don’t see myself as ever retiring”, and “It wouldn’t matter if I was making a difference in a company and being paid for it or making a difference in a charity and not being paid for it”.

Within the individual accounts of career progression context also emerged as important in terms of what individuals saw as feasible in terms of career progression, e.g. “People didn’t do that” and “There simply were no women bosses”. In the past, as well as in respect of their current and future situation, “career progression” tended to be individually evaluated less in terms of

overcoming the status quo (e.g. aiming to be the first woman manager) and more in terms of participants using their own skills, experience and networks to progress on their own terms despite “the system” and individual work contexts. What often emerged was evidence of an understanding of both what had been acknowledged as a motivational driver at the time, e.g. “We had just bought our first house” and later insights into other drivers relating to that career period, e.g. “Looking back I guess it was ... it was like I was trying to prove that I could do that”. Such insights appeared to relate to Schein’s concepts of *internal career* – the (subjective) path followed by individuals pursuing an occupation in order to meet their own needs, and *external career* – the (objective) employer-provided opportunities for individuals to follow a development path during their time with an organization (Schein, 1978: 1).

The pilot study tested, as had been intended, the validity of the research method and its suitability for addressing the research questions. It confirmed that in practical terms the research protocol was appropriate and functioned efficiently as a means of eliciting information about participants’ career experiences and attitudes. It generated interesting and deeply reflective accounts of participants’ career motivation and aspirations resulting in thick data from which meaningful insights could be drawn. A further outcome of conducting the pilot study was that it highlighted the issue of possible bias towards social desirability (Fisher, 1993) in the participants’ accounts of their careers due to a desire to create a good impression with the interviewer. My interest in the effects of this was such that before undertaking the main study I undertook an exercise to explore it further. Using a tape recorder and addressing the questions in the interview protocol, I recounted my own career story twice, first as I would tell it had I been talking to an academic researcher who was a stranger, and second, as I would have summarised it or talked about it to a trusted friend. The transcripts of these two “interviews” did show that there were significant differences. When talking to strangers and being challenged to account for ourselves we do justify, neaten, over- and under-emphasize and present ourselves in the best possible light. In contrast, when talking informally to those who know us, we are more likely to recall our

mistakes, doubts, inconsistencies, and disappointments - and even our absurd innermost hopes and improbable desires (Lawler, 2002). Whilst this exercise did not lead me to change the interview protocol it did deepen my awareness of this factor when analysing the findings.

The findings from the pilot study showed that changes in motivation do take place in older managers, with intrinsic motivators becoming more important than extrinsic factors such as pay and promotion, although status remained important. However those intrinsic motivators varied on an individual basis reflecting factors relating to career history, personal circumstances, health, and work and personal interests. There appeared to be a greater drive for autonomy - both reflecting the issues surrounding responsibility for career progression which emanate from contemporary career contexts and also reflecting notions of what represented "progress" in the subjective view of older managers themselves. These preliminary findings also demonstrated how future career progression appeared to depend upon *drivers of career progression* in combination with *influences on career progression* and *opportunities for career progression*. From this a question was raised concerning the extent to which it might be possible to devise a typology of different later life careers based on work motives. If such a typology could be created it may be a useful approach to categorising the range of ways in which older employees are motivated to continue to work (Claes and Heymans (2008).

Having tested the research strategy and interview protocol through the pilot study, the next stage was to undertake the main study, as described in the following section.

### **3.4 Stage 2: Main study**

Due to economic circumstances and forthcoming redundancy programmes the companies from which I had hoped to obtain my interviewees no longer felt able to cooperate by the time I was in a position to undertake my main study. Having contacted a number of other companies within the pharmaceuticals industry without success, I was then, by chance, offered an opportunity to conduct my

research within the UK offices of a large international investment bank with several thousand UK employees. After some deliberation, and revisiting my original list of organizational requirements, I decided that a shift in focus would be acceptable and indeed, in light of the turbulence experienced within the sector, potentially very interesting. Thus I decided to re-locate the main study to the financial services sector; a decision which did not appear to compromise any of my initial requirements. Having agreed to pursue the opportunity offered by the first financial services organization, I was able to gain access to the second organization, a long-established financial services provider, through contacting them directly.

I set up an initial meeting with a key HR representative from each of the companies involved in the study to discuss my research objectives and requirements and to ascertain the potential value to the organization of the research results. Whilst the unit of analysis was the individual manager, it was clear that HR policies and practices may impact heavily upon motivation at an individual level, so this was identified as a potentially significant factor requiring investigation prior to commencing the interviews. I therefore drew up a list of contextual elements which I discussed with representatives from each organization at the outset. These are listed below in table 5.

**Table 5: HR policies and practices in organizational selection**

Topic	Relevance
Mandatory / default retirement age (DFA) /retirement planning policies	Possible limitation of future career options if DFA is retained; alternatively retirement planning policies may stimulate career motivation through consideration of options at an early stage.
Pension and benefits schemes	Pensions and long service benefits may influence career plans and decisions in terms of retirement dates and financial ability to cease work.
Flexible working/ flexible retirement policies	Flexible working options may extend working life and enhance work motivation through providing opportunities to improve work/life balance, reduce stress, and avoid burnout.
Other policies e.g. mentoring and coaching schemes/ secondments / project work/ succession planning	Involvement may enhance the motivation of older managers in terms of 'doing something different' or 'giving back'. Receiving coaching and mentoring may help improve career insight and motivation.

Training and development	Lack of training and development support may impact older managers' ability to progress through restricting their skills and devaluing their input.
Health and wellness programmes	Impact on older managers' actual ability to keep working as well as motivational impact through underlining the value of the individual to the organization.
Age discrimination legislation	The extent to which an organization has introduced policies and practices to ensure an age neutral workforce may affect the motivation of older individuals.
Recruitment procedures	If and how older managers are recruited into an organization can affect individual motivation by signalling how much they are valued as workers; it may also reinforce individuals' views of their chances of obtaining another job outside the organization.

Discussions with representatives from each organization were useful in terms of understanding the employer's perspective on the position of older managers and providing useful background in terms of any particular influencing factors on career progression, e.g. pensions. In fact, neither organization had specific policies relating to older workers although the investment bank (FS1) had a community scheme in which employees, generally older individuals, could participate. Although both organizations still retained a formal retirement age, this was rarely used in respect of managers as most either left before that time or negotiated longer service if it was considered mutually beneficial. It should be noted that at the time the interviews were taking place both organizations had recently undergone restructuring and redundancies due to the economic recession. One of the organizations faced an imminent merger which again would result in down-sizing. This added uncertainty in an industry which participants already alluded to as 'volatile', meant that many older managers had experienced significant pressure in recent years to evaluate possible future outcomes and options against their own aspirations. Overall, the information gleaned from these discussions was useful in terms of providing contextual background to the interviewees' accounts and enabled me on occasion to question them about some aspect of working conditions that they may not have mentioned themselves e.g. the company pension scheme.

Having discussed issues surrounding confidentiality and other ethical considerations and having gained permission to proceed, each company representative then provided me with an internal contact (another HR person) to assist me in arranging an interview schedule. In each case company representatives were provided with a draft email to circulate containing a brief outline of the research project and requirements in terms of time commitment and availability (see Appendix B). In one company potential participants were requested to contact me directly; in the other I was provided with a list of names and details of respondents to contact myself (requiring me to amend the initial email slightly). Having reached this stage, I then repeated the process outlined in the Pilot Study at section 3.3.1 above, i.e.

1. An individual email to those who responded to confirm their agreement to participate and to ensure they were clear about what the project involved. The email also contained a link to an on-line questionnaire which they were asked to complete as soon as possible.
2. Once they had completed the online questionnaire, a further email to arrange meeting details.
3. A few days prior to the meeting another email to remind them of the forthcoming interview date, thank them for their involvement and confirm what to expect in the interview.
4. Face-to-face interviews were then undertaken with participants at their place of work or a convenient location nearby.

In all, across the study, this involved visiting four different sites in London and the Southern counties (which for reasons of confidentiality cannot be specified further). All the interviews were recorded. At the end of each interview I also made brief notes about my impression of each participant and what they had said, and my overall views on how the interview had gone, which I later revisited when analysing their interview transcript. Although originally I had intended to interview an equal number of male and female older managers, in the event I was only able to recruit 13 female managers out of 40 participants. This meant that the final sample - comprising two-thirds male to one third female managers,

was a more accurate reflection of female managers' representation within the overall management population. (The number of females in management roles has increased significantly over the past decades, trebling in the ten years to 2006 to 33.1% of all managers - Chartered Management Institute, 2009). It appeared that theoretical saturation (see Section 3.2.4 above) was reached within this number of female managers with no new material being generated after about 8 or 9 of the interviews.

The age distribution of participants is shown below in Table 6. As can be seen, 31 out of the 40 individuals were aged between 50 and 55, which means that the responses in total reflect the views of those who may be some years away from retirement, rather than those who in chronological terms may be expected to be closer to the end of their career.

**Table 6: Distribution of participant ages**

Participant														
age:	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63
male	5	4	5	1	2	2	2	1	2	-	-	1	-	1
female	6	2	1	3	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
total	11	6	6	4	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	0	1

The details of the research participants involved in the main study, all of whose names have been changed to protect their identity, are outlined in table 7 below.

**Table 7: Details of research participants**

Name	Age	Years with company	Years since promotion*	Marital status	Dependents: C=children ≤ 18 P=parents
Alan	52	23	16	married	c
Alec	58	5	4	married	-
Alice	51	22	5	co-hab	c
Alistair	51	6 months	n/a	married	c

Name	Age	Years with company	Years since promotion*	Marital status	Dependents: C=children ≤ 18 P=parents
Annette	53	26	4	married	-
Antony	50	22	1	married	c
Brian	52	29	8	co-hab	c
Bruce	58	16	7	married	-
Colin	50	20	4	married	-
David	52	26	11	married	c
Dennis	52	12	1	married	c
Edward	51	3	1	married	c
Elizabeth	50	6	n/a	single	p
Emily	52	7	7	married	c
Fiona	51	20	3	married	c
Gail	50	5	4	married	c+ p
Gary	50	23	9	co-hab	-
George	63	16	10	married	-
Gloria	53	4	6	married	p
Jennifer	50	1	2	married	c
Julia	50	5	n/a	married	c
Keith	55	1	n/a	married	c
Ken	56	4	4	married	-
Leo	54	37	2	married	-
Margaret	59	1	n/a	single	-
Martin	50	32	1	married	-
Matthew	53	9	n/a	married	c
Murray	52	3	n/a	married	c
Neville	56	4	n/a	married	c
Nick	50	12	4	married	c
Patricia	50	17	1	married	c
Paul	57	36	19	married	-
Peter	51	3	1	co-hab	c
Philip	54	1	n/a	married	c
Ruth	53	12	4	married	c
Sam	51	18	2	married	c



Name	Age	Years with company	Years since promotion*	Marital status	Dependents: C=children ≤ 18 P=parents
Sandra	50	16	1	single	c
Simon	61	33	6	married	-
Terry	57	22	21	single	-
Trevor	55	7	7	married	-

\*n/a = no promotion since joining company

In the event, four months elapsed between conducting the two sets of interviews due to difficulties in gaining access to the second company. Whilst this was frustrating at one level, the advantage of the gap between conducting the two sets of interviews is that it allowed me time to transcribe and analyse the first set before commencing the second. This meant that I had time to consider in some depth the findings of the first interviews and to focus on emerging issues relating to such key matters as the influence of employment context and culture, life stage influences, gender specific experiences, and the emergence of what appeared to be a possibly interesting typology of career progression orientations. This helped with identifying any areas where additional exploration of topics might be required (through prompting participants for greater detail) and also, a sense of when saturation point was being reached in respect of various issues. In fact, saturation point appeared to be reached at the stage when I had analysed about two thirds of the interviews (across male and female participants).

#### **3.4.1.1 Data analysis and coding**

Interviews - which averaged one hour and eight minutes in length - were recorded. As with the exploratory and pilot studies I then transcribed them verbatim myself and undertook a thematic analysis using NVivo data analysis software and template analysis, following the procedure outlined in section 3.3.2.1 above. The starting point for this analysis was the basic structure that had emerged from the pilot study which in itself reflected the original categories of data that had emerged from the exploratory study i.e. drivers, influences, attitudes and feelings – a structure which it appeared was logical to underpin

ongoing analysis (see Appendix C). Each interview transcript was analysed line by line in order to identify sentences and sections relating to specific themes. Where no pertinent theme already existed within the existing structure, I would either create a new code under an existing part of the structure e.g. critical incident under influences/personal, or would allocate the quotation to a new free node, e.g. boundaryless and protean careers. As the coding progressed, the original framework required numerous additions, regroupings and refinement of themes and a considerable amount of cross-referencing throughout, before the final structure was reached at the end of the first analysis stage. Whilst this was in itself an extremely time-consuming process, it was extremely beneficial in providing a great familiarity with the data. As can be seen from the two coding structures, in comparison to the initial coding structure which emerged from the pilot study (Appendix C), the final coding structure (Appendix E) was longer yet in some ways more precise. The final coding structure also had more free nodes in order to deal with interesting and potentially useful or relevant material that emerged that did not fit into the main coding framework.

#### **3.4.1.2 Methodological limitations**

Compared with an empirical approach, an interpretative methodology can create difficulties in terms of issues concerning the validity and reliability of research results. Reliability, the requirement that the research findings are repeatable (Burr, 2003) can only be achieved by clarity and transparency regarding research procedures as the same outcome will never be achieved if the study is reprised, due to different research participants and their views of the world. Validity, “the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers” (Hammersley, 1990: 57) is likewise a difficult concept within the qualitative research arena, particularly when considering individuals’ own conceptualizations and perceptions. Specific topics which have been identified as being of concern for qualitative researchers in terms of potentially limiting the validity of their study include the implications of context, credibility, and justification, transparency and coherence of outputs (Yardley, 2000). Within this framework, credibility and justification depend

heavily on the identification of a clear gap in knowledge and rigour and transparency of method to the extent of producing a replicable audit trail, with close attention paid to participants' use of language together with clear explanations of how their assumptions and reality may differ from those of the researcher. Mindful of these requirements I therefore kept a log of research developments from the outset of the study, noting progress points, insights, and the details of the procedures undertaken at each stage. Where appropriate, I revisited the literature and sought advice and alternative views from colleagues and my supervisor in order to ascertain that I was applying a sufficiently rigorous approach and had considered a sufficient range of possible options in the knowledge that one can never be aware of all conceivable possibilities.

One of the challenges in qualitative research, particularly in studies such as this using a phenomenological methodology is that although the method is effective for generating "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) it also produces a huge amount of rich and fascinating data for the researcher to analyse. Separating out that which is pertinent from that which is merely interesting is a considerable challenge and reflects an inherent tension, as Easterby-Smith et al., (2002) highlight, between "creating meanings and counting frequencies" (p.129) . This was dealt with by creating free nodes in the coding for interesting categories of material that did not immediately relate to the core coding structure and refining these free nodes and the overall coding structure several times in order to ensure the focus was maintained on relevant material.

A final issue in terms of methodological limitations is that of the relevance of the methodology for every aspect of the study. For example, in relation to gender perspectives, as gender was a secondary issue in relation to the research topic in this study it is possible that selection of a different methodological approach, for example examining the issues in terms of feminist discourse may have generated more insight in this area than the approach adopted. However as the primary intention of this study was not to study gender, this appeared an acceptable limitation for the purposes of this study.

In summary, in undertaking qualitative research, reflexivity i.e. “explicitly acknowledging the personal and political values and perspective informing the research” (Burr, 2003) has to be constantly at the forefront of the researcher’s mind in order to be aware of potential researcher bias. In analysing the findings the researcher also must be aware that the methods being used to elicit knowledge are constructed themselves and may be easily overlaid by their own values and judgments. In order to maintain and improve my awareness of reflexivity, I noted some of the questions suggested by Langdridge (2007) and revisited them before each interview and repeatedly when undertaking the analysis and writing up. These questions are shown in Table 8 below:

**Table 8: Questions to encourage reflexivity (Langdridge, 2007:59)**

Why am I carrying out this study?
What do I hope to achieve with this research?
<p>What is my relationship to the topic being investigated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Am I an insider or outsider?</li> <li>• Do I empathise with the participants and their experience?</li> </ul>
Who am I and how might I influence the research I am conducting in terms of age, sex, class, ethnicity, sexuality and any other relevant cultural, political or social factors?

### **3.4.1.3 Ethical considerations**

Although the issue of ethics is being discussed at this point for reasons of presentational flow and convenience, any research must consider ethical issues at the very outset as they may have significant implications for the nature of research that is being proposed, the type of participants that may be involved, and the extent to which the findings can be made public. In short the success of the research design depends heavily on having considered a wide range of ethical factors. In respect of this study, three ethical aspects seemed particularly important. First, establishing informed consent on the part of participants in terms of ensuring they fully understood the nature and purpose of the research, the part they would play in relation to that, and what exactly they would be

required to do. This was achieved through providing them with a written summary of the research aims and structure and checking with them in writing and verbally that they understood and were happy with this before their participation commenced.

A second important aspect was anonymity and confidentiality. The information that would be elicited from individuals was potentially extremely sensitive and could have negative implications at a personal level if confidentiality and anonymity were breached. The procedure for ensuring anonymity and confidentiality was again outlined to participants in writing and again, verbally, prior to the commencement of each interview. Permission was requested on an individual basis to tape the interview. Initial on-line questionnaire responses were deleted immediately the information had been saved (and assigned a pseudonym) elsewhere. Tapes were handled with care, and deleted once transcribed. Pseudonyms have been used throughout and a minimum of personal information has been ascribed to individual participants in writing up this thesis in order to protect their anonymity.

A third aspect of ethics relates to the conduct of the interviews and the requirement of the interviewer to ensure that interviewees are put at their ease and feel they remain in control over the situation in terms of retaining the right not to answer certain questions or to stop the interview entirely should they wish. This was achieved through explaining this to each participant at the outset of their interview, alongside ensuring their comfort in terms such aspects as ensuring they were happy with the room temperature and had a glass of water if they required it. Further confidentiality was ensured by requesting that the companies provided an interview room that was private and ensuring there were no interruptions.

Having created a research protocol, defined the sample size and characteristics, and identified criteria for selecting organizations, the next step was to submit an application to the Cranfield School of Management Ethics Committee in order to gain approval for the study. Having achieved this, it was

then possible to proceed to the fieldwork, the results of which will be described in the following chapters.

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter has detailed the philosophical position underpinning this study and the research strategy and design. It has outlined the processes involved in developing the research protocol and presented the results from a pilot study undertaken to test the effectiveness and validity of the research design for producing the detailed level of subjective information required on topics of relevance. Explanations have been provided for changes made to the initial research questionnaire and further changes to the research design following the pilot project. The procedure by which the results were recorded, analysed and coded was documented and brief details provided of issues relating to validity, reliability and flexibility. An explanation of the findings of the study now follows in chapters 4-6, followed by a discussion of the findings in chapter 7 and conclusions at chapter 8.

## **Chapter 4: Motivation for career progression**

This chapter is the first of three detailing the findings of the research study. It reports the findings from the participant interviews relating to the research question: *What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?* The chapter commences with an explanation of some of the implications of locating this study within the financial services sector. This is followed by an investigation into the role of identity in relation to career progression. Having considered the nature of the frameworks provided by both organizational context and identity, the next section provides a detailed analysis of the positive and negative career drivers that emerged from participant interviews. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed also that the importance of particular career drivers at an individual level related to a framework of personal and workplace influences which operated within individual lives. The final section therefore explores what these influences were and their role in motivation for career progression.

### **4.1 The financial services context**

The context within which careers are enacted can have a considerable impact on the career norms and expectations surrounding career progression. It is important therefore to examine the nature of this context before exploring specific findings relating to motivation for career progression. This study was conducted within two large organizations within the financial services industry, a sector which due to its volatile nature exerts a significant influence on the meaning and enactment of individual careers. In the latter part of the twentieth century the rise of new competitors within the industry combined with increasing globalisation and widespread implementation of electronic information and communication systems had led, even before the 2007/8 economic crisis, to a situation where it was “an industry in turmoil, characterized by accelerating demands for competitive performance [and] ...a drive for lower costs which has manifested itself in restructuring, downsizing and de-layering...[and] a shift from a long-term perspective to a short-term orientation” (Tempest, Mckinlay and

Starkey, 2004:1541). As a result, pay and promotion policies were closely linked to immediate past performance, dramatically eroding career security and employee trust and loyalty and creating a situation where “only a very few, by definition, can ever reach the top” (Polden, 2002: 88).

In the UK the financial services industry had experienced the effects of the economic downturn at an early stage and by the time this study was conducted it was, according to representatives of the two organizations involved, in a “recovery” stage, having implemented redundancy programmes and introduced some restructuring. However, as was also indicated by the research participants themselves, such measures were by no means out of the ordinary and reflected the turbulent nature of organizations responding to constant economic pressures, often through mergers and acquisitions.

Within the two organizations in the study, the effect of this on individual careers differed according to the nature of managerial roles. In the investment bank (FS1) careers in general were categorised as “front office” – operational, extremely fast-moving and pressurised money creators; or back office – money consuming support roles for the front office functions e.g. IT, HR, Legal, etc. Back office functional or professional roles involved smaller teams with comparatively less change in responsibilities and little movement or scope for advancement. Many of those who had been employed in front office roles early in their career moved into general front office management with many geographical and functional changes. Those in support roles (back office) tended to have much more limited career paths and more stable career structures. Within the second organization (FS2) a financial services provider which had a more traditional and slow moving culture, careers were again divided across general management roles and functional support roles although it appeared that the culture of the second organization did not differentiate as much in terms of the value ascribed to each role type. Within both organizations it was acknowledged by the research participants that although in the past it had been the norm for managers to be able to afford to leave the organization at a comparatively early age, now as economic pressures made it more difficult



for the majority to accrue wealth, individuals were tending to stay with the organization for longer.

In summary, for the reasons outlined above the potential for objective career progression for the majority of managers in the study was low. Finding out from individual managers what motivated them in terms of career progression in this context was therefore significant and is examined next.

## **4.2 The role of identity**

What motivates people about their career depends very much on how they see themselves and how central their career is to their overall identity (Meijers, 1998). From an analysis of the findings of this study, some individuals admitted that their life was heavily focused on work almost to the exclusion of all else, whereas others clearly saw work as just one part of their lives and who they were. From the interview transcripts it emerged that in career terms identity is more than what a person does, it is who they are. Within the participant interviews there was strong evidence that individuals recognised the significance of this as revealed in such comments as:

*My career is as a [job role]. That's my identity. I'm proud of it. Peter, age 51*

Managers could clearly identify not only what aspects of themselves they saw as strengths and skills and how these now formed key aspects of their career identity, but how these variables were also recognised and evaluated by others. Although most of the managers considered the positive aspects of their identity, some also identified parts of their identity which they felt were undervalued or which impeded their career:

*For me...I've always found corporate politics a difficult thing to get into. I always focus on the job to be done, I tend not to... I'm not great at self-promotion and putting myself forward. That's sort of hindered me somewhat in my career, Alan, age 52*

Many of the managers started talking about their career identity completely unprompted during the timeline exercise. It was obvious that they could identify quite clearly the stage of their career when they felt their current career identity emerged, using examples from their career trajectory to illustrate the process and accentuating the meaning and value of their career identity to them:

*I got a job working in-house back in London – in the City. The job was absolutely fascinating, extremely difficult intellectually but it was really, really interesting - my ideal, I think. That was where I think I really found myself. Philip, age 54*

It appeared that some managers had come to a realisation about their identity over the years based on their behaviour compared to that of work colleagues and the rewards or lack of rewards that resulted:

*You have colleagues whose main focus is on pleasing the boss, getting in their good books and they make a quick career - but I don't think they're happier than I am. Rank goes with remuneration and you can afford a certain lifestyle but it only goes so far – I think you have to pretend to yourself that you are someone else than you really are. David, age 52*

Many of the women managers in particular alluded to the fact that their work identity only represented one part of them:

*Outside of work I don't think I've been particularly closely identified with what I do. Most of my friends probably don't understand much about what I do – it's not something I talk about a lot. And I think it's quite important because if you get solely defined by your career and then you want to move into retirement I think that can be quite a wrench. Alice, age 51*

Nearly all the managers indicated that their choice of career and the path it had subsequently taken had been largely unplanned and in form represented a series of decisions relating to choices and opportunities which had arisen at

particular points throughout their working life. Some of these individuals, like Alice above, felt that as a result their career identity didn't fully reflect who they were and what they would have liked to do, or would like to do at some future date. In these cases they indicated that they had made a trade off between their career choice and personal fulfilment in order to accommodate other responsibilities in their lives:

*I could have developed a career in a totally different area... I think I would rather have done something different but its okay - I've been grateful that it's delivered me the ability look after my children, to educate them. Margaret, age 59*

Understanding their career identity meant individuals pinpointing skills and qualities about themselves that they knew were strengths, involved them in activities which they enjoyed and found fulfilling and which reinforced their own sense of who they were and how they wanted to be viewed by others. Many spoke of their career identity in terms of their realisation of the influence it would exert on future career decisions they might make:

*I like the technical side best, rather than the man-management side...Working with words certainly suits me, I wouldn't be able to do a particularly manual or practical sort of job. But I'm not so sort of set that I wouldn't consider other things. For example, the other day, I thought it would be nice to be a pharmacist... Annette, age 53*

From the way participants described their careers, their situation and their motivation at various times in their life, it appeared that people saw their lives as a story that they had enacted which now represented who they were. Their motivation for "what next" was very much linked to a combination of what they wanted to do at a practical level (e.g. the amount of time they worked), the way they wanted to be seen (by themselves and others), the realisation that there was only a certain amount of time left in order to create a satisfactory ending (and that it was their own responsibility to do so), and an underlying feeling of uncertainty regarding future events which were out of their control (e.g. health,

job or career opportunities). Overall, it was clear that what individuals saw as their identity, regardless of whether it was solely work-focused or involved wider behaviours and attitudes, was closely related to what motivated them about their career:

*I need to be challenged and interested. I've always been very keen that the things that I do result in someone, somewhere doing things differently. I've always been much more interested in stuff that results in a change or a big event, or something happening – not just [doing it] for its own sake. Sam age 51*

Thus although the findings described above related to the overall evidence which emerged relating to participants' views about career identity, how their identity was enacted through their careers emerged through what was important to them about their careers in terms of motivational drivers. This will now be explored further below.

### **4.3 Career drivers**

Career drivers are inner forces that influence what one wants from one's working life. They can be divided into positive and negative motivational drivers and the findings from this study are considered below in relation to each of these categories.

#### **4.3.1 Positive drivers**

Positive motivational drivers – those forces that direct people towards certain outcomes - are considered first, not least because within the interviews older managers identified a greater variety of positive than negative motivators. These drivers have been categorised, in order of priority according to frequency of occurrence, as interest enjoyment and variety; challenge and growth; contribution, making a difference and developing others; autonomy, freedom and self-realisation; relationships; recognition; and further advancement and promotion. Each of these is examined below; starting with the notion of interest and enjoyment - by far the most frequently mentioned driver.

#### **4.3.1.1 Interest, enjoyment and variety**

As a concept, interest in and enjoyment of the work managers did was extremely important to them and was viewed by the majority as the critical variable that made their ongoing employment in their job viable. For many it made an otherwise objectively plateaued career acceptable and sustainable and offset other less desirable aspects of their job such as stress. Although individual managers described it in different terms, the majority clearly viewed continuing interest as a form of career progression:

*I've got a job, a good job, an enjoyable job working on a very interesting project at the moment and that's what I enjoy. Enjoyment is progression in its own sense. Alan, age 52*

Most of the participants saw the intrinsic level of variety in their job as a factor that reinforced its inherent interest. That said, some individuals also clearly differentiated job satisfaction (the day to day value of their job) and career satisfaction (the longer term value of their career overall) recognising that job satisfaction did not, for them, represent career progression (forward movement or development within their career):

*Career progression? I probably don't see any progression at all. And that's not a worry if I can continue doing what I do... I enjoy what I do; I get a lot of satisfaction from what I do. Bruce, age 58*

What this latter statement illustrated is that in speaking of career progression, some of the managers like Bruce automatically linked it to objective progression even though in other parts of their interview they made it clear that they also measured progression subjectively and in terms of different variables.

#### **4.3.1.2 Challenge and growth**

The majority of older managers felt that from the outset their careers had comprised a series of welcome and less welcome challenges. Most felt they still experienced challenge in their career on a day-to day basis, and in general,

viewed this very positively, with some seeing it as closely linked to interest, enjoyment and variety in the job. Most saw it as something they would not only look to replace within their current organization or current career framework if it disappeared but regarded it as a major motivator for continuing to work once they had 'retired' from their current career or organization.

*Even if I won the lottery I'd feel I had to work. I'm stimulated by the intellectual challenge, by people. Murray, age 52.*

Along with interest in and enjoyment of their job, many saw the challenge in their current role as something which replaced, at least in part, reduced opportunities in terms of organizational progression or financial reward:

*I find the work I do intellectually stimulating... there are aspects of the job that are quite challenging and so actually keep me up at night. So work-wise there is quite a lot there, and I'm happy with that. I need work that challenges me and pays the mortgage. If it wasn't interesting I'd just get a 9 to 5 job somewhere else. Gloria, age 53.*

As Gloria's statement shows, the majority of the managers recognised that objective rewards such as pay were not sufficient motivators in themselves and that the drive for "happiness" as a work outcome was equally if not more important to them.

#### **4.3.1.3 Contribution, making a difference and developing others**

Doing meaningful work that was valued and could be seen to make a difference was another key motivational driver at a subjective level. Unlike the drive for recognition which could be seen as public acknowledgement, this was more a reflection of people's subjective feelings about the value they provided:

*I'm asking "What am I doing here – is it valued? And do I enjoy doing it?" You can go on doing something which isn't to an extent perfectly valued as long as you think you're doing something which is worthwhile. Elizabeth, age 50*

Participants spoke of pride in their achievements as exerting a motivational force and providing them with a sense of satisfaction and a desire to continue in their role:

*I think it's about having a sense that you're doing something meaningful. I don't think that means doing something beyond the mundane in terms of tasks, it's feeling that you are helping in an organization; you're contributing to a team. I think that's a good feeling at the end of a working day. And when that stops and you think you are in something repetitive or frankly meaningless that's not really helping anybody, that's really energy-sapping .Gail, age 50*

Identification of this driver also raised the question of the extent to which the importance of helping others and giving back may be age-related, reflecting a developmental tendency towards generativity (Erickson, 1968) an issue which will be discussed further in chapter 7.

#### **4.3.1.4 Autonomy, freedom and self-realisation**

Some of the older managers considered that a further key motivating element of their career was autonomy which provided them with access to increased self-realisation in terms of what they wanted to do and who they felt they were:

*What drives me is that I know I'm good at managing people and meeting a challenge. I like variety in the job and there seems to be plenty of that, but more than that I like to be left alone to get on and do things in my own way, the way I know I can do it without being told what to do.  
Dennis, age 52*

The question which this raises is whether the significance of autonomy may be related to career stage and experience or whether, as Patricia's statement seems to suggest, this has always been an aspect of individuals' personality or preferred way of working:

*I like a reasonable degree of autonomy - I don't like people breathing down my neck or telling me how to do things. I prefer newly-created jobs that are a blank sheet, where nobody's done it before and nobody knows exactly what's required so you just have a go and make it up as you go along. That's what suits me best. Patricia, age 50*

From these statements it can be seen that there is a considerable overlap between these categories of motivational drivers, for example Dennis talks about both variety and autonomy and Patricia's statement relates equally to challenge. The key factor underlying them all is the element of what people felt they got out of their jobs and careers on a subjective basis which provided them with positive reinforcement to continue.

#### **4.3.1.5 Relationships**

Although this was not seen as such a powerful or prevalent force as other motivational drivers, many managers – both male and female - mentioned social relationships and interaction as being important to them.

*I enjoy being at work and that social interaction [sic] and the challenge that happens every day. Julia, age 50*

However, as is outlined in the next chapter, for many participants relationships were more of an influence on career decisions than a direct driver, particularly in terms of some of the negative effects of relationships which could affect their career attitudes and behaviours.

#### **4.3.1.6 Recognition**

Although several managers mentioned that they valued the recognition of their contribution in the workplace, recognition tended to be viewed as almost an incidental part of "doing a good job" - a bonus rather than a key driver. Some of the managers openly admitted that due to becoming plateaued in their career they felt they had lost recognition and status and this now represented a driver



in terms of something they would work to replace and which in itself would represent career progression:

*I'd like some sort of promotion, status or recognition of contribution, but I don't have to have career progression as (in terms of) another step on the ladder. Emily, age 52*

In general, recognition was not seen as having to be enshrined in formal promotion, it related more to a desire for a general attitude of respect, appreciation and acknowledgement from peers and the organization as a whole.

#### **4.3.1.7 Objective advancement and promotion**

As outlined above, positive career drivers were identified as interest in the work, enjoyment and variety, challenge and growth, contribution, autonomy, relationships and recognition. All of these were individually subjective and intrinsic to the work involved. Objective drivers were mentioned less frequently; out of forty participants only five, all of whom were at the younger end of the age scale, intimated that they were still actively pursuing promotion:

*I'd like to step up another couple of rungs...If I could get another couple of promotions that would suit me. Julia, age 50*

The desire for further advancement was linked by the individuals themselves either to their career history in terms of whether or not they felt they had achieved the level to which they aspired, and/or their career identity in terms of whether they felt their current position and the degree of success they had achieved reflected who they felt they were. For example, Julia's desire for further promotion reflected the fact that she had made a retrograde step when joining the organization and wanted to regain the level of status she had achieved previously. It was also driven by a long-felt desire to prove herself: "I guess when I started out there was an element of showing people that although I'd struggled at school I was going to be successful, and I have been". That

said, even for the managers who sought further objective promotion, it was not a driver that operated in isolation:

*I will be making future decisions about the next job (elsewhere) based on a balance of pay, prestige, control, autonomy and will it interest me.*

*Because if it doesn't I'll stay here. Edward, age 51*

As Edward indicated, reflecting the situation of the managers as a whole, career behaviours were generally driven by a range of factors acting together such that decisions relating to objective career progression would depend on achieving an acceptable balance with subjective factors. What was highly apparent was that the majority of managers, having gone through this process of evaluating the implications of further objective career progression, had decided that this was something that, in general, they did not want. One of the reasons was that many saw that it would mean losing what they had decided they valued about their career and which they considered would be difficult to replace elsewhere. Alongside this a considerable proportion of the managers openly admitted that based on past experience, they no longer saw any possibility of future objective career progression. Some attributed their inability to advance to relatively positive factors such as being useful to the organization where they were, although from the researcher's perspective it was impossible to know whether this reflected the reality of the situation, or organizational or individual justification. Others saw their situation as a result of inherent organizational ageism which will be discussed further below.

#### **4.3.2 Negative drivers**

Negative motivational drivers, those forces that act as deterrents, are considered next. Within this study they were identified as avoiding stagnation and boredom, preventing loss, and reducing pressure and stress.

#### 4.3.2.1 Avoiding stagnation and boredom

For some managers the drive to avoid boredom and stagnation was largely based on their own past experiences of the impact of boredom on their feelings about their job. Others knew that as individuals in any environment they didn't cope well with being bored.

*I'm quite happy doing my current job for another five years but then I'll be bored and not being bored is quite important to me. Ken, age 56*

Yet others were only using it as a yardstick of how they anticipated they might feel in future if the nature and content of their role remained unchanged. Whilst many of the managers had been successful in taking steps to avoid stagnation and boredom within their career, a few felt frustrated that they had now come to a standstill in their current position:

*The fact is that I'm not now enjoying my job because it has changed; others have taken over the best bits that I don't now get involved in. And that's disappointing. So that's why I'm looking to move. I actually said to my manager today that I don't want to continue doing this work, I actually think I need to change roles, I need a new, bigger challenge. Julia, age 50*

Julia's comment was interesting in as much as she had also said (see relationships above), "I enjoy being at work and that social interaction [sic] and the challenge that happens every day". This is a useful example of the interaction of different work and career-related drivers on managers' motivation which themselves were also subject to a range of individually significant influences, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. As can be seen from her comment Julia aspired to a more challenging role, which would probably represent promotion. However it was not promotion in itself that she was seeking; but rather related elements such as challenge, interest, contribution and recognition. In seeking promotion Julia was in the minority; most of the

other managers in this situation such as Alan, were prepared to tolerate their plateaued situation:

*My career progression has stagnated – the last time I was promoted was 1997. I've stayed at that level and haven't been able to get up to the next grade so that's 13 years at the same grade... so I feel my career has stagnated, eroded... The reason I've stayed so long - I have thought at times of changing - but you become... trapped. No trapped is probably too strong a word; it's difficult to change career and take a risk because you've got so much at stake. I'm embedded. Alan, age 52*

From other parts of his interview it was clear that Alan still had considerable ongoing financial commitments (children's school fees) and that he recognised that he was well-paid and in a relatively secure position because of his specialist skills. The combination of these factors mitigated his concern over his plateaued career to an extent that he could rationalise staying where he was and had been able to live with this for some years. This aspect of balancing out the negative aspects such as lack of objective career progression with positive aspects such as enjoyment of the job was highly characteristic of the way in which the managers spoke of their careers.

#### **4.3.2.2 Preventing loss**

In many ways preventing or avoiding loss might be thought of as being the same as maintaining the status quo. But, after much consideration of the way individuals spoke about the two aspects, it appeared quite clear that avoiding loss was a much more proactive driver than maintaining the status quo - an inherently passive state. Avoiding loss covered a range of different motivators including keeping up with younger colleagues, coping with market conditions, and avoiding being stereotyped or disregarded due to the ageing process. In his current position Terry had experienced loss over several years due to market conditions and management decisions largely outside of his control and this had impacted the way he viewed his career:

*I've been very lucky to be at the same organization for 22 years and it's just worked out really, really well for me. I'm proud to have been here. But since then (2005), I've just sort of bounced down from branch to branch. But you get that anywhere in life; that's fine - you just pick yourself up and carry on. But you know after a while that the only thing you're going to hit is the ground and that's really what it's felt like for the past five years. Terry, age 57*

As a result of this situation, Terry's motivation now was to rebuild his self-esteem and repair his identity as a successful professional. Many of the managers, however, were more focused on avoiding the potential future implications of decline and loss. For example, Peter was aware that at some stage it was possible that he may find himself in an increasingly negative situation due to age-related factors:

*I'd like it to just stay as it is. If they thought you weren't worth what you had been ...then I would just go. Peter, age 51*

For Peter and other managers like him, a drive to maintain their position was central to their career motivation and their own career identity. Others such as Patricia, who saw herself as a competent and accomplished manager in her current role, did not want to risk damaging this self-image through accepting promotion to a role that they felt they may not be equipped to deal with:

*If I was offered a much higher role, I'd like to feel I was competent at it and not struggling to keep my head above water - I've had enough of that in the past; Being overloaded with work, not really knowing what I'm doing and thinking that nobody else did either. Not being out of my depth. Patricia, age 50*

#### **4.3.2.3 Reducing pressure and stress**

For some managers, the drive to avoid high levels of pressure and stress was also a significant motivator, either in terms of reducing the levels they currently experienced or avoiding the possibility of future stress. In the latter case, this

was usually linked to having experienced high levels of stress earlier in their career and not wanting to repeat the experience and its consequences:

*I'm not now looking to go back into these highly responsible areas. I'd like to do something useful without the high pressure of responsibility... I don't think gaining more status is a motivator for me. Obviously being paid more is better than being paid less, but if it means working 60 hours a week [as I did before] it wouldn't be. Neville, age 56*

Some could clearly link their current stressful situation to organizational change and down-sizing which left fewer people charged with the responsibility for delivering more. For people like Matthew in such a situation the negative demands of the day-to-day job now superseded any positive drivers related to their broader career:

*I don't really know where my career's going anymore...I just want the job to become realistic again. We are running 100 miles an hour at the moment just to stand still, and that's got to change. Matthew, age 53*

A few of the other managers acknowledged that although they were coping with the demands of their job they were now increasingly motivated by the idea of taking up a job that could be left behind at the end of the day with an accompanying reduction in responsibility and stress.

#### **4.4 The role of remuneration**

The positive and negative career drivers outlined above all relate to intrinsic motivational variables, the exception being career advancement (promotion). A variable which was more difficult to classify in terms of its role as a motivational driver was that of financial remuneration which, in general, links to extrinsic aspects of organizational careers. In this study however, although all the managers talked about remuneration in relation to their career only one said that financial reward was still his overriding motivator:

*I always wanted to work and always wanted to earn money. Money has always been the driving factor in my career. Alistair, age 51*

A considerable number of the managers clearly viewed financial reward as an unavoidable necessity due to the requirement of ongoing financial commitments. For this reason they intimated that they felt it continued to shackle them to their career, rather than acting as a positive driver in itself. That said, financial reward tended to be spoken about in relative terms within a context of what it allowed people to do (e.g. “because of my job we have a nice lifestyle”) and its implications for the way in which they lived and organized their lives. Several of the men mentioned the significance of financial reward in terms of their identity:

*I see myself in very old-fashioned terms as the main provider. My wife works part-time but doesn't have a career; the amount of money she earns wouldn't be enough to support us... I'm a classic Volvo man; I have a family and my job is to provide for them. Keith, age 55*

Terry, talking about the impact of redundancy for managers he knew, stressed the complex role that he believed financial provision played in male identity:

*I know the real problem around it is, for males, not that they can't get another job of some sort and make some money, but explaining to their family, who are of course hugely supportive, that as the bread winner, the main provider, they may not be able to finance going abroad on holiday or whatever. Terry, age 57*

Many of the managers conceded that financial reward was no longer as important to them as it had been earlier in their career. Others, although recognising the significance of financial reward, clearly had never seen pay as being a key motivator; they viewed it as merely a by-product of their position. Some of the managers were open about the fact that they were already financially secure and could choose to stop work if they wished although for others, financial reward was still a pressing issue. Overall, the majority indicated

that even if they needed a certain level of income to support their current lifestyle they were not motivated by it to the extent that they had been when they were younger. Most felt that they would be able to 'get by' in financial terms in a lesser role if organizational changes meant they were demoted, or if they lost their job and then they would not necessarily seek an equally high-paying position. So for the majority it appeared that financial considerations had now assumed the position of being one of a number of influences on their career decisions (as outlined below) rather than being a prime career motivator. Many also mentioned that their concerns regarding finance had shifted to focusing on whether they would have enough to sustain them in retirement:

*I'm finding it difficult now to be absolutely clear about what I want. I know financially that I need to stay at least on the same remuneration, if not try to improve it, to keep my son at private school and maybe help my daughter who's just graduating. But also, making sure I'm saving for retirement because obviously pensions and things have taken a bit of a blow over the past few years. So my goals are to keep working, to keep the same if not better remuneration if I can and make sure I can save.*  
*Alan, age 52*

Alan's situation represented that of the majority of the managers in their early fifties, both male and female, in that he was balancing the need to provide for children, his own current lifestyle and to set aside money for retirement with his own career-related needs in terms of the subjective drivers outlined above.

In this section, a number of positive and negative career drivers have been identified. However this does not thus far sufficiently account for the research question: *What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?* Although various drivers were identified, they appeared to operate principally to affect individuals' behaviour in relation to the day-to-day enactment of their career. From an in-depth analysis of the interview transcripts it was clear that the importance of particular career drivers was linked to frameworks of personal and workplace influences which operated within



individual lives. What these influences were and their role in motivation for career progression in older managers is examined next.

#### **4.5 Influences on motivation for career progression**

In considering the development of careers over time, the motivational drivers identified above did not appear to act in isolation in terms of the impact they exerted on older managers' career plans, behaviours and decisions. In their interviews participants also referred to a wide variety of factors which they felt influenced their career attitudes and behaviours in relation to these drivers. It took several attempts at coding, re-coding and revisiting the data to analyse what made these influences different from drivers and to establish their role in motivation for career progression. These influences were not strong enough to be considered career drivers in themselves, and they did not operate in isolation. They appeared to represent a rich variety of personally significant factors connected to work and life that impacted career drivers on an individual basis – either positively or negatively – leading people to choose one career decision over another. The distinction between drivers and influences can be seen in this statement from Keith (age 55):

*I'm actually quite happy and comfortable with what I'm doing and don't want to change. So, for example if they [the company] decide to geographically relocate, I won't. That's the sort of pressure that would prompt me to make a change.*

For Keith, the motivational drivers underlying his career were job satisfaction, challenge, and retaining what he had already achieved; the influences affecting his future career progression were family and geographical location which taken together exerted an influence in terms of a wish for stability. The desire for stability didn't drive Keith's career, it merely acted as a counterbalance in respect of his plans and decisions relating to potential career events. This interaction of variables could also be seen clearly in relation to finance. Whilst for some older managers monetary reward was still a key motivational driver in its own right (as described in the previous section) this was not the case for the

majority. For them it acted merely as an *influencing* factor, i.e. something which might or might not come into play in relation to some other motivational driver. For example Patricia, age 50, said,

*I wouldn't really be comfortable taking a cut in pay just at the moment simply because my children are about to go to university.*

Although Patricia had stated elsewhere that money was not a key factor in her motivation for career progression, by making the statement above she indicated that the amount she would be paid in any career move would be a key *influencing* factor on that decision.

Discrete influences on career progression were identified through the coding process and categorised into *personal influences* and *workplace influences*. Personal influences included critical incidents; family and partner; quality of life; tiredness, stress or health; stability or security; lifestyle and interests; finances; and awareness of ageing. Workplace influences were organizational structure and change; relationships with colleagues and management; organizational attitudes and culture; and working conditions and benefits. Each of these categories of influences will be examined and discussed in further detail below. Before doing so it is important to recognise two notable aspects of the role of influences on career progression. The first is that in the analysis of data this was the area that most clearly demonstrated how managers' motivational drivers had changed over time, and second, they showed that for some, particular past events had made a significant and lasting impact on the way their career was played out. The influence of these critical incidents is considered first.

#### **4.5.1 Personal influences**

##### **4.5.1.1 Critical incidents**

Dramatic, often unexpected events which might be considered critical incidents and which have been described as "frame-breaking changes" (London, 1990) can have a significant impact and ongoing influence on the nature and direction

of careers and career decisions. Several of the managers in this study mentioned such incidents and the impact these had exerted, or continued to exert on their career. For the female managers these tended to be family-related, as in these examples:

*My mother dying knocked me off course. After that I went down to three days a week because I thought "I have put far too much into my career and not enough into the family for the past years". I had been thinking that for a few years up until then and that crystallised it for me. Ruth, age 53*

But men too had been affected by such experiences. A couple of the managers acknowledged that the bombing of the World Trade Centre had exerted a profound impact:

*9/11 came along and changed my mind a bit. Our organization went crazy – I had a pretty bad day that day and after that – so I decided "this isn't working". I quit that job. Peter, age 51*

Others had endured health-related problems or accidents which had caused them to take stock. Obviously all these events were individually experienced and exerted an impact at a very personal level and were not common to all the managers in the study. A critical incident which was more frequently experienced and appeared to be shared in its impact on older managers was divorce. Notably, 19 of the managers in this study (47.5%) had been divorced and had remarried at least once, which, although a high number, was not that far above the national average of around 45% (ONS, 2011) This meant that many of the participants were subject to the influences of a different lifestage than they would have been experiencing had they not divorced. For example, many were comparatively newly re-married and admitted that the influence of their new partner was highly significant for them; others now had young children from a new marriage or stepchildren to provide for at a time when they might otherwise have been moving on from such commitments.

#### 4.5.1.2 Family, partner, children, parents

The influence of partner or spouse, children, and parents on motivation for career progression reflected the rich variety of personal circumstances of the managers in the study. As mentioned above, although most were now married, many of them had been divorced and had remarried at least once although one had married for the first time the previous year and four of the managers were single (though all had been married previously). This variety extended to their situation with respect to children; while some managers had grown-up children, others had children who were still completing university and/or living at home, and a further group had young children (one was about to become a parent for the first time). All of these responsibilities impacted the managers' individual careers in different ways including both emotional ties and practical and financial responsibilities:

*I got remarried this year although we'd been together for 14 years. My new husband is a bit older than me; he's already retired so he's at home most of the time so I wouldn't want to be doing a job now that meant I would be away from home a lot. Annette, age 53*

However, the influence of family circumstances was also strong in those who had remained married. Philip, who recently had made a significant job change and had been with the company for only a matter of months, explained the way in which his changing family circumstances had influenced his career decisions:

*I was so keen to get out of that job that I thought, "I'll just take a chance - almost anything is going to be better than this". In terms of family my children were coming towards the end of their education and were at university and my wife works full-time as well which means we have a very steady income. Philip, age 54*

For most of the managers, the influence of family responsibilities related to caring and/or providing for a partner and children. In addition a few of the managers were also heavily committed to caring for elderly parents. In terms of

care responsibilities there was less variation in the types of demands involved although for those confronting this challenge it represented a major influencing factor on their career motivation:

*Currently I feel personally conflicted in terms of family loyalties because my mother's not at all well and needs a lot of support. I'm frequently down in the South West, every weekend I'm down there... and there's a part of me that thinks I should retire and perhaps I should devote my new-found time to my ailing parents. And yet there's a part of me that says "Well there are these opportunities internally here and I think I can deliver on them" and I'd like to try to do that. Elizabeth, age 50*

It was interesting to note that the three managers who spoke of these caring responsibilities were all female. Passing comments from some of the male managers suggested that as a family unit they too may have had elder care responsibilities but it was evident that they did not consider them either their personal responsibility or a key influence on their own career. As would be expected, partner and family exerted a ubiquitous influence throughout all the managers' careers. However the extent to which the male managers in particular, alluded to their family as being a prime consideration or merely a peripheral factor in their career decisions threw some light on how central their career was to their lifeworld. From the researcher's perspective, gaining insight into how important an influence this area of life actually was to individual managers compared with how comfortable they were in talking about it within their career environment, required considerable reflection. Some managers, who appeared relatively reserved and possibly tended to delineate their work and life boundaries, spoke less about the importance of their family. Nevertheless, from other comments they made it could be surmised that this influence may have been just as strong for them as for those who spoke more freely about it.

Next to family, the influence of most importance for the managers was quality of life. For the majority this appeared to be the most significant area of change in terms of its influence on their career.

#### **4.5.1.3 Quality of life and desire for more flexibility**

Quality of life was identified by the majority of the managers as an increasingly significant influence on their career motivation. Several said it had grown in importance in reaction to the long hours and stress they had experienced in the past, had now managed to overcome, and wanted to avoid in future. Once again, participants demonstrated considerable insight in relating what was important to them:

*I think in my last few years, encouraged by my wife, I've tried to get my work/life balance better. I used to take lots of work home and work far too hard, working late at home every night. Now I try to maximise my work here and delegate to my staff. Paul, age 57*

Other managers however saw themselves as still experiencing a great deal of pressure and relatively poor quality of life:

*I think I'm looking for better quality of work and quality of life. I'd like the whole thing to work better together. At the moment it's long hours and very little time outside of work and so I think I'm missing out on things outside because I'm just spending my entire time working; there's not much time left for anything else. It's quite difficult to balance work and family life. Fiona, age 51*

Once again there was a temporal element to these statements in as much as the managers intimated that although in the past they had been prepared to endure poor work/life balance, they now felt that at this stage in their career and life, they wanted it to improve either for positive reasons, e.g. to enable them to have time to do other things, or to avoid negative outcomes such as poor health.

#### **4.5.1.4 Tiredness, stress or health**

Linked to quality of life was stress reduction and what most realised was an increasing need to protect their health:

*With this type of work you do have to work late and work weekends but over the past year or so I have deliberately tried not to... Stress has been a large factor; about five years ago they found a melanoma on my leg that may have been stress-related and I've had various stomach conditions so I'm trying to keep a better work/life balance. Alan, age 52*

For those such as Alan who had experienced health problems this influence was directly related to those issues. For others who had not, there was evidence nevertheless of awareness that due to their age, health-related issues were becoming more important and automatic assumptions about ongoing good health could not be made. Some such as Matthew saw that work in itself had health benefits and were keen to continue in order to avoid possible future decline:

*I don't know what I'd do if I left here. You have to keep your mind going. Dementia's a massive thing in the world now isn't it, and I know you have to keep your mind active. So I don't think I'll ever stop work entirely. Matthew, age 53*

#### **4.5.1.5 Desire for security or stability**

Many of the managers had experienced volatile careers to date with frequent career moves involving relocation. Although a few still saw relocation and unpredictability as exciting and energising the majority were influenced by a desire for a more settled and predictable lifestyle. Ideas about stability were also often closely linked to the feelings of spouses or partners and where they wanted to live:

*I have been asked several times if I would move overseas but I wouldn't because of my family; it was never the right time. I think some of those moves would have had a significant impact on my career. But if someone asked me now... well no, my wife's mum is getting on – so probably not; it's never the right time. Colin, age 50*

Although many of the managers conceded that job security was no longer

assured in the way that they felt it once had been in earlier decades, a number of them still felt that the relative security they felt they had in their job was a major influence on their career decisions:

*I think it (career progression) comes back to security - that's really important to me. Bruce, age 58*

#### **4.5.1.6 Lifestyle and other interests**

Linked to quality of life was the influence of lifestyle and other interests on career decisions. This was demonstrated both in terms of recent career decisions which managers had made and in the way in which they saw it influencing their future decisions and behaviour in relation to their career:

*I thought "I'm 49, my husband is about 20 years older; my mother is widowed and not in particularly good health" and I had to make some lifestyle decisions vis a vis work and the things I had to manage. So I decided to look at a job that was in a reasonable commuting distance of where I live. That was a choice. I was fortunate enough to get a job here. It's been great... It's not at the same level as I was working at before, but I've accepted that... it was, as I say, a lifestyle choice. Gloria age 53*

In terms of the implications of improved lifestyle and outside interests the managers in general indicated that they were still committed to working as hard when they were at work, but wanted to work fewer hours in order to have more time to devote to other interests outside of work. Several mentioned the implication of this in terms of the possible limitations it may place on their future objective career progression, an aspect which is discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.

#### **4.5.1.7 Finances**

As discussed above in section 4.2, financial remuneration did still act as a prime career driver in relation to career progression although this only applied to a minority. The majority, including both those who now regarded themselves as



being in a favourable financial situation and those who still needed to work for financial reward, now regarded financial reward as having assumed the role of an influence on their situation rather than a key driver.

*In terms of getting more money and higher level positions, yes that was important a few years ago but it's not so important now. Paul, age 57*

This meant that as one of a number of influencing factors, financial reward became more fluid and flexible in nature in relation to career decisions than it had been previously. Individuals now considered the role of financial reward in terms of *what they needed the money for* rather than as an absolute driver. For some this meant ongoing mortgage payments and school fees, although most said these were now coming to an end, or were now paid off. In the area of finance it was possible to see, perhaps more clearly than in any other area of the career, the trade-offs that managers were now prepared and able to make in terms of balancing drivers and influences in their choices and decisions. For example, in this excerpt Keith explained how he had chosen security and interest over a higher salary:

*So I still see myself as needing to provide a good standard of living for them [my family]. So it would need to be a very interesting job for me to lose that. Having said that, I was earning more as a contractor than [I do here] as a permanent member of staff, so I'm not averse to trading salary for other benefits. And doing this job - at least it gives me a perceived idea of more permanence. Keith, age 55*

Many also viewed the level of money they now needed to earn in relation to their future needs in terms of funding their pension and future lifestyle rather more than for its present day to day significance.

#### **4.5.1.8 Awareness of ageing**

The final significant personal area of influence which emerged was that of awareness of ageing and its implications. This manifested itself in many ways, some of which overlapped with influences such as tiredness and health

mentioned earlier, and for the older managers, a realisation that their career was coming to an end. However, in this area it was clear that for many of the managers in their early 50s, the act of turning 50 had been a highly significant event in itself:

*I've suddenly realised that our twenties seemed to hang around forever, our thirties picked up speed, and our forties whizzed past and I hate to think what the fifties, let alone the sixties, will be like. It's that greater appreciation that you are zooming towards retirement and you're thinking "I don't like this ride", not that you're fearful of retiring but that you're quite enjoying the ride and you don't want to get off. Nick, age 50*

From the majority of managers there was a sense that things were or ought to be different at this age and a feeling of individual responsibility to arrange things differently in a way that might lead to an improved lifestyle and an increased sense of purpose for the future:

*There are, I guess, a lot of things that are in play as a result of this particular time of life where you suddenly do have a different set of responsibilities and also some personal realisations about what you want to do. You have to work your way through those and manage your way out of the other side. Elizabeth, age 50*

However, there appeared to be an overlap between age and lifestage and some saw ageing in terms of an increasing sense of liberation as their children moved away, their financial position improved and their options opened up in terms of the remainder of their working and non-working life:

*I got married quite young and had children quite young so my children are now grown. My priority over the past 20 years is that the children were alright and sorted, - I kind of feel I've done that bit now. So I'm kind of at the point now of, "what's the next phase of my life"? I'm not quite ready for the slippers. Colin, age 50*

Awareness of ageing and the other influences considered above all related to

factors from outside individuals' working environment that they saw as important. That said, as would be expected, many factors within their organizational framework also exerted a significant influence. For the majority of participants, in light of the workplace turbulence they had experienced in recent years and were continuing to experience, the most significant influence was organizational change and its implications, and the culture of the company as a whole.

## **4.5.2 Organizational influences**

### **4.5.2.1 Organizational context**

For reasons of confidentiality it is not possible to provide detailed accounts of employer policies or practices that might allow the participant organizations to be identified. Nevertheless there were some general aspects of the culture of the two organizations which emerged as particularly pertinent. For example, within the investment bank there was a sense that those who were employed were expected to manage their own careers and prove their worth by achieving ascendancy. It was then down to individual managers to decide when the time was right for them to stop aspiring and/or leave the company:

*“At the heart of it is the question that’s hard to answer, ‘When is it okay to stop?’ It’s a feeling that no one’s counting anymore... an awful lot of people go on because they don’t know when it’s okay to stop, they don’t know when no one else is counting. Which is why I think for some people it’s quite a relief when someone says “It’s stopped”, because then they don’t have to decide for themselves - that’s quite a difficult thing to do.” Sam, age 51*

The second organization had a markedly different culture where age appeared to matter less. However, several of the managers still could explicitly describe the impact the organizational context had on their career and their motivation. They spoke of the way in which older individuals were overlooked in company reviews of talent and the way they felt they were automatically passed over for

further career development even though they felt they had more experience and a wider skill set than when they were younger:

*Unfortunately age around here is seen as a negative. Whether it's age per se or whether people start to behave differently because they're older and start saying things that are different and making it obvious they have different motivations...I don't know which it is, probably a mixture of the two. Sandra, age 50*

Several individuals mentioned the importance of understanding and adapting to the organizational culture and “how things worked around here” for those who joined the company and felt frustrated that although their length of tenure had provided them with this knowledge, their prospects for promotion were now being usurped by younger incomers. This was a particular concern for the second organization where, due to a merger, a number of the managers faced having to re-apply for their jobs in competition with individuals in the same role in the other company.

A final aspect of organizational context which acted as an influence for some of the managers and which was closely linked to remuneration, was working conditions and employee benefits. The second organization, in particular, had offered many such benefits in terms of facilities such as a sports club and in-house restaurant, and although these were now less generous they were still highly valued by many of the managers.

#### **4.5.2.2 Organizational structure and change**

Organizational change was identified as a significant influence by many of the managers reflecting the repeated restructuring that many had endured over a relatively short period of time resulting from mergers and takeovers:

*We've had three years of uncertainty... I'd like a bit more of a sense of job security but I think the changes here are going to go on for quite some time. Gary, age 50*

Recognition of the influence of organizational change manifested itself in different ways across the managerial sample. Whereas some appeared relatively comfortable about their ability to accommodate its ongoing implications, others were anxious about what future changes might mean:

*We have recently been through major reorganizations. One thing I'm afraid of is that the autonomy thing [that I value], will really be eroded. And where I am in my life my tolerance for that is really low, so in six months time I might be seriously thinking "can I stick this out?"* Colin, age 50

On the other hand some of the managers maintained that the frequent changes and restructuring within the career environment provided them with interest and challenge. Particularly for those who had relatively unchanging functional roles, this had kept their job stimulating over a number of years.

#### **4.5.2.3 Relationships with colleagues and management**

In the earlier part of this chapter relationships with colleagues and management were identified as a motivational driver. However in addition to this, quality of relationships also appeared to act as an influence which supported or weakened other drivers. The difference between relationships as a driver and relationships as a career influence was that for many it was not the relationships themselves or the ability to participate in them which was significant (a motivational driver), but the *quality* of those relationships (a motivational influence):

*One of the other things that has kept me here is the quality of the people you work with; people in the team are interesting, fun to work with.* Alan, age 52

For some the absence of such relationships could also exert a negative influence, as Terry indicated:

*Most of my peer group I enjoyed working with three years ago have now*

*really all gone. It's not the place it was. Terry, age 57*

The particular relationships that were significant varied greatly on an individual basis. Some valued their close work colleagues – usually other members of their team or department. Others valued peers of a similar age, tenure or role from other departments. Yet others found relationships with either their superiors or those they themselves managed to be the most significant. For all, however, it appeared that changes in key relationships had the potential to exert an equally important influence on career decisions and behaviours as changes to their own role or position.

#### **4.5.2.4 Organizational culture and attitudes**

In much the same way as the quality of relationships could strongly influence career drivers, so too could the quality of the organizational culture and attitudes:

*The people and the attitude of the company to the staff – that was probably the main driver for me taking the job here. Since then the company has had to become more commercially minded and is now far less employee-friendly. So that could make me leave and go somewhere else. Ken age 56*

In much the same way as relationships with colleagues could act as a positive or negative influence, so too could organizational culture. Many said that they still liked the culture of the organization, but reflecting the turbulence of the sector as a whole, several managers spoke about the organizational culture becoming more aggressive and demanding leading to a reduction in security and in their feelings of loyalty and commitment. This appeared to link to an increased sense of the need to do a good job for one's own benefit rather than putting the company first, with a corresponding decrease in the sacrifices that individuals were now prepared to make on the organization's behalf. This was quite significant in as much as potentially it compounded the changes that were

already taking place, as described above, in managers' own need for improved work life balance and reduced working hours.

#### **4.5.2.5 Age discrimination or ageism**

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that many of the managers acknowledged the existence of age discrimination or ageism as an influence on their motivational career drivers. This was a challenging issue in as much as it was difficult to establish the extent to which individuals had moderated their career goals in line with what they had concluded was or wasn't possible in light of ageist attitudes. The conclusion appeared to be that rather than acting as a direct influence on a day to day basis, ageism appeared to exist as a barrier which many felt they would have to deal with if and when they wanted to make a career move. Several managers acknowledged that in such circumstances, they believed it would restrict their future choices:

*I think I would find it difficult to get a job outside at 59 or 60. People are reluctant to take you on. Ken, age 56*

These views related to perceived ageism in the wider marketplace. Ageist attitudes on the part of the managers' employers or demonstrated through employer policies were viewed as having a more direct and immediate impact on people's careers as indicated in the section on organizational context above. An interesting issue was what people actually considered constituted ageism or age discrimination. For Gloria there was a distinction between being discriminated against because of age and an organizational culture that evidently preferred and promoted younger people:

*I don't think there is any (future career progression), certainly not here. I'm not saying that I've ever been treated in an ageist, discriminatory way and I don't think that people would do that. But I applied for a business partner role which I felt that I could do and I didn't get it – but I felt the person who got it had fewer skills and experience. So I don't think that if I applied for another job in this company that I would get it. I think that they*

*want people who are younger. Gloria, age 53*

As mentioned previously in chapter 1 the difference between age and tenure can be unclear. Some of the managers who had been in post in high level positions for a number of years clearly felt they were being overlooked for further career advancement but their views raised a question around whether that was a result of their position and long tenure or their age. Some said that they felt they were now pigeonholed and perceived as being comfortable in a role where they were useful to the company. This meant that individuals felt that they were overlooked for future development, particularly in relation to younger colleagues and reports whom they were encouraged to train and support to be able to take on new roles. Some of the managers in functional roles also felt that because they were experienced and did a good job they were ignored and became invisible, whereas younger, less experienced colleagues were able to retain a place under the talent development spotlight.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This chapter has examined the influence of career context and the role of career identity on motivation for career progression. It demonstrated that while managers defined themselves to a lesser or greater extent in terms of their career role, other non-work identities could also be important in influencing their motivation for career progression. Specific career drivers were examined next demonstrating that individual managers had a clear and relatively internally consistent conception of the aspects of their career that motivated them at this stage in their life. These were factors such as interest and enjoyment, varied work, challenge, personal development, contribution, autonomy, self-realisation, recognition, and personal relationships with bosses, peers and reports. All of these acted as positive motivators, although certain other factors such as avoiding stagnation, boredom and stress, and avoiding loss, acted as equally strong negative drivers – although these were not experienced consistently by all participants in the study.



In the main these drivers were subjective career aspects relating to intrinsic elements of the work with which the managers were involved. That said, further promotion and financial reward were still key motivators for a minority of the managers, those who felt they hadn't so far realised their career identity or who still had financial responsibilities in terms of mortgages, children's education, or unwaged partners. It must be noted that this latter situation was less a function of age than of lifestyle; around half of the managers in this study were divorced and had remarried giving them financial and childcare responsibilities which some of the other managers had transcended.

However, identifying the participants' career drivers was not sufficient to answer the research question: *What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?* Motivational drivers appeared principally to affect individuals' behaviour in relation to the day-to-day enactment of their career; the importance of particular career drivers on an ongoing basis was linked to frameworks of personal and workplace influences which operated at an individual level. Personal influences included critical incidents; family and partner; quality of life; tiredness, stress or health; stability or security; lifestyle and interests; finances; and awareness of ageing. Workplace influences included organizational structure and change, relationships with colleagues and management, organizational attitudes and culture, and working conditions and benefits.

What these findings have shown is that individuals possessed considerable insight into the aspects of their personal and work environments that significantly affected the enactment of their careers on a day to day basis and the decisions they made relating to their future career progress. But, as it was clear that many either saw no opportunity for future objective career progression or no longer desired it, it must be questioned what the term actually means at a subjective level for older managers. This topic and the role played by managers' attitudes towards their career and career opportunities are considered next.



## **Chapter 5: The meaning of career progression**

Addressing the research question *What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?* involved establishing exactly what research participants understood to be the meaning of career progression. In line with the epistemological approach of this study, research participants were not provided with a definition of “career progression” to use as a framework. This being the case, the meanings of career progression presented here emerged from individual perceptions in terms of responses to the interview question *“What does the phrase “career progression” now mean to you at this stage in your life?”* These responses were then categorized into a number of variables relating to organizational career progression and personal career progression. From the further analysis of the interviews it appeared that what managers thought career progression meant also related, in part, to their attitudes toward career progression and how they viewed career opportunities and retirement, all of which are examined in detail below.

### **5.1 Individual perceptions of career progression**

As mentioned above, participants in the study were not given a definition of “career progression”. Rather they were asked the question “What does the phrase career progression now mean to you at this stage in your life?” This meant that although they had, in general, already described various drivers and influences from which meanings of career progression could be inferred, they were additionally required to state specifically what they felt career progression meant to them within this framework. Their responses fell broadly into the categories which are outlined below, classified in terms of either organizational or personal career progression. However, before examining these in more detail, a caveat is required relating to the degree of clarity and certainty that respondents were able to demonstrate in their responses. Whilst some were able to provide a direct and relatively clear and concise answer to the question, others were vague or unsure; this information could only be elicited from them by combining their response to this question with other comments they made

throughout the course of their interview. In these cases, a summary of what each individual appeared to view as career progression was reflected back to them at an appropriate stage during the interview, e.g. *“So from what you’ve been saying, it seems as though staying where you are is a form of career progression in itself, is that right?”* Similarly, whilst some were able to isolate one or two relatively cohesive meanings, others were less sure and vacillated between several different ideas. Overall, however, a significant divide could be identified between meanings relating to objective aspects of the career, and those relating to subjective factors. Each of these is dealt with in turn below.

## **5.2 Organizational career progression**

Organizational career progression relates to what traditionally was considered “advancement” under hierarchical career models, i.e. factors such as promotion, advanced status and incremental pay increases. However, such progression may be influenced by other factors; within an organization people may be objectively or subjectively affected by the culture of the organization and may also have bought into the values and differentiators of the organization e.g. *“There’s lots of bright people here with smart ideas”*. This may have impacted their career in terms of their immediate work motivation, longer term career motivation and also may have acted as drivers at an individual level in motivating them to remain with the organization.

### **5.2.1.1 Continuing advancement**

The meaning of career progression as continuing objective advancement clearly emanated from continuing advancement as a motivational driver. This was to be expected as this meaning most closely related to conceptions of objective career progression under traditional career models (as discussed in chapter 2). Those who still regarded career progression in terms of objective organizational factors were very much in the minority in this study and tended to be those at the younger end of the age range. Amongst these individuals, one or two were prepared to make quite significant changes to increase the promotional opportunities available to them. This applied in particular to those who were in

specialist technical or professional roles such as law, finance or IT where, due to the nature of the work and the relatively small size of their functional departments, there were few promotional opportunities. One such participant, Philip, who had only recently joined the organization (FS2), responded to the question about the meaning of career progression in the following way:

*What opportunities there will be here for career advancement is difficult to see. I wouldn't want to be doing the same job in the last two or three years of my working life... I'd be quite interested to move into another area of the business. Philip, age 54*

This demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between the meaning of career progression as inferred from individuals' motivational drivers and their overall perceptions of what career progression meant to them. While the meaning of career progression for Philip, as indicated above, was upward movement into another area of the business, this did not fully reflect his motivation. From other parts of Philip's interview it was clear that objective progression in terms of gaining increased reward and recognition was not his prime motivational driver; essentially he was bored with his current role and wanted a change to broaden his horizons.

#### **5.2.1.2 Maintaining the status quo**

Many participants viewed objective career progression in terms of either maintaining financial stability or retaining the status quo in terms of where they currently were in the organization and their career, and holding on to what they had achieved to date.

*It [career progression] means getting comfortable in the role and not trying to sort of use it as a battering ram to the next thing. Trevor, age 55*

As Trevor's statement indicates, this aspect of career progression focuses heavily on maximising the "here and now" and not viewing the role as a stepping stone to another position further up the hierarchy. Trevor's use of the

word “comfortable” usefully describes how the managers in general conceptualised career progression in relation to maintaining the status quo.

#### **5.2.1.3 Lateral movement**

Lateral career change in terms of sideways or downwards movement within their current organization or outside was seen by many managers as an acceptable and even desirable form of objective career progression. For some this reflected their past actions:

*I would see a downwards step as progress - I've done it several times before... it wouldn't be an issue if I thought it was a job I'd be interested in. Alec, age 58*

Some said they would not want to take a reduction in salary within their current employment context to make such a move, but might be prepared to do so if they moved elsewhere. The majority of those with this view seemed to evaluate the attraction of a lateral move less in terms of its financial implications and more in relation to the interest and benefits which may be inherent in making such a move.

#### **5.2.1.4 Flexible working**

The third perspective which emerged around the meaning of career progression in objective terms related to working hours, specifically the notion that flexible working options could be a desirable catalyst for improved work/life balance.

*I do think about that (work/life balance)... It's not that I want to sit home and watch TV and eat biscuits - it's just that there are some other things that I want to participate in and I know that chance isn't going to be around forever. Gail, age 50*

Out of the sample of women managers the majority spoke about how they would see improved work/life balance and reduced commitment to work as representing career progression. Fewer than half of the men mentioned this. Amongst the managers, female and male, who saw career progression in this

way, a proportion wanted improved work/life balance in order to reduce the pressure on continuing to do what they already did (for the women, this was often balancing work and family commitments), whereas others saw it in terms of providing them with more time and opportunity to do new things (e.g. pursue interests and hobbies).

#### **5.2.1.5 Status**

The final meaning of career progression in objective terms related to status and recognition, factors which varied considerably in their importance on an individual basis. As with continuing advancement, this meaning was closely linked to motivational drivers, but whereas status may have been one of many drivers for some individuals, for a few it now represented the meaning of career progression. These individuals stated that they now saw career progression as meaning the ability to retain their current reputation and status, admitting that they would find it difficult to cope with the loss of this.

In summary, it was clear that rather than viewing organizational career progression in terms of advancement up a linear career path, the majority of participants now saw it as encompassing downwards or sideways career moves, varying status and reduction of, or increased flexibility in working hours. Some also saw career progression as encompassing lack of movement through maintaining the status quo and continuing to be comfortable where they were. Many acknowledged that their career was currently objectively plateaued but felt that they were still progressing in as much as they were working through this stage to reach the next stage in their life and career which might entail a new role within their existing career path, a new type of work entirely, a new way of working (e.g. reduced hours) or, for the minority, ceasing work entirely.

### **5.3 Personal career progression**

In analysing the interviews, a number of themes emerged relating to how individuals viewed the meaning of career progression in terms of factors which were internal to them. For some individuals only one or two of the following

variables were significant, whereas some other managers saw all of them as impacting how they would define career progression in their own terms. Because of this, the topics below are not presented in order of importance, simply as different aspects of individual perceptions.

#### **5.3.1.1 Following interests or developing new skills**

The role of interest and learning as a career driver was discussed in chapter 4. In that context these factors related to *current* career drivers. In general, individuals persisted in finding activities that represented what they saw as progression within their existing role through pursuing novelty, challenge and learning-directed experiences reflected in activities such as regular idea-sharing conversations with their managers, volunteering for new tasks, secondments, and mentoring or supporting less experienced colleagues. But future career progression for many of the managers meant breaking away from the status quo in career terms, pursuing what interested them and developing new skill sets and capabilities in other areas.

*I have lots of ideas of things I want to do that would involve a complete break with what I've been doing now. Emily, age 52*

A number of the managers, like Emily, indicated that although they viewed their career as currently plateaued, career progression in these terms was something they aspired to in the future.

#### **5.3.1.2 Retaining power and autonomy**

Some managers thought of personal career progression in terms of the importance of fulfilling their own desire to exercise power and autonomy. For most, this linked to the organizational definition of career progression as maintaining the status quo in that it reflected that they wanted to hold on to what they had already achieved:

*As an individual I absolutely and totally value independence so much – I'm not beholden to anybody - not emotionally or in any way at all. That*



*control and autonomy is quite big for me. Colin, age 50*

Others, however, saw it as something they wanted to achieve even more of, and a key factor in any future career changes they might contemplate either pre- or post-retirement.

### **5.3.1.3 Using knowledge or experience**

A defining aspect of career progression for many managers, and one which was viewed as highly important, was the opportunity it represented to utilise the skills and experience they had gained to date:

*The word 'career' is actually quite a strange one; people seem to associate it with progression rank-wise and money-wise. Certainly for me that's one element of it but it's not everything – [for me it's] stimulation, learning something new or applying skills and experience in a new area. I keep learning – if you think you can't continue to learn, it's time to retire.  
David, age 52*

This aspect of the meaning of career progression linked very closely to the motivational drivers of interest, enjoyment, contribution, and growth identified in chapter 4. It was, perhaps, with continuing to learn and develop (see below), the factor which many of the managers saw as the common denominator in their current and future roles, whatever the latter might be.

### **5.3.1.4 Continuing to learn and develop**

As David indicated above, continuing to learn and develop in personal terms was also a key construct of many of the managers' own definitions of career progression. For some, the nature of their role created new learning opportunities on an ongoing basis, whereas others, such as Alec (age 58) were still finding their way through a relatively newly-acquired role with changing responsibilities: "Currently the job itself is still developing and I am too". The ways in which the participants assessed how they developed were wide-ranging and personally significant as can be seen from the following quotation:

*Career progression probably means for me [that] in three years time can I look back and say I've learned or experienced or done something more than what I'm doing now? Can I look back and say "It's different" in some way that I think is worthwhile? Emily, age 52*

A few of the managers linked career progression in terms of continuing to learn and develop with the need and desire to avoid age-related cognitive decline and mentioned that this aspect was one of the reasons that they would continue to work, even post-retirement.

### **5.3.1.5 Retaining enthusiasm and commitment**

Finally, for some, career progression meant continuing to have, or re-establishing, something interesting and engaging to do about which they could maintain enthusiasm and commitment. In general this tended to equate with feelings of having sufficient variety and challenge in their role in order that they could feel stretched. While some viewed this as an ongoing element of their current career path, others saw that in order to achieve progression in these terms they would have to make a change to a different role, either within or outside their current organization:

*I've come to an internal conclusion and it's supported by my manager. I'm going to move to another area where I feel more committed and can enjoy what I'm doing. Elizabeth, age 50*

From other parts of her interview, it was clear that Elizabeth considered that her career was objectively plateaued; overall her desire to move was motivated by a drive for more interesting, enjoyable work, rather than further organizational promotion. A few other managers mentioned that, although there were possible promotion opportunities in their current position, they would be prepared to trade these for increased enthusiasm for a new role elsewhere (either inside the organization or externally).

The above categories of factors relating to the meaning of career progression and managers' attitudes towards career progression and career opportunities

all, naturally, involved individuals' conceptions of the future form and nature of their career. These notions were in line with the definition of career progression provided in chapter 1, i.e. "a gradual movement or development towards a destination or a more advanced state" (Compact Oxford English Dictionary, 2008). This being the case, it was important therefore to consider also the managers' *attitudes* towards career progression, career opportunities and retirement, all of which related to the decisions they had taken or would be likely to take in relation to their career.

## **5.4 Attitudes towards career progression**

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that two types of attitudes were of potential importance in relation to career progression. These were the perceived external attitudes of employers and others towards older managers which were considered in the previous chapter under organizational influences, and the managers' own attitudes towards career progression. The two appeared to act together to influence the extent to which people took a proactive or reactive approach to career progression. Attitudes towards career progression which were internal to the individual could be positioned on a continuum between optimism at one end, through satisfaction and acceptance, to anxiety, disappointment and resentment at the other end. In addition there was a small group of managers who acknowledged that their attitude towards career progression was one of vacillation and uncertainty.

### **5.4.1 Optimism, confidence, excitement**

Several of the managers – male and female – made it clear that their attitude towards future career progression in whatever form that took for them was buoyant:

*I feel really positive about it [the future] - relaxed and in control. Actually it all comes down to my circumstances really. I feel I'm in a really lucky position that I'm working because I want to work but if I was made*

*redundant or something like that, it would be fine because I wouldn't go starving or anything like that. Annette, age 53*

As Annette's statement indicates, this optimism in general related to a combination of managers feeling in control of their position in terms of mastery of skills and being in a secure financial situation. Most of all it meant "working because I want to work" and the implication (overt or inferred) that, if necessary, this could extend to working in different ways in different environments.

#### **5.4.2 Satisfaction, happiness**

Some other managers had an attitude that could be thought of more as quiet satisfaction and happiness with their current position:

*I'm happy with where I am in terms of the plateau I'm on. I'm not anxious or frustrated. It feels the right level so I'm content. Patricia, age 50*

In terms of career progression these managers were less concerned with future options and more focused on enjoying and maximising their existing role with the implication (overt or inferred) that they wished to see this continue into the future.

#### **5.4.3 Acceptance or resignation**

Another group of managers appeared to be resigned to their position, neither happy nor particularly unhappy about their situation and prospects:

*I came to this organization as a safe haven after four years of contracting; I saw it as somewhere I would see out my career without necessarily moving up the ranks. I see it as a means to an end to support my family and my girls through university. Keith, age 55*

For these managers career progression was seen as "more of the same" in terms of doing the job they were employed to do, with the implication that they would continue to do it for as long as it suited their own purposes.

#### **5.4.4 Anxiety, disappointment, resentment**

At the other end of the scale a fourth group of managers expressed anxiety and/or regret about their position and their future prospects:

*At the moment I feel my career is somewhat on the downside. It's no longer going up, it's plateaued and has been for about two or three years and now it's on a decline unless I take some positive action to do something about it and I don't quite know what. At this age I think I'm not going to be that attractive in the open market place so I just have to stick it out for another few years. I feel a bit angry to be honest. Fiona, age 51*

As Fiona explained, future career progression for these managers was something that they saw as possible only outside the organizational boundaries. Whether and when they might achieve it was an unknown factor.

#### **5.4.5 Vacillation or uncertainty**

A final group of managers mentioned the extent to which they were unsure about the future and veered between pessimism and optimism:

*It depends on which perspective I'm coming from at the time. In a stable world where I see my ambitions materialise I feel very optimistic. In a very unstable world, then I think in very short-term ways about a career here. I'm managing conflicts – internal and external – and some of these things are beyond my control in any case. Elizabeth, age 50*

As Elizabeth intimated, her feelings were in part due to the unstable career environment in which she operated, but this was compounded also by her own conflicts about what she wanted in career terms in the future.

In summary, it appears that attitudes towards career progression reflected individuals' past experiences in terms of the way that previous events had shaped their expectations and either enhanced or reduced their career motivation. In addition to this, attitudes towards career progression overall

linked closely to people's attitudes towards career opportunities and how they viewed these as occurring, as is explained in the next section.

## **5.5 Attitudes towards career opportunities**

As demonstrated above, the relevance of peoples' attitudes towards career progression to their conceptions of the meaning of career progression is that they provided some insight into their likely future actions based on how they believed the world operates. For example, the extent to which individuals believed that career opportunities resulted from chance or were a result of their own actions may influence their future plans. Analysis of the findings in this area showed that attitudes towards career opportunities could be categorised as luck, self-created opportunities or job offers. Each is explained further below.

### **5.5.1 Luck**

When talking about how their career had developed, a significant proportion of the managers clearly took the view that luck, variously conceptualised as happenstance, chance or serendipity, was both a significant causal factor and an influence on their career:

*A lot of it is luck – you're in the right place at the right time and the sun is shining and there's the opportunity – timing. You're on the bench, your star player breaks an ankle, they call you up and they realise you've got more to you than they thought and suddenly you've got a good career. It's not planned. Antony, age 50*

The implication of this for future career progression is significant. If individuals feel that career progression is a matter of luck, then it is likely this will have repercussions for their motivation for career progression. Having examined the interview transcripts in detail it would appear that those with such an attitude also possessed a mind-set of "if it has happened before then it will happen again" and an associated philosophical approach to career outcomes. Other managers, however, felt that career progression was a result of creating their own opportunities and making sure they were in the right place at the right time.

### 5.5.2 Self-created opportunities

Self-created career opportunities were seen by the managers as resulting from being well-positioned and open to possibilities. Brian's phrase (below) of "putting oneself in harm's way" was apt for describing how they saw being prepared to react to career opportunities as they came along.

*I don't think that you can or should plan a career when you start out. I must admit I think I've been lucky but also I think I've put myself in harm's way, so to speak, to get those opportunities. Brian, age 52*

Although at face value this and other similar statements tend to imply that the managers involved may have had charmed lives and easy careers, many of them reported that they had experienced setbacks, and numerous career challenges and disappointments. In fact, it appeared to be those who had experienced the most apparently "difficult" careers that exhibited the most career resilience and persistence and had the most positive attitude towards the likelihood of further career opportunities and progression.

### 5.5.3 Job offers

In respect of past career progression many of the managers conceded that they had been fortunate in receiving particular job offers at certain career points. Several mentioned the importance of their network of contacts and the way in which this network had helped them to find out about and achieve certain positions, particularly those requiring a change of employer:

*The jobs I've had have been challenging but I've been offered roles, I haven't really looked for a role – maybe I'll have to at some point.  
Antony, age 50*

Some of the female managers also recognised the importance of a network of contacts and how the absence of this may have a negative impact on women's careers. This issue will be revisited in chapter 6 as part of a wider examination of male and female managerial career differences. For now the above analysis

of attitudes toward career and job opportunities has demonstrated the extent to which managers felt optimistic, pessimistic or resigned towards their situation in terms of current and future career progression, and the extent to which they felt they had control over opportunities for career progression. Having examined attitudes towards career progression and career opportunities, it remains to consider attitudes towards and retirement which traditionally has been regarded as marking the end point of the career. However, as the following section will demonstrate, although retirement remains a significant transition point in careers there were substantial differences between managers who retained this view and those who considered it as a milestone in their journey towards a more advanced career state.

## **5.6 Attitudes towards retirement**

When managers were prompted to explain what retirement meant to them it became clear that it represented a wide range of scenarios; the common denominator for the majority being that that retirement meant, essentially, receipt of an occupational pension. Attitudes towards retirement were variously expressed in terms of feelings about retirement and plans for retirement. Feelings about retirement varied across the entire sample of managers. But, in respect of retirement intentions, the older managers (over 55), as might be expected, had more clearly defined plans than the majority of the younger managers. That said, only two of the managers acknowledged that they had so far given little thought to retirement or had failed to discuss it with their partner. Amongst the others, ideas about retirement ranged from fully formed to somewhat vague, with the majority conceding that although there were external constraints on when they would retire (e.g. pension age) the retirement decision ultimately was their responsibility and under their control.

This aside, two key themes could be identified from the managers' accounts: first, that retirement did not mean stopping work, and second, that work in retirement, for some, was seen as a continuation of their career. In respect of the first point, most of the managers did not see the formal act of 'retirement' as



marking the cessation of work or the end of their working life; the majority said they wanted to keep working in retirement:

*I would like to continue working here in the final salary scheme until I was say 55 and then I would take my pension and I'd go and take a job somewhere else doing something more interesting, maybe working part time doing things which I felt were a more valuable activity - to the community or in another sense. Fiona, age 51*

Like Fiona, many of the managers mentioned doing a different kind of work, or working in a different way in retirement and balancing work in retirement with having time to pursue other interests. The second finding was that the majority of the managers saw post-retirement work as a continuation of their career and a form of career progression - albeit in most cases in a different arena.

*I might go in for more voluntary type work where I could still make a difference and still be challenged. So work might look a bit different than it does now...my career would continue but it would be a different aspect of my career. Julia, age 50*

Many of the managers, like Julia, equated future career progression with personal development, learning, and new challenges (as mentioned in the previous section) rather than with continuing in their current type of work. The majority of the interviewees acknowledged that work after 'retirement' probably would be different in nature to the work they had done throughout their career to date, with nearly all the managers mentioning aspirations concerning undertaking some sort of voluntary work or work with a charity. Many also wanted less commitment to work in terms of fewer hours and reduced pressure and stress. Next to the marker of pension provision, this appeared, for many to be the major differentiator between pre- and post-retirement work. From this came an indication that the majority of the participants no longer viewed retirement in terms of a cliff-edge, complete cessation of work but rather, the doorway to a new type of working life.

## 5.7 Summary

This chapter sought to further explain the significance of the motivational drivers and influences identified in chapter 4 by examining individual perceptions of the meaning of career progression. By categorising individuals' attitudes towards career progression, the organizational and personal ways in which they evaluated it, and their attitudes towards career opportunities, it was possible to identify a variety of ways in which individuals might enact future career progression, thereby adding substance to a range of different meanings. For some, career progression would involve maintaining the status quo, with progress representing maintaining continuing satisfaction with what they had already achieved. For others it would mean doing something different at some future stage, in terms of transferring their existing skills and experience to a new arena, or developing new interests and skills. Others envisaged that they would improve their work/life balance through reducing their commitment to working life in terms hours worked. Yet others, although a minority, still sought objective career progression in terms of achieving further promotion and increased levels of remuneration either within their current organizational context or elsewhere.

In considering the meaning of career progression, participants tended to examine the entirety of their careers and the shifting values and circumstances relating to past career progression, current progression, anticipated future career progression and the ultimate end point of career progression - whenever they envisaged that as occurring. In doing so, the managers linked the meaning of career progression to their whole life experience, demonstrating how the drivers and influences which they identified as being important to them in relation to career progression had either remained the same, or changed over time. What emerged clearly from this was the way in which conceptions of career progression were closely linked to what individuals considered as important to them across the whole of their life. How changes were perceived as occurring across the career span and the ways in which they were experienced similarly or differently by male and female managers is examined in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 6: The role of age and gender**

Having considered the findings relating to the main research question, “What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?” in the preceding two chapters, this chapter now examines the findings relating to the two supporting research questions, “In what ways are the motivational drivers of career progression perceived as different from earlier in the career?” and “Do the motivational drivers of female managers aged over 50 differ from those of male managers aged over 50?”

### **6.1 Age-related changes in motivation**

As described in chapter 2, the extent to which motivation for career progression varies across the career span and results from age-related changes is unclear. Whether any changes that do occur link to chronological age or to other factors such as tenure, changes in personality, or life stage is equally uncertain. In examining the findings from this study in relation to this topic three perspectives will be taken in order to help clarify where changes appeared to be occurring in factors that underpinned managers’ notions of “career progression”. The first of these is age and identity; the second, age and experience; the third, age and career motivation. Although, as has been seen, the participants’ accounts supported the view that the formation of the career identity is a learning process which takes place over time and is in a constant state of flux (Hall and Moss, 1998), evidence from these interviews also revealed that identity may become more stable in later life.

#### **6.1.1 Age and identity**

Overall, there was little evidence from the findings to suggest that the managers saw their career identity as changing over time. Not only was there little reference to age or to the effects of being older in terms how people spoke about themselves, but participants seemed rather more to regard ageing as a temporal process in respect of their career. This meant that when they spoke of being ‘younger’ they were referring to an earlier stage in their career and when

they said “Now I’m older” they were talking about their current career stage relative to earlier stages in their career.

*When I was young if I applied for a promotion and I didn’t get it I was devastated. I needed to get that next promotion not so much because of the money but to keep moving up the ladder. Now, and I wouldn’t like to say when it changed, probably because of a number of events over the years... now I enjoy the job I’m doing and don’t really care. Alec, age 58*

This distinction is significant and will be revisited below in considering age-related changes in career motivation.

In terms of their personal identity, however, some managers did acknowledge the physical aspects of ageing and associated changes, both negative and positive, they had perceived as resulting from ageing:

*You get exhausted, you make jokes and say “I’m too old for this” but you cope. It’s okay; the mind is always much stronger than the body. When you’re older you’re mature, more sensible. You’re much more resilient, Antony, age 50*

Other individuals commented on the limitations that they felt accompanied the ageing process, for example, Bruce, age 58, said “I think I’d be working abroad (if I was younger), but I’m too old now”, although it was evident that in saying this Bruce was talking as much about his life stage as any inhibiting factors relating to chronological age itself. In general, participants indicated that they felt it was their own attitudes or the attitudes of others that were influencing them rather than age *per se*. However, one participant, Peter, aged 51, did link his dislike of change to his age: “I’d like it to just stay as it is. When you get older you don’t like change so much, let’s face it”. What was possibly more significant in terms of the influence of age on identity was individuals’ sense of time running out, potentially placing limitations on what they might be able to achieve both in terms of work-related activities and realisation of their own identity:

*There's so many things at this point – older responsibilities, young responsibilities – at this stage of life. When you're 20, 30, you don't really dwell on the fact that, "Oh God, it's going to run out", but by the time you're 50 you do start to realise that. Sandra, age 50*

What was interesting from statements such as Sandra's was the sense of changing responsibilities that came with ageing which potentially impacted the significance of the career to individuals' overall sense of identity, generally leading to indications that the career was now less important than it had been in the past. Sandra's statement also highlighted a factor which several of the managers mentioned, i.e. their awareness of time passing resulting in limitations on what would be possible in career terms in the future.

### **6.1.2 Age and experience**

In general, being older was viewed in a positive light. Many of the managers commented on what they felt was their increased experience, wisdom and resilience which had come with age and which made them feel better equipped to cope with making career decisions and dealing with work-related stress.

*When you're at the beginning of your career you think, 'Oh dear where is it going?' - will I be able to buy a house, will I be able to bring up a family? That makes you a bit edgier. I think I have changed; I am more mellow in my view of life though that doesn't mean in a work situation that I'm soft. I think that experience has given me strength - a belief that what you have achieved you can re-apply. David, age 52*

By far the majority of older managers saw that there were particular advantages to being older, in terms of greater respect and deference from others, despite the ageist attitudes that many were aware of which have been discussed previously. Some mentioned that they brought attributes such as wisdom and stability to their team, counterbalancing the comparative inexperience of younger colleagues. In contrast, others saw few changes in terms of age-

related differences or the way they saw themselves even though they did accept that they were older:

*I don't think I work any different than I did 20 years ago. I've still got as much enthusiasm and pizzazz and passion as I did when I was 30. Gary, age 50*

### **6.1.3 Age and career motivation**

This study has shown in chapters 4 and 5 that the passage of time may manifest itself in changing career drivers, influences and attitudes. In respect of motivation for career progression, individuals in general reported that becoming older had caused them to adopt a different perspective on what mattered to them about their career in terms of its role in their whole life experience and its position relative to changing influences on the career. For example, for many of the male managers in particular, the drive for promotion and “making a mark on the world” that had been strong earlier in their career, had now lessened:

*I guess if I was still in my early 30's I would be a little bit more demanding in terms of where do I go upwards from here? For the past few years I've not been too fussy about that. It's nice just to have a job without being too fussed about what it is. I think I would have been leaning on my immediate boss a bit more to say, 'Okay what is the way ahead here?' George, age 63*

Some managers were clearly able to identify how their motivation and attitudes in respect of financial reward had changed in line with their improved financial position as they grew older. For the male managers in particular, this was the most significant change that emerged as relating to age.

*When you're 30 you've got a decade or a decade and a half when, depending on your aspirations, it's really important that you keep your job and you keep earning a lot of money to finance the house and pay for the children's education and all that stuff – so I think that's the hard time, the*

*most stressful decade you have... I think there comes a point when it becomes easier because the big worries are gone, it becomes something you want to do rather than you have to do. Sam, age 51*

Managers such as Sam, whose views represented those of the majority of the participants, were able to describe not only how they now felt less motivated in terms of pursuing objective career progression that would provide them with increased status and remuneration but explained how this affected their behaviour in terms of being less concerned with doing the right thing or speaking out. Having acknowledged the decreasing significance of financial reward and making a mark, several of the managers explained how they saw age as having impacted what was important to them about their career and the way in which they managed their career. Although, as discussed earlier, most of the managers were now primarily motivated by enjoying their work and making a contribution rather than being objectively rewarded for doing so, one or two still saw themselves as competitive and motivated by improving their performance both for its own sake and in relation to others:

*I think I've become more realistic but I have also become more competitive as my career has gone on. You do your damned hardest to do a good job - you do the extra mile. It's quite a difficult balance to strike, to push hard yet not to appear over-ambitious and walking over other people and at the same time do a good job. The fact that I'm still here after 27 years with the same employer is a good sign - it shows I have been able to adapt to change. David, age 52*

In general, the managers' perceptions of changes relating to their careers were all positive. For example, some perceived that age had given them more power and confidence in relation to their career, based on previous experience and having endured and survived various challenges and crises. This meant that they felt they were now more resilient, self-assured, and less reliant on others. The majority also indicated that they were now less concerned with "doing the

right stuff' in order to pursue further promotion and more motivated by conducting themselves and making career decisions to suit themselves.

*Twenty years ago... at that point in your career you're establishing yourself; trying to get some gravitas behind you, earn some respect. At this age I'm not concerned about my decision-making because it's based on lots of experience over lots of points in my life. When you're younger, you're more reliant on others, less self assured, more open to influences and unwilling to say no. You don't push back so much. Edward, age 51*

That said, some saw their current age as now hampering what would have been attractive opportunities earlier in their life. Although the participants themselves use the word 'younger', statements such as these taken in the context of their whole interview, reflect a greater concern for the limitations of life stage and not wanting to lose what had already been achieved rather than the effect of any real or perceived restrictions relating purely to chronological age:

*If I was 30, knowing what I know now, I would be taking up every opportunity to network and use this [job] as a stepping stone. I think it's just a little too late sadly. Ken, age 56*

In terms of addressing the research question, "In what ways are the motivational drivers of career progression perceived as different from earlier in the career?" it can be seen from these excerpts that it was possible to identify multiple ways in which these older managers perceived their motivational drivers for career progression were different from what they had been in the past. In general this revealed that the majority of managers had moved from a situation where their motivation for career progression had been similar across the group, i.e. focused on gaining increased financial reward, status and building a reputation based on experience and effectiveness, in early career to one where motivation for career progression related to individually significant, subjective factors. It appeared that not only was this change a result of a range of individually diverse reasons reflecting the different motivational career drivers and influences and the managers' different attitudes towards career progression



and career opportunities (as identified in chapters 4 and 5) but now linked to different future career orientations. The significance of this is highly important and will be discussed further in the following chapter. A further aspect linked to this was the issue of the extent to which differences relating to motivation for career progression could be linked to different age groups within the sample, i.e. between those who were at the younger end of the age group (around age 50) and those at the older end of the age spectrum. Although there were far fewer managers at the “older” end (see chapter 3, table 6), it appeared that there were few, if any differences that appeared to be linked to chronological age or proximity to retirement. Where these might have existed, for example with the younger managers being more inclined towards pursuing objective career progression there were examples of at least one of the older managers (age 61) who still was motivated by this also. Further discussion of this issue will be undertaken in the following chapter, but before then, the findings relating to the second research sub-question, “Do the motivational drivers of female managers aged over 50 differ from those of male managers aged over 50?” will be examined.

## **6.2 Male and female motivational drivers for career progression**

In addressing the question “Do the motivational drivers of female managers aged over 50 differ from those of male managers aged over 50?” it may be helpful to examine the findings from a number of perspectives that the older female managers adopted in talking about their careers. These can be summarised as gender related responsibilities, career development paths, and drivers for career progression, each of which will be examined below. When considering these aspects it is important to understand that although many of the factors may relate to the women’s entire career span, the female managers either continued to see them as still being influential in late career, or as having led them to the situation they felt they were now in and/or the future options and opportunities available to them.

### 6.2.1 Gender-related responsibilities

As indicated in chapter 2, women's careers in general are more complex than men's involving many choices and balances relating to family and other responsibilities. In consequence, in examining potential gender-related variations in motivation for career progression it is important to understand the female managers' overall position and the way in which they felt this had impacted their career. Within this study only one of the female managers was single (i.e. not married or co-habiting) and childless, the remainder had children and had experienced male pattern careers in terms of working full-time and having had taken the minimum time off work for maternity leave. Three of the female managers also had elder care responsibilities.

According to their accounts of their position the female managers in this study not only represented a minority position within the workforce as a whole in terms of there being fewer older female managers than older male managers, but due to what they perceived as issues relating to both gender and age they were also a minority within their organizations. Particularly within the investment bank (FS1), women alluded to the career norms of the industry in which they worked in terms of there being few senior women and even fewer senior women with children. As a result, the female managers indicated that in general they gave extensive and ongoing consideration to their position, demonstrating considerable insight about their career development and situation particularly in relation to how caring responsibilities had influenced and continued to influence their career decisions and career path. Their comments indicated that they felt that women have to make important life choices that may not be faced by the majority of professional males:

*Women are still the main carers of children – they have to combine the role; I did and it was a very difficult thing to do. It was incredibly hard - because at the end of the day you're still a mother and you still want to provide the level of care that your child deserves. Julia, age 50*

From their accounts, it was clear that compared to the male managers, family care responsibilities had been and continued to be a key and overriding influence on the female managers' career decisions. The female managers all reported that they had taken roles and stayed in roles which enabled them to achieve certain variables which they saw as important if they were to continue in their career, such as fixed working hours and a stable location. They also spoke about having less time than their male colleagues for networking or other out of hours, work-related activities and the importance of being able to work at home or work flexibly in order to meet family needs. Although these were objective aspects of the nature of their careers, many also commented on the constant emotional balancing act which they felt they maintained between concern for their family and concern for their work and career. The guilt complex that women have about quality time spent with the family, was mentioned often.

Life choices were not just restricted to childcare however but tended to extend to every area of life. For example, Gloria explained how she saw the complexities in her life as being gender-related across a number of different areas, with a view that the male approach to life and careers was simpler than that of females:

*This isn't sour grapes but I do believe that as a female - either consciously or unconsciously - you actually take on more of the onus and obligation for making sacrifices. If I was male, the chances are I would be far more prepared to move and my partner would go with me. If I was male I wouldn't have had two years constant pressure from my mother - she wouldn't do that to my brother. And at certain turning points I would have made different decisions as I wouldn't have had more complex interaction of things to take into consideration. Gloria, age 53*

Some reflected in detail on the ways in which their life and their careers might be different if they had been male, or did not have children, using for comparison examples of senior women who were either not married or were childless. That said it was particularly interesting that one of the male managers had divorced when his two daughters were very young and had

brought them up single-handedly for a number of years. His experiences meant that his career path had been influenced in very similar ways to that of female managers with his loyalties and emotions apparently equally conflicted. This indicated perhaps that some differences in fact may relate less to gender than lifestyle (with the understanding that females usually have a lifestyle involving childcare).

### **6.2.2 Male and female career development paths**

In considering older managers' career progression it was essential to derive a sense of which gender-related differences and influences were felt to be significant, both over the length of the career and in relation to individuals' current situation. In order to gain some insight into this, female participants were asked the question: "How do you think your career would be different if you were a man?" and male participants were asked, "How do you think your career would be different if you were a woman?" The responses to this question covered a number of areas including the relational aspects of women's careers, career opportunities, different approaches to doing the work and the effect of the organizational climate. When talking about career opportunities men seemed to have more to say about this than women themselves; perhaps this was because women didn't have the same clarity as the male participants about what might have been had they not been female:

*I think it's harder for women. I've had two women working for me on the team and I've had to struggle to get recognition for them and I know if they'd been men I would have had an easier time than I have done. I think it's based on the perceptions of the people I work for; they have chips on their shoulders about women and lack of experience in managing them. Gary, age 50*

Several of the women in the study were or had been either single parents or the main breadwinner for their family. This was seen as having exerted considerable pressure on them to deliver "male-type" career results in terms of financial provision and to compete for promotion with male colleagues

throughout their career in order to improve their position. Whilst the majority of the female managers admitted that they also had sought promotion in the past as recognition of their own abilities and to improve their experience, level of involvement and interest in their job, they also conceded that competing with males was and had been difficult in terms of the restrictions they had on their career commitment e.g. length of working hours, reluctance or lack of opportunity to network in male-dominated environments, and lack of exposure to top level opportunities.

When considering gendered career differences it is important to take into account the context within which careers are enacted as well as how differences emanating from that context may be dealt with at an individual level. Many women recounted how the organizational climate had exerted an influence on their career throughout their working life with some explaining that they had been informed early in their career that they would not be promoted or progress in their career at the same rate as male colleagues if they had children. Their response, in general, had been to seek more accommodating organizational climates and to work harder than they felt their male colleagues had to, in order to prove their ability and worth. Although the women felt that in form their careers had to fit a male pattern it was evident from their own accounts that they also felt that females may approach work differently to men. For example Elizabeth spoke about the way she approached work, against a background of organizing her work and life responsibilities in order to both deliver a good job and have time to care for her ageing parents:

*Two years ago I asked my manager if I could downsize on a piece of work that I knew would be just vast. And a more career-oriented decision at that time would have been to say, "Yes, I can do it, yes, I can arrange that", and then not quite deliver. But you know, because I am a conscientious deliverer and because I am very rational about the process of deciding time here, time there, time in the office, I probably did what a guy would not have done and said "I want to downsize this piece"... So I definitely think there's a psychological difference there. Elizabeth, age 50*

In respect of how male and female career paths had differed over the career, several of the women alluded to the fact that when they started their careers there was still a strong expectation that women, regardless of having been to university, would get married and have children rather than seeking a career, and how in the early days society viewed married women's careers as being less important than their husband's. Further to this some of the women – and men - talked about how the organizational climate for women had changed over their career span and how they felt that today things were easier for female managers both as a result of their increased numbers in the workplace amongst younger women and also the improvements in maternity and paternity leave and flexible working. They also mentioned that they felt that there was now a greater understanding of the fact that women, and men, had families and outside interests that were as important to them as their career and that this was taken into account far more in working arrangements than it had been in the past.

However, although numerous gender-related differences were identified in respect of how these had impacted their career in the past, most of the managers, female and male, no longer considered that there were any particular issues that constrained or shaped their careers at their current stage of life. What was different was that women saw themselves as having arrived at a less advantaged position, further down the organizational hierarchy than they felt they would have been had they been men. For example, several of the women felt they were on a career plateau, although a number of them believed that this was because they had chosen not to take on more challenging roles due to their outside responsibilities and still did not feel that they were in a position where they were free to surrender themselves to an all-consuming role. Several of the male managers also felt that they were on a career plateau, and some of them also felt that this was because they had chosen not to take on more challenging roles, though this did not tend to reflect their attitude towards their outside responsibilities.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrated that both female and male managers possessed considerable insight into how gender-related issues had impacted the female managers' career path and career progression. When considering this issue, some of the males used their wives as an example of how they had achieved personal insight into women's career advancement, particularly in terms of the barriers that women had to overcome in order to sustain successful careers and also the societal and workplace changes that had taken place in attitudes and policies relating to female careers.

### **6.2.3 Drivers for career progression**

As mentioned in chapter 4, there was little difference in terms of what motivated the managers in this study in respect of their careers and career progression. Drivers such as interest, meaning, contribution, challenge, and relationships were important to both males and females. Differences in attitudes towards career progression were also undifferentiated although in terms of attitudes towards job opportunities, the women in general considered that these related in general to job offers rather than luck, or self-made opportunities. The biggest difference between the older male and female managers was however, that the influences on career progression were different. Female managers were still more highly influenced than male managers by family-related variables where the male managers were more influenced by their outside interests. Both groups were influenced by work/life balance issues although, once again, this appeared to be for different reasons with the women wanting more time for themselves and the men seeking a reduction in stress and more time for outside interests. Overall, however, it appeared that whereas influences on career progression may have varied significantly between male and female careers earlier in the career, now in later life they had become more aligned.

The majority of the women, because of their relatively well-paid jobs which made a significant contribution to their family finances, acknowledged that they had made a strategic decision to remain in their job for the foreseeable future if not until the time when they were able to draw a pension. In consequence their

immediate concern was to find sufficient challenge and interest in the job to keep it fulfilling on a day to day basis. That said, once they had reached this stage, many of them aspired to a radical career change after “retirement” in order to have more time to fulfil personal ambitions. Many, but not all of the women said they would like to work part-time in the final years of their current career:

*In five years' time I think I'll still be doing something similar. If I've really got my act together I think I may not be doing it five days a week and I suspect it won't be here. Gloria, age 53*

Many also mentioned doing something that was more meaningful, more “them” or which provided them with a greater opportunity to make a difference:

*I'd go and take a job somewhere else doing something more interesting, maybe working part time, doing things which I felt were a more valuable activity - to the community or in another sense. Fiona, age 51*

Although the female managers and the male managers also, could see the disadvantages that many of the women had experienced throughout their career and the challenges and difficulties they had had to face and overcome, the women in general appeared to exhibit more optimism than men about the future:

*I would have been further up a career ladder somewhere undoubtedly (if I was male). But if I were a man I don't know, I might be a bit less enthusiastic now. Would I have been stuck in a rut for 20 years? Probably. I see a lot of men in that situation- they have a very singular view of their lives, whereas my life is much more rounded and defined by the things I've done. Margaret, age 59*

As mentioned in chapter 4, one of the influences on the older managers was the issue of stress, burnout and tiredness, a negative motivational driver in relation to their career. Whilst this was referred to by both male and female managers, women tended to associate their levels of stress and tiredness with the



pressures of juggling different aspects of their life, unlike men who saw stress as associated with work itself. It may be that women's jobs were in themselves less stressful, although there was no evidence that the men or women in the study considered this to be the case. It was more likely the fact that as women's stress derived from more than one area of life they were more resilient to job-related stress. Going back to the issue of identity, several of the managers – female and male – considered that men were more defined by their work than women of a similar age in similar roles:

*They're (men are) more defined by their work. When they come to leave, whether made redundant or through choice, they're bereft; they feel as if they've got nothing. I can't imagine me ever having that feeling. This [my career] doesn't define me so when it stops I won't collapse. I can't see a senior woman ringing me up saying, 'I don't know what to do with myself.' Sandra, age 50*

Overall, these findings demonstrated the existence of significant gender-related issues impacting the managers' past and current career progression. But, in themselves, these do not provide an immediately apparent answer to the question, *Do the motivational drivers of female managers aged over 50 differ from those of male managers aged over 50?* The reasons for the complexity of the situation will be explored further in the overall discussion of findings in chapter 7.

### **6.3 Summary**

This chapter presented the findings relating to the influence of both age-related changes and gender differences on older managers' motivation for career progression. What each of these sections demonstrated was that although significant changes and/or differences could be identified there was no evidence of a simple relationship between motivation for career progression and chronological age or gender. In respect of age-related changes these may be linked to a wide variety of factors including changes in identity, the influence of experience, and different motivational drivers in terms of what people wanted

from their careers and the overall role that the career now played in their life. A single comment made by one of the managers seemed to epitomise, perhaps more clearly than anything else, the underlying driver for changes in older individuals: "When you're young you always think you're going to be special and your career will add up to something huge". What many of the managers appeared to have realised and accepted was that their career wasn't something huge or special and this was reflected in their reduced aspirations for future career progression.

The question of whether there may be differences in the motivational drivers of female and male older managers was examined from the perspectives of gender-related responsibilities, male and female career development and drivers for career progression. These showed that although both female and male managers considered that there had been considerable differences in all these areas over the career span, they also indicated that they felt that these no longer dramatically impacted women's career progression in terms of what the participants themselves now wanted to achieve. What did emerge as a difference was that, in general, the female managers had greater aspirations for more meaningful work and more flexible working arrangements in their future working lives than their male counterparts.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion of findings**

The starting point for this research was an acknowledged dearth of investigative studies into the drivers of psychological career mobility in older managers and their conceptualisations of subjective career progression (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006). Following a review of the literature in chapter 2, appropriate research questions were developed to address this gap. These addressed individual conceptions of motivation for career progression in managers aged over 50 and how they perceived that these may change over the career and differ by gender. A strategy and method for conducting the research was outlined at chapter 3 followed by the presentation of the findings of the study in chapters 4 to 6. This chapter now considers how these findings relate to existing knowledge and in what ways they extend, differ or contradict what is already known.

### **7.1 Career drivers and career identity**

Career drivers are inner forces that influence what one wants from one's working life (Francis, 1985). They comprise people's sense of career purpose and direction and motivate them in respect of career activities and decisions (Coetzee 2008). Drivers of career progression are a subset of career drivers in as much as they are particularly concerned with those forces that motivate people in respect of further development of, and movement within their career. A key finding of this study was that in the majority of older managers objective career drivers such as promotion and pay increases that had been important earlier in the career were replaced as primary motivators by subjectively meaningful motivators. These included interest and enjoyment, varied work, challenge, personal development, contribution, autonomy, self-realisation, recognition and personal relationships with bosses, peers and reports. This extended the findings of Sturges (1999) who concluded that in managers, changes in notions of career success did take place over time with factors such as interest and autonomy becoming more important. However, whilst similar, her findings did not extend to managers aged over 50 and did not consider how

these changes might impact motivation for career progression. This said, financial reward and further promotion *were* still key motivators for some of the managers; in this study this related less to relative age (i.e. those who were nearer 50 than 65), than to individual feelings concerning whether or not individuals felt they had fully realised their objective career ambitions. This point is important for two reasons: first it accentuates that “older” cannot be used as a generic category when considering older workers’ attitudes towards career progression; and second, it confirms the findings of scholars such as Flynn (2010), Maestas (2010) and Wang and Schultz (2009) that life stage may be more significant than age in relation to later life careers. Through these findings this suggestion is extended to embrace motivation for career progression. As the range of different lifestyles within this sample showed, divorce and remarriage in particular is increasingly impacting the nature of older people’s careers in terms of differing life stages. So too is the growth over past decades of the numbers of female managers who, in general, have combined establishing and sustaining a career with marriage and children.

Within this study, the subjectively meaningful drivers of career progression which emerged appeared closely related to the concept of job satisfaction which some studies have suggested may be a key motivator for older individuals in the absence of more tangible prizes such as further pay and promotion (Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004; Sterns and Miklos, 1995). At one level the findings of this study support that view and the earlier finding that even long-term objectively plateaued managers may experience higher levels of job satisfaction than their younger selves (Janson and Martin, 1982; Near, 1980). However, what these findings demonstrated was that, unlike these previous studies in which the pursuit of job satisfaction was an *alternative* to objective career progression, the majority of the managers in this study viewed it as a significant motivational aspect of career progression in its own right. Such was its importance that some managers actively admitted that they did not want to pursue further promotion and would not accept it if it was offered to them. The underlying reasons for this were wide-ranging but tended to relate to a number of individually significant organizational and/or personal influences which were impacting their drivers for

career progression. This said, such a conclusion may also have reflected to some extent the suggestion that individuals may change their attitudes and perceptions in relation to the reality of their situation in order to maintain feelings of worth (Warr and Fay, 2001).

The role of financial remuneration as a motivational driver in older managers' careers was complex and reflected differing personal situations, including those of individuals who continued to work in the same position rather than endanger their pension rights (Sterns and Miklos, 1995). In respect of this it is important to acknowledge how changing economic and social contexts now mean that for many of the managers day to day financial needs were equally if not more significant in financial terms than funding their pension. Kooij et al., (2008) talked about individuals making career changes both to increase their income and to sustain what they envisage will be a considerably extended working life and this accurately reflected the role of finance in motivating the individuals in this study. Although they were less likely to make career changes to increase their income, participants were highly motivated to retain the level of income they had achieved and many were also looking ahead to working after drawing their pension and leaving their career role, in order to supplement their income. Unlike the work/non-work split presented in many traditional retirement studies, the individuals in this study were highly aware and motivated by the very long period of retirement that they were likely to face and the need to find ways of adequately financing it.

As described in chapter 4, a relationship between career identity and career drivers emerged from the findings which had a significant effect on the importance of various career drivers. For example, managers' notions of their own career identity as comparatively powerful, accomplished and valued operators were reinforced by intrinsic rewards in terms of value, contribution and "a job well done". All of these variables acted as positive motivators, although certain other factors such as avoiding stagnation, boredom and stress, and avoiding loss, acted as equally important negative drivers in encouraging individuals to take evasive action. These findings aligned with the conclusions

of Lord and Farrington (2006) who found the motivational drivers of older knowledge workers were related to gaining a sense of accomplishment from doing the work, enjoying being creative and deriving satisfaction from using skills. The findings in this study indicated that in overall terms the relationship between career drivers and career identity was complex. In talking about their motivational drivers, participants exhibited a clear understanding of their own career identity, the extent to which they defined themselves in relation to their work and how central their work identity was to who they felt they were (Noe et al., 1990). This identity was both a reflection of and a driver for those things that motivated them about their career. For example, those who saw an aspect of their career identity as being a good negotiator were motivated by aspects of their role that allowed them to exhibit this behaviour and were interested in further developing their job to allow them to do this more. In these terms, “realising their identity” meant doing things and pursuing goals that the managers knew they were good at and could achieve, which in turn meant that an individual’s identity was in itself a key motivational driver

Meijers (1998) suggested that in developing their career identity an individual must consciously identify that part of the world of work that fits in with his or her own identity and having done this, must be able to “recognise and articulate what that identity is, and what it means to them” (p.194). From the findings in this study it was clear that, in line with this, individuals in later life saw their career identity as a key part of who they were overall. In addition, there was evidence that managers not only could identify clearly what aspects of themselves they saw as strengths and skills and how these now formed key aspects of their career identity, but also how these were recognised by others. Studies have shown that individuals possess multiple identities in different areas of life, of which career identity is only one (Meijers, 1998). For some of the males in the study, in particular, their career identity possibly represented the most important aspect of their overall identity. In general, participants indicated that they were more concerned at this stage in their career with maintaining “who they were” rather than risking the loss and confusion of losing their identity through inappropriate career advancement, even if this meant

ignoring development opportunities. Although for some this related to retaining objective aspects of their career such as salary level, benefits, job title or status, for others it meant maintaining their capabilities. Thus, whether it was an antecedent or a result of their position, career identity was linked to the extent to which they were embedded in their job, i.e. unwilling or unable to change roles or careers (Feldman, 2007).

Career identity also reflected the extent to which managers “lived to work” or chose to see work as part of a balanced lifestyle. One of the implications of career identity for the managers in this study was that it undoubtedly influenced the extent to which the majority planned to continue to work pre- and post-retirement (which will be discussed in greater detail below). For many, it appeared that stopping work on retirement would mean letting go of a valuable part of themselves that they had developed and nurtured throughout their adult life. A further aspect of the role of career identity concerns the extent to which the managers may have shared some sort of common underlying characteristics which governed the fact that they were still in the workforce. Feldman (2007) proposed that personality factors such as openness to experience, extraversion and self-efficacy may be significant in those individuals who undertake career changes. Later, Power (2009) in examining the concept of *career renewal* concluded that the common personal characteristics of those who renewed their careers were mindfulness (the capacity for self-awareness) and optimism. From their career histories and comments it may be assumed that many of the individuals in this study may have shared at least some of these characteristics which is important to remember when considering the generalisability of these findings, although the issue of the extent to which these are characteristics of managers in general may also be pertinent.

In conclusion, career drivers related to what motivated people about their job and what drove them to continue in their career on a day to day basis. There was a clear acknowledgment that people saw their career as a meaningful pattern of events in its own right, closely linked to how they saw their individual career identity. However, in analysing the findings it became evident that

managers' career drivers were subject to a wide range of influences, objective and subjective, which impacted their significance on an individual basis. The role of these will be considered next.

## **7.2 Influences on motivation for career progression**

In today's career contexts, with the escalation of new career models such as boundaryless and protean careers, the divide between work and non-work issues within the career is breaking down (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006). As career drivers are only one aspect of the overall motivational drivers which may operate within a person's life, and career identity is only one aspect of an individual's identity, it is increasingly possible that "work and non-work roles overlap and shape jointly a person's identity and sense of self... under the rubric of attaining psychological success" (Mirvis and Hall, 1994:369). As described in chapter 4, the findings of this study showed that the career drivers identified above did not act in isolation in determining motivation for career progression; a number of personal and workplace influences significantly affected how these drivers were enacted. Using an analogy in which motivational drivers might be considered the engine of the career, with career identity setting the direction of movement, it appeared that certain external influences could act as either accelerator or brake in affecting individuals' enthusiasm for further career progression.

Personal influences included critical incidents; family and partner; quality of life; tiredness, stress or health; stability or security; lifestyle and interests; finances; and awareness of ageing. Workplace influences were organizational structure and change, relationships with colleagues and management, organizational attitudes and culture, and working conditions and benefits. The reason career influences were so important in this study was that they appeared to be the main area in which it was evident that significant changes had taken place over time. Individual interview transcripts viewed in their entirety showed that the majority of managers, both male and female, acknowledged that a shift had occurred over their career span in what mattered to them about their career



over a range of different variables. For example, for many, the influence of good working relationships had grown stronger than earlier in the career as had the desire to be within a comfortable and receptive working environment and culture. For the majority, being in an environment where there was guaranteed career progression in terms of status and reward now mattered less.

These findings support those of Sterns and Miklos (1995) who proposed that with age, factors such as health, outside interests, and family and other responsibilities may exert greater and more diverse influences on individual motivation than in earlier life. They suggested that older adults may have a different perspective on work from younger adults with survival needs likely to be less urgent and job satisfaction more dependent on intrinsic work variables. This study added to this and the other literature in this area by demonstrating not only the extent to which non-work and subjective drivers assumed a greater importance to older managers, but also how their impact differed on an individual basis. Although there were some shared areas of influence which operated across the older managers, the overall impact of such influences was individually diverse and led to a range of different outcomes. This accentuated that, as scholars such as Patrickson and Ranzijn (2006) have maintained, it is inappropriate to regard all older individuals as being the same with shared career needs and aspirations purely because of their chronological age.

Although awareness of ageing was not universally mentioned as an influence on participants' motivation for career progression, almost by definition it did have an impact on the way older individuals viewed their career. Whilst some commented that they didn't feel old, or older, or didn't consider that being older had exerted any impact on their career, they nevertheless were aware of the variable of age and its implications, and exhibited insight based on their own experiences and those of others into ways they might expect that age may influence their career or life in future. Whilst this demonstrated the influence of an *awareness* of age norms relating to what constituted "old" and what might be appropriate behaviours (Lawrence, 1988) there was a strong sense from the managers that they were not intending to act in accordance with any

predetermined societal notions of what “older” people should do. In terms of the differences which emerged across the age spectrum represented by the sample (from age 50 to age 63), these related more to career age and life stage factors rather than to chronological age. For example some of the oldest managers spoke of being “very old” in an organizational context in which all managers over 50 were old and in the minority. At the same time some of the younger managers (those around 50) revealed attitudes which might be more common in younger people in general, due to factors such as re-marriage. These findings supported the view of Kooij et al., (2008) that it is not sufficient to link older individuals’ motivation to chronological age alone as other conceptions of age, e.g. functional (performance-based) age; psychosocial or subjective age; organizational age; and the lifespan concept of age, singly or in combination, may be equally important.

In terms of personal influences on motivation for career progression the role of family and lifestyle had generally changed over time although, as mentioned earlier, these changes essentially related to the individual’s current life stage. The view that for older individuals their career was important but (to quote one of the managers) “it’s not the only thing”, epitomises the overall framework in which drivers for career progression operated. The implication of this, as revealed in participant interviews, was that for many of the male managers in particular, their career *had* been the only thing earlier in their life. A key aspect in respect of older workers’ motivation for career progression therefore was that their notion of a career had a fundamental temporal aspect reinforcing the findings of Adamson, et al.(1998) that “[a career] is not simply about what one does for a living, but about what one has done, does now and might do in the future”.

### **7.3 Career attitudes and opportunities**

The way managers perceived career opportunities and the amount of control they felt they had over them impacted their motivation for career progression. There appeared to be a difference between those who saw opportunities as

largely employer-created and controlled and others who saw them as being essentially self-created, whether within the current organization or externally. This supports O'Neil and Bilimoria's (2005) conclusions about the significance of each individual's locus of control, which they saw as the source of motivation, career orientation and success. This can be defined as either "an *external* locus which links to passivity and dependency, or an *internal* locus which is reflected in behaviours such as planning, persistence and problem-solving" (p.174). This construct accentuates the range of individual differences underlying career progression in that an external locus links to a belief that career opportunities are related to luck and job offers; whereas an internal locus sees them as self-created and a result of the exercise of individual responsibility for career development. The impact of this could be seen in the different attitudes the managers in this study exhibited towards career progression and the extent to which they were optimistic, satisfied, resigned, anxious, or vacillating. This relationship between attitudes towards career progression adds to what is known about how expectancy theory operates within older managers in contemporary career contexts. It demonstrates how, in general, managers' attitudes towards career opportunities and career progression affected the extent to which they perceived barriers to future career progression and their perceptions of their ability to overcome these barriers to achieve their goals. What this meant was that attitudes towards career progression both resulted from and impacted career drivers.

Attitudes towards retirement and the extent to which individuals viewed it as representing the end of career progression was an important area of influence on the motivational drivers of the older managers. The findings of this study concerning the meaning of retirement added new insights into the function of retirement in the careers of today's older managers. It showed clearly that for the majority of the managers retirement was considered primarily as a financial milestone marked by receipt of one or more pensions. Reaching this milestone would give the recipient the financial freedom to pursue new paths in work and leisure for the remainder of their life. Individuals also saw retirement as marking the divide between ceasing to work in the job in which they were currently

employed (i.e. the one which they considered represented their career to date) and continuing their career in another occupation, for another employer, and/or in another way (e.g. reduced hours). This said, for some others 'retirement' meant the end of their current career, even though they would still be working. It therefore meant doing something different in retirement. In general, this "something different" was linked to a desire for greater self-realisation and an enriched lifestyle. These findings support and extend those of scholars e.g. Maestes (2010), Gobeski and Beehr, (2009); and Davis (2003), who have proposed that retirement as a 'cliff-edge' experience whereby individuals move from working one day to being retired the next is now obsolete, being replaced by a more gradual or staged process. They also support the suggestion that the work-retirement distinction may be oversimplified, overlooking person-specific combinations of work, leisure, family and community roles (Greller and Richtermeyer, 2006). This study showed clearly that retirement aspirations and the nature of post-retirement work were very closely linked to factors such as these and were person-specific in nature rather than representative of a shared notion of a single new concept to replace non-working retirement.

In respect of external attitudes, interviewees acknowledged that their careers might be shaped by restricted opportunities and limited employment options in later life due to ageism. In practice this meant that most realised that they would have to align their goals with what was likely to be realistic and achievable in terms of future work opportunities. For the majority this meant either working in the voluntary sector where their existing skill set would be valued and part-time work might be available or undertaking interim or consultancy work or self-employment. What was particularly interesting about these statements is that, in general, they encompassed participants' views about their future work opportunities both pre- and post-retirement fuelled by the workplace uncertainties which they saw surrounding them. Most saw the significant difference between the two situations as being that 'retirement' i.e. pension entitlement, would reduce the financial pressure associated with working and reduce the need to have to get another high level job. That said, several indicated that if they lost their jobs, or felt forced by circumstance to make a

change prior to retirement, they would be able to afford to take the opportunity to commence their post-retirement career prematurely. A very small minority saw retirement i.e. drawing a pension, as the end of their working life. These findings support those of Vickerstaff (2006) who suggested that in respect of retirement decisions “managers and professionals were most likely to have the understanding and financial wherewithal to be able to negotiate a preferred retirement option for themselves” (p. 470). In general the managers’ view of their career at this stage in their life appeared to be not only that they wanted to keep working to reach the finishing line, but to do so in a way that demonstrated their enthusiasm and commitment to the end and reflected well on them as a manager. These findings add richness to our understanding of the individually significant ways in which this might be enacted.

#### **7.4 Changes in motivation across the career**

An analysis of the career drivers, influences, and attitudes of the older managers in this study revealed that changes had taken place in their motivation for career progression across the career. However the question this raised was the extent to which these reflected changes at an individual level or influences exerted by the changing nature of careers, in particular the individualization of careers which has resulted from the breakdown of traditional career contexts. These factors will be considered in turn.

First, in terms of changes occurring at a personal level, participants reported numerous changes relating to their career drivers and career influences and their attitudes towards career opportunities. The influence of impending retirement as a potential career endpoint also represented a change from earlier in their careers. As these variables have been discussed above, they will not be dwelt upon further here apart from re-emphasizing that in the main such changes as had taken place were not necessarily linked to age, but more to experience and to movement through different lifestages and career and life contexts. Although numerous reviews of older workers’ abilities (e.g. Warr, 2001; Sterns and Miklos, 1995) have intimated that changes may take place

with age such that older individuals become resistant to change, or less adaptable or flexible in approach, there was no evidence of this in the way that older managers in this study saw themselves, although of course there was no way of verifying how they were viewed by their colleagues or employers. Where negative aspects of the career were evident, such as disillusionment, boredom or disappointment, these appeared to be linked more to career aspects such as lack of stimulation or interest or lack of recognition rather than any changes that inherently could be linked to age.

In terms of the second source of change, changing career contexts, it appeared that in general, the majority of the managers could be said now to exhibit a protean career orientation i.e. psychological mobility as reflected in an ability to self-manage their own career and control its progress and direction (Hall, 1976). For the majority who had started their careers in traditional career contexts with aspirations of building a career with one or a few employers, this represented a major change. Recession, restructuring, globalisation and the impact of technology and other advancements meant that many had been forced to take responsibility for their own career development and progression to the extent of recovering their situation after redundancy. Even those who had experienced less turbulence nevertheless accepted that they no longer expected particular loyalty from their employer, conceding that the nature of the psychological contract in the workplace had changed and accepting that their career and its advancement was their own responsibility.

This change impacted their motivation in as much as in general they had now switched their motivation to achieving a good career for themselves, rather than a good career solely in terms of their employer model demonstrating, as Hall and Richter (1990) indicated, that “a lot of good baby-boomers have their own sense of where they want to head with their protean careers” (p.20). It may be argued, of course, that their confidence and ability to achieve a satisfying career on this basis were in part due to their experience, which although not age-related, was time-related. However, although examining this further was outside the scope of this study, it may not be a requisite requirement. Goffee and Scase

(1992) in an investigation into organizational change and the corporate career described how changing career environments had caused individuals to change their existing work values which previously had required that corporate demands be a priority above all other interests including their immediate families. This meant that for managers across all age ranges personal and family life has become of increasing importance as a source of satisfaction and personal identity. As the managers in their studies were largely in their thirties and forties, this suggests that adoption of a protean career orientation is not linked in particular to age-related variables in older individuals.

Evidence in this study of more relational careers which take into account aspects of the manager's family and personal life suggests also that this career approach is now no longer one that solely characterises female careers. This finding has extended the work of Sturges (2004) and Sullivan and Arthur (2006) in terms of demonstrating the way in which individual career competences develop in older managers leading them to adopt greater responsibility for managing the relationship between work and the non-work aspects of their lives, linking this to changing career contexts rather than age-related factors. Most significantly for this study it clarifies that in line with taking responsibility for career progression, managers also assume ownership of what career progression now means to them, as will be discussed in the following section.

## **7.5 The meaning of career progression**

As explained in chapter 1, one of the aims of this study was to investigate what older UK managers perceived as the meaning of career progression in later career. Clarifying this was vital in order to be able to understand older managers' motivation for career progression. Traditional developmental theories (e.g. Erickson 1963; Levinson et al., 1978) proposed that life and careers progressed through a sequence of orderly stages. Mid- and later-life careers were characterised by maintenance and stability followed by withdrawal and decline. The latter stage in general was seen as being linked to retirement and cessation of the individual's main career role. Transitions between each stage

were viewed as being periods of change and development before the relative stability of fully adopting the characteristics of each new stage. Sheehy (1976) supported this view of transitional phases (which she referred to as “passages”) and saw the period of transition at middle life as being particularly significant as a time of re-examining priorities and taking control of life’s future direction. In considering the career differences of men and women Sheehy suggested, as have subsequent theorists, that in later life while men saw their careers as starting to decline, women would be re-energised and ambitious, demanding more of their careers. The underlying premise of this proposal was that until this stage, women did not have the chance or ability to take their careers seriously in the same way as their male colleagues.

As indicated at various points earlier in this chapter, the findings of this study did not uphold the notion of predestined progression through a sequence of orderly stages in career or life, as was suggested by traditional models of development such as those of Erickson (1963) and Levinson et al., (1978). Sterns and Miklos (1995) proposed that with age, factors such as health, outside interests, and family and other responsibilities may exert greater and more diverse influences on individual motivation than in earlier life. Due to varying lifestyles and past events, the managers in this study reported a range of diverse career and life needs and drivers. For example, although for many of the managers, childcare responsibilities and the need to provide financially for children were becoming less significant influences, others acknowledged that these would continue to be important for many years to come. For some of the managers, the impact of this was less than it may have been earlier in their career as over time, through career advancement and asset accumulation they had achieved a relatively financially secure position compared to their younger selves. In contrast, some others faced having to work for longer than they had once planned due to the financial implications of divorce and remarriage. It is this complexity of the issues relating to individual drivers of career progression and the way they interact with various influences and attitudes that produces individual meanings of career progression. In the above example, those needing money to finance school fees would not necessarily see the prospect of



promotion and a pay increase as career progression if they valued spending time with their family; rather they may see it as a retrograde step. Through such detail, these findings add weight to the proposal that individual differences become more important in later life (Sterns and Miklos, 2004), providing evidence of the ways in which this is enacted in individual careers.

In chapter 2 in reviewing the existing literature relating to career progression the point was made that very few studies had looked at career progression *per se* but rather had adopted the lens of lack of career progression, i.e. career plateauing. The findings of this study indicated that in objective terms, despite the emergence of boundaryless and protean career theories, the career plateau – viewed as a period of time in the career where little objective career advancement takes place – does still exist. However, there are two key points to make in relation to this. First is that career plateaus in older managers may be a result of their own unwillingness to seek further objective advancement and all that it entails. Second, the career plateau does not necessarily mark the final point of the career; in terms of developmental theories. There was significant evidence that showed that those in the latter stages of their career did not view this as a period of stability prior to withdrawal and decline; many anticipated the next stage of their life as involving reinvention and reinvigoration in line with Super's (1957) concept of career recycling. In these terms for many of the managers in this study who not only intended to work post-retirement, but saw that work, whatever its form or nature, as representing career continuation or renewal, the career plateau was a mere period of marking time in career terms.

Only a minority of the managers said they were still motivated by the prospect of further objective advancement within their careers, a finding which appeared to be a function of personality, unrealised aspirations or previous career experiences. The influence of age on these aspirations is that there was a sense that perhaps more of the managers might have aspired to further advancement had they not believed that their age would make this difficult or impossible. On the other hand, participants realised that age was not the only

reason why they may not have been successful in respect of their career aspirations, several intimating that they believed they were not regarded as suitable for promotion or were too useful in the role they currently held. A further negative motivator for many of the managers in respect of aspirations for future objective career progression was stress and burnout which many wanted to avoid. However in line with Appelbaum and Finestone's (1994) suggestion, for many this had been experienced earlier in the career; by now many of the participants had developed resilience and coping mechanisms or had already withdrawn from highly stressful arenas (Baruch, 2006).

Some of the managers, however, implied that barriers were more a result of the organizational culture which, particularly in the investment bank, was focused in general on youth, energy and a working pattern of early burnout and withdrawal from the company. Several of the functional managers e.g. in law, HR, IT, alluded to the fact they would not still be with the company if they had roles in general management and they felt they had been retained only because of their specialist skills which made them particularly useful to the company. Yet others were unsure of where the barriers lay, but knew that within their current career roles they were unlikely to overcome them. For these managers, the effect on their career expectations was not caused so much by their age, but by the time that had passed since their last promotion and the number of failed attempts at advancement.

### **7.5.1 Career progression orientations**

One important aspect of career progression which emerged as people spoke about their career was that of how and when they saw their career ending. It became evident that what managers wanted to do in the future affected their motivation in respect of their current career. When asked "*What does the phrase career progression now mean to you at this stage in your life?*" many referred to their future plans in respect of retiring and working post-retirement. However many of the managers also had aspirations to change their job or the way in which they worked prior to when they retired. Some anticipated that they

would choose to make such a change at a particular future date whereas others had no clear plans, simply seeing this as something they would like to do.

Bailyn (1989) in her study of the career experiences of male and female engineers proposed the existence of different “orientational categories” which she saw as individual predispositions and an aggregation of subjective meanings relating to the specific topic under investigation, in this case, career progression. She maintained that orientational categories are “taxonomies based on individual actors’ wants, plans and commitments” (p.481) and saw the usefulness of the concept as being “a way of bringing the internal career into our research” (p.483). Following that lead, it seemed useful to categorise the managers’ different meanings of career progression into a typology of career orientations based on their broad aspirations concerning types of future career progression. The value of presenting such a typology reflects Yeandle’s (2005) view that it might “stimulate the range of thinking about the range of experiences and the range of policy responses needed” (p.14).

In this study eight of the managers wanted further advancement (“strive”), nineteen wanted to continue as they were with little change (“stick”), seven wanted to work in a different way involving fewer hours or less commitment (“slow down”), seventeen wanted to do something different either pre- or post-retirement (“switch”). These categories, which overlapped and were not mutually exclusive, are presented at table 9.

**Table 9: Career progression orientations**

Career orientation	Description
STICK	<p>This orientation represents the motivational direction of those who want neither more nor less than their current role in their current organization. These managers have decided that they want to remain where they are until they retire and leave the organization. Although this might be seen as an orientation to remain plateaued, this should not be thought of as representing a negative situation.</p> <p>The majority of managers indicated that they were happy to be in this situation and had made the choice themselves not to seek further advancement.</p> <p><i>“I want to be left alone to get on with it, do my job, and go home at the end of the day... What’s going to happen next? The answer is, ‘Nothing really!’ but now that’s an okay answer.” (Trevor, age 55)</i></p>
SWITCH	<p>This orientation represents a drive to make a change to a different career or a different type of work from that which the manager has seen as their career to date. A few had already made such a change in response to marketplace opportunities, or by retiring or being made redundant from one career and starting anew in a different career direction. Although some of the younger managers saw this as a move they would make prior to retirement (i.e. prior to taking their pension) the majority of this category saw it as something they aspired to once they had taken their pension and retired from their current employer and career path.</p> <p><i>“I haven’t yet firmed up what I’m going to do. Whatever I do after I retire from here, whatever field it’s in, I would consider a continuation of my career... I’d want to do it full-time; I don’t do things by halves.” (Julia, age 50)</i></p>
SLOW DOWN	<p>This orientation overlapped in many cases with the “stick” or “switch” categories. It represented the views of those who wanted to have less commitment to their job in future. This could either, most commonly, be through working reduced hours or through finding some way of reducing the responsibilities and pressures their current role entailed. For many, this would have financial implications and needed to be considered against pension and other financial drivers before they retired. Nonetheless, many of the managers saw their working life post-retirement (i.e. post taking a pension and leaving their current employer or career field) as reflecting this option. Whilst many said they would like to continue to use their existing skill set and experience in post-retirement work, they also wanted to do so in a less demanding role.</p>

Career orientation	Description
	<i>"I like coming to work generally; I get quite a lot out of it and I think I'd be a bit dull if I stayed at home the whole time. But it would be great to be here less, maybe three days; that would give me a chance to do more of the things I want."</i> (Gail, age 50)
STRIVE	<p>This could be thought of as the most traditional career orientation in that it represented a drive for further objective career advancement as marked by increased status and responsibilities and further pay increases. This advancement was seen by some as taking place within their current organization, whereas others conceded that they may have to go elsewhere in order to realise their ambitions.</p> <p><i>"There are at least two more slots above mine and I expect to get them. It'll take time, but if it doesn't happen, I'll be making it happen somewhere else."</i> (Neville, age 56)</p>

Many saw their aspirations in respect of switching or slowing down as only being realisable post-retirement, i.e. when they were drawing their pension. However, knowing that they had plans appeared to be a motivating force in itself, adding an extra level to their inherent drive to want to keep developing their current role and career through doing interesting and meaningful work and continuing to learn and develop. These two orientational categories can be aligned with Power's (2009) concept of renewal in that those who saw themselves as wanting to continue to work post-retirement could be viewed as being in mid-career and their aspirations for a different working life being a way of renewing their energy and commitment. Many of the individuals conceded that they would consider implementing the types of change they envisaged if they were forced to leave their current employer prior to their planned retirement date due to redundancy, or if their job was no longer satisfying and fulfilling.

In order to understand how these orientations have evolved from the findings it may be useful to consider a range of case studies drawn from the participant interviews. These brief summaries illustrate, at an individual level, the interaction of career drivers, career identity and personal and organizational influences on the career. They also demonstrate the role of career insight and

attitudes towards both career progression and retirement and how these affect each participant's overall conceptualization of the meaning of career progression at this stage in their life.

The first case study illustrates how a combination of career drivers, identity, influences, attitudes, and opportunities led some individuals to want to continue in their current career, i.e. to "stick".

#### **7.5.1.1 Case study A: Stick**

Alec was aged 58. He was university educated and had worked for the company (FS2) for five years in a specialist support role at managerial level. Prior to joining the company he had been made redundant three times in ten years from senior roles in the financial services industry. The position he originally accepted with the company was a downwards move which he took "because, in effect it was around the corner, although it paid about £10,000 less" (than his previous salary). He had been promoted to his current position within about a year of joining the organization. His motivational career drivers were very much around enjoying the job and continuing to develop, and also fulfilling work relationships.

*My motive now is to do the best I can in the job I'm in, to learn as much as I can about it, to build up better working relationships with people in the company...The thing I probably enjoy most is dealing with people and I get that in this job.*

Working was important to Alec as he said he appreciated working and being busy and enjoyed his overall lifestyle,

*I think, particularly at this age, that I'd get very bored if I had retired completely. If I was sitting at home for any length of time I'd want to do something that I felt was useful and I do feel I get that here - it's what keeps me going. I want to keep interested.*

A key influence on Alec's career drivers was the issue of health which he said was the only thing that bothered him about ageing.

*Last week at our exercise class, a guy fell over and collapsed and now he's in a coma. Seeing things like that, it makes you think, puts things into perspective. I'd like to keep enjoying my job and keep the stress at a manageable level – that's what's important to me.*

While he wanted to keep working full-time in order to keep active and healthy, he also did not want to return to the levels of stress and associated ill-health which he had experienced at earlier stages in his career. Alec was divorced and had two children in their late twenties with whom he enjoyed a good relationship. Around three years ago he re-married which took him from a situation of relative affluence and having paid off his mortgage to having once again a large mortgage which wasn't due to be paid off until he reached the age of 72. In addition to the financial implications of his remarriage, his wife appeared to be a key personal influence on his career decisions: *"My wife's opinion is important. If she wasn't happy with what was involved, then it wouldn't happen"*.

Having worked in a large city early in his career, working near home was now also very important to Alec in terms both of the fact that he enjoyed being able to walk to work and the extra time it allowed him for other activities. For these reasons, although he recognised that because of his age it would be difficult for him to get another job if he was made redundant, he considered that working in London again would be "the absolute last resort". Alec was aware of how his attitudes towards career progression had changed from earlier in his career and how because of this, his key motivation was to continue enjoying doing his current job:

*When I was young if I applied for a promotion and I didn't get it. I was devastated. I needed to get that next promotion not so much because of the money but to keep moving up the ladder. Now, and I wouldn't like to say when it changed - probably because of a number of events over the*

*years, now I enjoy the job I'm doing... If there were any vacancies above me, and I'm not aware that there are, I'm not sure what my attitude would be. I'd like to think that if I was offered something that was a higher salary but looked boring, that I'd say, 'No thanks I'll stay where I am; I'm enjoying my job'.*

Alec had no particular plans for retirement and, as he considered that his job “still had lots in it” in terms of interest, he hoped to work at least until the age of 65. He reported that he had “very positive” feelings about the future, although he conceded he was not particularly looking for any substantial change. He saw his career as a significant part of his life, but not one that subsumed all else. Alec summarised his overall attitude towards career progression by stating, “I wouldn't go out of my way to look for another job, I'd be happy to continue developing this one”. Although he was motivated in his career by doing a good job, continuing to learn, and developing others, this was mitigated by the fact that he now wanted to spend more time out of work both with his new wife and also on his various interests. His overall financial requirements had changed as a result of remarriage and taking on a new mortgage, but although he conceded that he had to work for financial reasons, this aspect was less important to him than it had been in the past and it was not a case of remuneration “at any cost”. Alec had decided some time ago that he no longer wanted to commute to London to work and that he needed to protect his health and avoid stress. These were now also strong influences on his motivation for career progression. In terms of his attitude towards career progression, he saw career opportunities as largely a matter of luck or chance and again said that any future objective promotional opportunities would be weighed against how interesting he found the job and the extent to which it would be stressful or would damage his work/life balance. Alec himself could see that his motivation for career progression had changed from earlier in his career when his main driver was on making a name for himself and being promoted, and that his career identity was now linked to seeing himself as being useful and doing a good job.



Although the details in terms of individually significant drivers, influences and attitudes varied at an individual level, those whose career orientation was to stick shared Alec's drive for continuing to use existing skills, and deriving a sense of progression from the ongoing interest and challenge inherent in their current role. These managers could identify what they valued about their current situation and indicated that if they were not able to continue in their current employment as a result of redundancy they would seek to replicate these attributes through seeking a similar employed or self-employed role elsewhere. Regardless of their financial need, a key driver for individuals in this category was enjoying work itself and wanting to continue to do so for as long as possible.

In direct contrast to those like Alec who wanted to "stick", others aspired to change career direction. The next case study demonstrates how a different pattern of career drivers and career identity in combination with individually significant influences, attitudes, and opportunities can lead individuals to want to "switch":

#### **7.5.1.2 Case Study B: Switch**

Fiona was 51. She had worked for the organization (FS2) for 20 years in a professional role and for the past 13 years had been head of her department. She was clear about what drove her career:

*On a day to day basis I like the variety and mixing with other people. I like managing people, working with people to solve their problems – I get quite a lot of satisfaction from that.*

She clearly exhibited insight into both the reasons she had stayed in her job and what she was now looking for from her career:

*I've never really had the courage to break away. But over the years [my job] has changed enormously so I've never felt I've stagnated in one place. And it has supplied me with a safe and secure income. Now I think I'm looking for better quality of work and quality of life.*

Fiona was married with one teenage child and had been the main breadwinner in her family throughout her career. However, she admitted that she felt that in her own relationship role reversal hadn't worked inasmuch as she had to work and yet still did all the things that she felt traditional, non-working wives would do, such as shopping, cooking and cleaning. A key influence on the drivers of career progression for Fiona was therefore quality of life:

*I'd like the whole thing to work better together. It's quite difficult to balance work and family life. I do manage it but my work comes first, then my family, then anything I want to do comes at the very end. And I just don't seem able to get that order differently because there's too much work and not enough time to do it.*

Because of the nature of her work, Fiona felt that there was little possibility of meaningful progression in her career and increasingly resented the way her career overshadowed all the other aspects of her life, She felt that she spent her entire time working and had little time for anything else. However in terms of work Fiona also felt that due to the nature of her position, her career had plateaued; in the absence of any opportunities for progression the only means of objective progression within the existing organization would be through making a sideways move into a different field, without any increase in remuneration. Although recognising this option, she felt that this would not improve her situation in terms of either reduced hours or increased recognition for the contribution she made. As a result Fiona felt motivated to make a career change, which she indicated she would see as progression. That said, the issue of her company pension was a strong influence on her short-term decisions:

*I would be very tempted [to make a move] if it gave me better work/life balance, but it would have to be extremely interesting and something I'd think, 'Wow, that's something I'd really like to do'. And I'd have to do it away from this company, because I'm in a final salary pension scheme so at the age I am if someone offered me a reduction [in salary], that would immediately affect my pension and I can't afford to do that. So it*

*would have to be something outside. But I would be very tempted if it was something stimulating and interesting.*

She also saw other influences as barriers affecting her ability and motivation to make a move, including the fact that due to organizational change and uncertainty she felt that she had lost control of her career destiny and was concerned about the likelihood of redundancy following the forthcoming merger. If this occurred she indicated that she would be looking for a career change rather than just replacing the job she currently held. In common with several other of the managers who had an orientation to “switch” she spoke about the difficulty of making the decision to leave a secure role to embark upon a career change,

*I love change, I do like change but I'm not good at leaping into the unknown when I haven't got enough of what I think of as security behind me. Just fancying change isn't always enough.*

Another influence on Fiona's motivation to progress in her career through making a career change was that she felt that due to working so hard she had neither the time to look for something else, or to mix with people and network to think about what she might want to do. As a result, she indicated that redundancy might be a positive outcome in terms of helping make that decision, concluding that, “[Redundancy] would be quite a positive thing if it happened, it gives you a bit of a push, and also a cushion”.

Outside of the issue of possible redundancy Fiona had quite clear ideas about how she would like her future career to progress and what that career would look like. She planned to stay with the organization until she could take her pension at age 55 and following that, to make a career change into what she would consider a “more interesting and valuable” occupation, although she was not clear about exactly what type of work that might be. What she was clear about was that such a move would still be another stage in her existing career, even though it occurred after she had “retired” (i.e. taken her pension): “I would say then that I was still continuing my career; I had just changed direction”.

As with the other managers with a “switch” orientation, Fiona’s overall motivation for career progression was “doing something more interesting”. Her career identity had changed from being linked to her professional role within financial services to that of a person with portable and transferable skills that she would like to use differently within another organizational arena alongside developing new skills. Her career drivers - variety, managing people, meeting challenges, and maintaining stability and security - were subject to strong influences relating both to her family’s needs and financial matters in terms of the implications of the organization’s final salary pension scheme. However the influence of her own desire to achieve a better lifestyle and develop other interests was growing stronger as organizational change exerted a greater impact upon her. Although her attitude towards career progression within the organization was one of resignation, she also demonstrated an attitude towards external career opportunities that saw them as being self-created. She indicated that she knew she would have to take the initiative if she was to implement the change that she would regard as career progression, i.e. switching to another more enjoyable and satisfying career role. Although Fiona’s dissatisfaction with her current role was exacerbated by the fact that she felt overworked, her prime motivation was not to slow down, an orientation which will be examined next. Overall, her motivation and that of the others with this orientation was renewed interest and enjoyment, as encapsulated in this statement:

*I don't want to stop working I just want to do something a little bit different. If I was really lucky I'd like to have a job where I'd never want to stop because I was enjoying it so much... that would be my ideal; I'm sure they exist out there.*

Career progression for those with this orientation was viewed as taking on a role in a completely different field. This could involve being employed or self-employed and viewed as simply a job or a new career. As indicated above the focus is on the nature of the work and, as many of the managers had spent their careers in cerebral roles, may involve pursuing future roles involving artistic or practical skills.

The next case study focuses on examining the career of a manager who represented yet another combination of variables relating to motivation for career progression and who, as a result, aspired to “slow down”.

### **7.5.1.3 Case Study C: Slow Down**

Matthew was aged 53 and was married with two children in their late teens. He had been with the organization (FS2) for nine years in a general management position after taking redundancy from a previous role in financial services. Since then he had not been promoted. The drivers of Matthew’s career motivation were that he felt he worked for a good organization, enjoyed his job, found it intrinsically rewarding, and he liked to work. The issue that influenced these drivers most was the effect of the changing organizational structure and culture on his motivation, in particular the increased expectations in terms of performance and delivery that had resulted from redundancies and mergers:

*Last year the company decided to cut back [my team] from twenty one to fourteen and we all had to reapply for our jobs. Some people had to go - it wasn't a very nice experience to go through at all, a really chilling exercise. I did put up my hand to go as I felt that things had changed too much from where they were, but they didn't let me go.*

This meant that Matthew now felt he had a significantly increased workload and was working extremely long hours. However, due to another forthcoming merger and the company’s strategy for future change this appeared to him to be a situation which would be likely to continue. Describing the atmosphere, he commented,

*You want to be stretched but you don't want to be out of your comfort zone pushed into panic and fear. There's not enough resource here but there's no opportunity to take on more staff. We're all trying to keep all the balls in the air – it's all a bit desperate.*

That said he could clearly still see the advantages of his position in terms of working in a pleasant environment in respect of locale and quality of office

accommodation with good facilities and a highly beneficial remuneration package. As a result, he indicated that without the issue of pressure, he would be “very happy to continue in the role”. Offsetting this, concerns about his current and future health were clearly a significant influence leading him to conclude that ultimately health would be the one thing that would make him do something different. Other more immediate personal influences on his career motivation were a desire to remain in the place he lived, and to ensure his family were happy and settled:

*I live 15 miles away. I don't want to change that set up at all - it's a lovely village and I feel very privileged to live there and my family is settled there as well. That's important to me; I wouldn't want to be in a situation where I had to move to find another job.*

In terms of remuneration, financial pressures were now more of an influence than a driver for Matthew:

*I haven't got a mortgage or debts so losing a proportion of my income through downsizing wouldn't be a problem; I'd love to be able to do that. Sacrificing some income wouldn't have a huge impact on my overall lifestyle.*

Another key influence on Matthew's career motivation was his life outside of work as he indicated he had “a very, very busy life outside of work” with numerous interests and involvements in the village where he lived and a good social life with his wife. The influence of this on his motivation for career progression and his orientation towards slowing down was that “It's very difficult to have a busy social life and work long hours like you do here”.

In the longer term, post-retirement, Matthew still saw himself as continuing his career, again in a less demanding role, with his focus on retaining work/life balance:

*You want a balance - time for activities and some mental work to keep you going as well; paid opportunities, ideally. If that happened I'd say*

*probably that my financial services career had finished, it would be a new career, a new chapter in retirement.*

Matthew's career identity was closely linked to his job and he liked working and was motivated by enjoyable, varied and interesting work and doing a good job. Organizational change and the changing organizational culture were now influencing his motivation which was also affected by the knowledge that in financial terms he could afford to take a lesser role and a drop in salary. The influence of organizational culture was so strong that it had even led him to volunteer for redundancy in the recent past. Health also influenced Matthew's motivation for career progression in both a positive sense, i.e. he wanted to keep working in order to avoid cognitive decline, and negatively, i.e. he was concerned about the negative aspects of continuing to work too hard. As a result of these influences his overall career progression orientation was to "slow down" in order to find a better work/life balance: "I'd be interested in doing the job part-time... I'd be open to that kind of opportunity". Other positive influences were the working conditions within the company and the village nearby where he lived; both of these factors affected his motivation to stay with the company rather than go elsewhere. His attitude towards career opportunities however was one of resignation in that he believed that future moves relied on job offers.

For Matthew and the other managers who shared an orientation to "slow down", career progression was characterised by reduced commitments through moving into a career stage involving fewer working hours and/or a less demanding role. This was envisaged in general as being achieved through progressing to a less demanding role in the same field, or part-time or contract work in the current field or a new work type. Unlike those with the orientation to "switch" the motivation underlying moving into a new work type was reduction in working hours and pressure rather than interest enjoyment, although these factors were of secondary importance. Many of the managers with this orientation anticipated that post-retirement, they would achieve their aspiration to slow down through undertaking paid or unpaid work in the voluntary sector.

The final case study provides an example of those of the managers who, although very much in the minority, continued to strive for further promotion and sought objective career advancement.

#### **7.5.1.4 Case Study D: Strive**

Edward was aged 51. He had been divorced and remarried and had two children in their late teens and early twenties from each of his two marriages. He was employed by the organization (FS1) in a functional support role at managerial level and was last promoted a year previously. Having been made redundant twice, the last time in 2006, he had taken a considerable downwards step to join the organization three and a half years previously, “I got a junior management job here which meant a 30% pay cut”. Edward’s career was obviously a key part of his identity and a significant driver for his motivation for career progression:

*In my 20’s and 30’s and maybe even 40’s I was very career-minded. I would say up to four years ago, I’d over-achieved; in terms of my expectations I would have seen myself at the next level down. If you look at my second career, this one, if I can make it to the next level, I’ll be happy - boxes ticked.*

In terms of attitudes towards job opportunities, Edward clearly felt that opportunities for career progression were ultimately self-created “If you don’t ask, you don’t get” and this exerted a significant influence on his motivation, “If I don’t get it (the promotion), I’ll stay a couple of years and if I still don’t get it, I’ll move on”. Although Edward was one of the few managers in this study who were still highly motivated by extrinsic reward, his driver for job and financial security was actually paramount:

*One of the main motivators for me is security. In order of things security of employment is extremely important to me, status is quite important to me and financial benefit is also quite important to me. I’ll sacrifice money and status for financial security.*



The main driver of Edward's career was striving to get back to the level he had been at before joining the company, and exceeding that position by at least one further level of status and pay. At the time of the interview he was applying for the role above him which if he achieved it, would "put me back closer to where I was" in terms of remuneration and status. However, in common with many of the managers in this study, Edward's motivation for career progression was heavily influenced by his concern about health issues:

*In the last few years at the last company my health suffered – so I made a decision that in the future my health would not suffer again. I think that at my age I have to be careful. In my 30's and 40's I was working 55 or 60 hour weeks under enormous pressure and strain. Do I want to go back there? No.*

Another influence on his motivational drivers was his concern for enjoying, with his wife, what he referred to as their "healthy social life" and maintaining a settled family life: "I like DIY, I like caravanning and my wife does too". In terms of remuneration, although this was a key motivational driver for Edward, it no longer surpassed other drivers such as a desire to retire within a reasonable timescale,

*I don't want to work beyond 60. I don't want to work longer; I want to earn enough money so I don't have to. So one of the financial drivers isn't about spending today's money it's about provision for the pension.*

Ultimately then, what appealed to Edward in terms of future progress was a balance of extrinsic and intrinsic career variables:

*I'm not looking beyond the next job up from mine. I don't fancy being the managing director or even on the senior management team. Slow, steady progression, or bit more status and a bit more money – that'll be fine for me. So I will be making future decisions about the next job based on a balance of pay, prestige, control, autonomy and "will it interest me?" Because if it doesn't I'll stay here.*

Extrinsic variables such as pay and promotion were mitigated for Edward by concerns for his health and the desire to have an improved work/life balance. Unlike many of the other managers Edward saw finance as closely linked to his career identity and a measure of his success as a manager. His drive to earn more was not linked primarily to financial need but to repairing the damage to his self-esteem that occurred when he had to take a massive pay cut on joining the company. He acknowledged that his attitude towards his career - no longer wanting the top job - had been affected by his career experiences and past health issues leading him to re-evaluate what was important to him personally, whereas previously he had been concerned with his competitive position and measuring his success against others in organizational terms. Intrinsic variables within his current job such as interest and control were now balanced against what might be offered within the company or elsewhere in terms of further pay and promotion. His attitude towards career progression opportunities was that they were ultimately self-created as reflected in his statement, "Promotion? I will make it happen here, or if it doesn't happen I'll do it somewhere else".

For the managers with a career orientation to "strive", further advancement within their career meant building on existing skills and experience and taking a proactive role in identifying and acting upon career opportunities. In general those with this orientation believed that career progression resulted from self-created opportunities or job offers as a result of "being in the right place at the right time". Those who saw restricted opportunities within their current organization envisaged career progression elsewhere as including an interim stage involving a possible portfolio of different roles e.g. Non Executive Director, consultant, interim manager, etc. in order to achieve what they would consider as the next higher step in their career.

In summary, the majority of the managers primarily defined career progression in terms of individually significant subjective variables. In respect of objective career progression it was clear that rather than viewing this in terms of advancement up a linear career path, the majority of participants saw it as encompassing downwards or sideways career moves *'with peaks and valleys,*

*left turns, moves from one line of work to another'* (Hall and Mirvis, 1995: 272). Many also saw it in terms of reduction of, or increased flexibility in working hours with the implications for career progression that may accompany this. These views were evidence of the development of a protean career orientation amongst older managers in terms of their ability and desire to create individually unique careers representing a more flexible, mobile career course.

As can be seen, to some extent the categories overlapped; some were more predominant than others. They are not prescriptive descriptors nor are they intended to be. As Flynn (2010) concluded, "one of the main dangers of typologies is that they may stereotype the people on which they seek to cast light" (p. 319) and in order to avoid this it must be recognised that this typology, whilst a useful indicator of different career progression orientations, cannot adequately describe the rich complexity of career drivers, influences and attitudes that underpin them. These case studies demonstrate that the interaction of factors underlying each orientation is complex and unique at an individual level and relates to past, current and anticipated future career and personal experiences. These intricate interactions, in combination with the temporal aspect of careers, are both key findings in relation to current career models. However, two further elements were also found to be important in relation to motivation for career progression: age-related changes and gender-related differences and these will be considered next.

## **7.6 The motivational drivers of older male and female managers**

The findings of this study supported the by now long-accepted view that work and career are just as important for women as for men (Still and Timms, 1998). Numerous studies have shown that traditional linear career development models were never an adequate means of describing women's careers (e.g. Reitmann and Schmeer, 2003) and that, for example, women's needs and drivers with respect to career success are quite dissimilar to men's (Sturges, 1999). This being the case, it would seem reasonable to expect that motivation

for career progression in older male and female managers would also vary. Overall, few indicators emerged from this study of ways in which the motivational drivers of career progression in male and female managers aged 50 and over were significantly different. Where they did differ however, was that the female managers tended to have different aspirations in relation to the work they sought to undertake in late career and up to the endpoint of their career. From the way that women spoke about their future hopes and plans it was clear that many desired some type of career renewal. Power (2009) saw career renewal as meaning the process by which an individual takes some action to improve their career position “having perceived a decrease from previous levels in their feelings of positive work involvement and/or subjective career success” (p.115). However, for the women in this study career renewal was less concerned with improving their career position as achieving a better alignment between the form and nature of their career and their own personal ambitions. One of their key drivers for career progression was self-fulfilment and a desire to both do something more meaningful and/or creative and a wish for an improved balance between career needs and the demands of other areas of life such as family, personal interests, and societal involvement.

The aim of this study was not to examine in any depth the advancement opportunities for women compared to men, although within this sample it appeared that there were two main reasons that women gave for what they saw as restricted opportunities for career progression. The first was shared by men and related to ageism; although in fact women appeared to be somewhat more optimistic about their chances than men. The second aspect was that for reasons largely related to their family responsibilities women had tended to develop careers in more functional (back room) roles such as law, HR, or IT which, while more stable, provided them with fewer opportunities for development. Following Mainiero and Sullivan’s (2005) findings the majority of women in this sample showed evidence of creating a career to suit their lives within the boundaries of the employment contexts in which they operated, rather than moulding themselves to organizational career demands in the same way as the men had done. On the other hand, as for the men with such roles, this

specialist functionality enabled them to remain in the workplace longer compared to those with more general management roles. Although this had been an element which had led to differences in the routes and speed of progression of female managers compared to males in the past, it was now a difference more closely related to job type than to gender.

In order to clarify the ways in which motivation for career progression in older male and female managers was both similar and different, both groups within the study were asked how they felt their careers were and would have been different if they had been of the opposite gender. The outcome of this question was that both sexes indicated that from the outset it had been more difficult for women to have a career and to progress at the same rate as men in that career. This had influenced the career choices they made and the position in which they now found themselves. Both male and female managers also acknowledged that women had to work harder to achieve the same results and that they were constricted, practically and mentally, by family-related responsibilities (relating to children and/or elder care). Although these commitments for some had reduced in practical terms, the emotional aspects of these relationships still continued to be important and led to the women having divided loyalties in terms of the amount of time and energy devoted to work and their private life. That said, both male and female managers commented that they felt that to a large degree these factors had mattered more in the past and that they now saw few differences, at an objective level, between male and female careers. The relevance of this point is that for the women there was still a lingering sense of having overcome greater obstacles and given more of themselves to achieve their position. For many this translated into a desire for greater self-realisation and personal time in the future to compensate for what they felt they had given up.

Certainly, from the female managers' accounts, their past career progression had involved more choices and balances than men's (Powell and Graves, 2003). From the descriptions of the current careers of both male and female managers however, few significant differences emerged apart from the fact that,

as both sexes acknowledged, women still retained their greater caring perspective and responsibilities in relation to maintaining family life. Whilst this generally related to childcare – with concerns for even adult children and grandchildren being an ongoing focus – three of the women also had elder care responsibilities.

Three reasons may account for the perceived similarities in male and female managerial careers in those aged 50 and over. The first relates to the perception that personal and workplace influences on men's careers now, in general, exercise a greater impact on their motivation for career progression than earlier in their career. As a result it may be proposed that their careers began to assume a form that more aligned to what has generally been regarded as a female pattern of career. For example, a male manager may have decided that improved work/life balance and spending more time away from the office was now as important as organizational career progression and had reduced his ambitions accordingly. Second, as these findings showed, what mattered to male managers about their career was perceived to have changed in late career such that some areas that might previously have been thought as "female" motivators now became important for some males also. For example, both male and female managers mentioned that an important driver or influence was contributing through their work in a way that was meaningful to them, a factor which in some studies of gender differences in careers has been viewed as being a predominantly female trait (e.g. Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005). It may be that this is an important driver for some males also earlier in their career; the significance of the point for this study is that it reflects how male managers felt their motivational drivers had changed. Third, this study suggested that male careers may now also be starting to imitate female careers in respect of reflecting control over the form of those careers. For instance Cornelius and Skinner (2005) maintained that the failure of some women to achieve positions at the highest level could be seen as representing choice rather than repression and the findings of this study indicate that may have also been the case for some of the male managers.

Overall the findings in this study supported Alban-Metcalfe's (1989) view that women are as concerned as men for career advancement and do not have less career commitment and ambition than men. However, this has to be related to career stage; if - as it appears - men have less appetite for advancement in later life, women do also for much the same reasons e.g. reducing stress. But women did still want to advance in different areas and in effect some appeared to exhibit a renewed sense of career ambition in terms of aspiration for a change of career. Many more women than men were planning on renewing their careers so in this respect it appeared that women did view career progression differently than their male counterparts. On one level they evaluated their progress in terms of the male-influenced career norms and patterns that they saw around them but, on another more significant level, they had been and were motivated by what was important to them personally. This aligns with Tremblay and Roger (1993) who saw women's careers as a *"process of personal development which involves interesting and challenging work and balances with the rest of their life"* (p.240). Not only may this be a result of innate gender-related ways of working but may reflect Mainiero and Sullivan's (2005), notion of *authenticity* – the drive to be true to oneself in what one does and the way one does it.

Partly because of the nature of the work they had pursued and the flatter careers they had experienced, the female managers in general had bypassed, to a certain extent, the creation of a strong career identity in earlier life (in comparison to those that men had formed) and so may have been looking to realise their personal identity in later life. Several of the women spoke about this in a very detailed way; if some males had similar aspirations they did not appear to be exerting such a strong motivational influence as they did in the women. Coupled with this drive to renew their career and achieve greater self-realisation, many of the women wanted to reduce their working hours and step off the treadmill that they saw as representing their career. They openly admitted that, like Mainiero and Sullivan's (2005) research subjects, they were motivated to get away from "the exhaustion that comes from trying to do it all" (p. 111). That said, women did have relational lives. Even when their practical

responsibilities were receding, they still tended to see themselves at the heart of a network of family, friends and colleague relationships, whereas the men showed greater evidence of compartmentalising different aspects of their lives.

Summarising the findings of this study in relation to the question of how motivation for career progression might differ between older male and female managers, three main conclusions can be drawn. First, in general, motivation for career progression appears increasingly similar in men and women over 50 in relation to their current career situation. Second, and related to the first point, the career drivers of older male managers may become more like those of females in reflecting concern for work/life balance and family needs. Both of these points are based on perceptions of managers themselves in relation to the development of their career over time. Third, older female managers may exhibit greater motivation for career progression than their male counterparts in later life. This is expressed in terms of an enhanced desire for career renewal and a future career which more closely aligns to their sense of personal identity. These findings contribute rich detail to extant knowledge concerning the careers of older women through their emphasis on their careers of those aged 50 and older, their focus on managers, and the comparative approach taken in studying the careers of both older male and female managers.

Thus far this chapter has considered various integral aspects of motivation for career progression. However, in order to understand how all of these are enacted in terms of career decisions and behaviours it is necessary to return to motivational theory and to explore how these findings relate to the existing paradigms of career motivation and expectancy theory.

## **7.7 Extending career motivation theory**

Career motivation theory is a multi-dimensional construct which differs from work motivation in amalgamating a wide variety of career-related behaviours associated with an individual's personality, needs and interests (London, 1983). As indicated in chapter 2 the relationship between London's career motivation theory and motivation for career progression in older managers has not been



fully investigated and remains unclear. Relating the findings of this study to career motivation involves examining the older manager's motivational drivers in terms of *career identity* – the extent to which they defined themselves by their work; *career insight* - how realistic they were about themselves and their careers and how accurately they related these perceptions to their career goals; and *career resilience* – the extent to which they resisted career barriers, obstacles or disruptions to their work.

From the perspective of career identity, this study has made several interesting contributions to London's theory. First, it demonstrated that there were no particular age-related changes in identity from being a younger manager to being an older manager; in fact there was little indication from the participants in this study of what the characteristics of ageing managers, as opposed to younger managers, might be. Second, it did provide evidence that career identity (who am I?) in general changes from individuals having an unformed career identity early in the career to a fully formed later life career identity, i.e. they changed from a state of not knowing to being clear about who they were in both career and whole life terms. Although this identity may have emerged in mid-career, by late career it had assumed a level of importance such that for many of the managers their career identity was closely linked to their motivation for career progression. The managers themselves commented that in these instances, this was something that they felt was related to length of tenure, experience and wisdom, i.e. to late career stage rather than chronological age. Understanding the significance of this means acknowledging that the career paths of many of the managers had not been straightforward and many had experienced career and role changes and setbacks that meant that their true career identities had not emerged until comparatively late in their career. The third contribution to the existing body of knowledge in this area was that the boundaries between the older managers' career identity and their personal identity appeared to break down compared to earlier in the career such that female managers now wanted their career to more closely reflect "who they felt they truly were", and male managers appeared to become more like female

managers in terms of wanting to achieve a balance between all aspects of their life across work/non-work boundaries.

A further significant finding of this study was the way in which the older managers identified certain influences, personal and organizational, that affected what was important to them about their career. This appeared to be closely related to London's construct of career insight which concerns how realistic people are about themselves and their career and how they relate these perceptions to their career and goals. This could be linked to three main areas of the managers' careers: the individual's sense of their own identity, their awareness of the influences that exerted pressure on their career decisions, and their beliefs about future career options. Career insight and the application of realism achieved through feedback appeared to be important in terms of providing managers with continuing flexibility to adapt to career needs and developments. Career insight thus provided the impetus for career motivation. Such insight could also be seen as the mechanism by which individuals utilised age-related experience, supporting the view of Hall and Mirvis (1995) who, in their study of the "career contract" (defined as mutual expectations between employers and their workers), maintained that the keys to mid-career success were identity and adaptability in terms of continuing to self-reflect and learn and to make behavioural changes (p.277). In this study, participants exhibited significant evidence of these attitudes and behaviours, demonstrating considerable insight about themselves, their careers and their future career prospects based on their own previous career experiences and those they had witnessed. For example, managers could clearly identify various career decisions they had or hadn't made that now had repercussions for their current career or future advancement.

Through statements about themselves managers showed how they understood clearly both their role and usefulness within the organization and the significance of the way in which they operated within the employment environment. Insight was particularly prevalent in individuals' accounts of their own career behaviours, the path they had taken, and their lack of willingness or

ability to do certain things which may have affected or be affecting their career advancement. Through this they had very clear views of their position and prospects within the organization and the external employment market, confirming London's view (1983) that career insight may govern the intensity of effort that people will put into career goal achievement (p.627). Later studies by London (1990, 1993) into the relationship between career motivation and career development concluded that, although insight relating to goal achievement does increase with age, there was no automatic relationship - positive or negative - with career development. These findings challenge that conclusion by indicating the strong links that exist between individuals' insights into their own career drivers and influences and their orientation towards one of a range of future career outcomes. As has been demonstrated, older managers applied insight to regulate the extent to which they could balance their career identity and career drivers with what they felt were important personal and workplace influences to aim for and achieve individually acceptable career development goals.

Within these interviews, whether or not they spoke about themselves using the term "resilient", the managers saw themselves as adaptable, flexible and able to accommodate the needs of the organization in terms of the skills and experience they could offer in meeting challenges. The extent to which the managers were able to build on experience in making future choices in line with their career identity and to resist or overcome barriers, obstacles or disruptions to their work relates to London's (1983) construct of career resilience. London maintained that those who are high in career resilience are likely to "take risks, be independent of others, create their own structure, and thrive on situations in which outcomes are contingent on their behaviour" (1983:621). He maintained that self-efficacy, independence and risk-taking were all key variables and certainly there was considerable evidence from the managers in this study of the existence and application of self-efficacy, i.e. confidence in one's ability to perform a task (Maurer 2001) in terms of the way that managers had taken control of their own career decisions. The fact that the majority of managers in this study actively wanted to continue to work, regardless of the financial need

to do so, was evidence in itself of emotional resilience and accentuated the high degree of self-efficacy that they demonstrated in respect of what they saw as their future career choices. In terms of risk taking, the issues seemed to revolve around each individual manager's realisation of their own career identity and the insight they exhibited into what it would mean to them to lose valued aspects of their career.

Many of the managers clearly indicated that they understood the risks surrounding their position and also that they felt they had the resilience to cope with dealing with eventualities. Career resilience, then, seemed to be a key factor in having enabled these managers to remain on their career paths and remain in employment. But although evidence showed that the managers were resilient, a larger issue was the extent to which they *wanted* to overcome perceived obstacles and barriers in order to achieve further progression in their career. Many indicated that they were not willing to do what would be required to move up to the next step on the organizational ladder. This reinforced the view that in building on experience to make future choices those choices in general are made to maximise pleasure and minimize pain (Pinder, 1992:90).

In summary, the findings of this study demonstrated that while London's career motivation theory can provide a framework for understanding attitudes and drivers towards current short to medium-term career progression, it does not account for the ways in which people's motivation is underpinned in later life by long-term future career and life goals. These findings demonstrate that at an individual level, drivers and influences reflect changes which have taken place as a result of time passing, career experiences and life stage. Based on an amalgamation of their identity with all their career drivers, career influences, and attitudes towards career opportunities the individual applies insight to take a view of desired and potentially achievable current and future career options. Whereas career resilience will dictate the individual's degree of confidence relating to action and possibly success in respect of career opportunities, it is the drivers, influences and attitudes which will determine the direction of the

actions they are likely to take and it is this that ultimately underpins motivation for career progression.

In order to understand more fully why this occurs the next section will briefly consider the findings in terms of expectancy theory (Vroom, 1965) to which London's constructs of career insight and career resilience are both closely linked.

## **7.8 The role of expectancy theory**

As indicated in chapter 2, expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) is concerned with how an individual's beliefs about outcomes, the desirability of those outcomes, and the relative effort to be expended in achieving them affects their motivation in terms of the attractiveness of a task and the energy which they are prepared to invest in achieving it. The relevance of the theory for this study however is not in understanding the process but using it to appreciate how certain career progression goals and outcomes are more attractive than others to older managers.

Within the older managers in this study, expectancy theory appeared to operate in three different ways. First, experience of what they valued about their life overall in combination with their knowledge about the effects of an unsatisfying work/life balance was leading them to shift their focus away from objective career progression at any cost, to maintaining their career as one part of their overall lifestyle. Second, based on their own experiences and observations of the career experiences of others, many of the older managers now believed that further objective career progression was unlikely within their current organizational environment either because of their age or because they were too useful to the organization where they were. This caused them to attribute greater desirability and satisfaction to other goals. Third, the majority of the managers, based on their own feelings of self-efficacy in having created successful careers to date, believed that they would be able to create further career progression for themselves in terms of pursuing a future career

orientation that would meet their own motivational drivers linked to their own conception of career progression.

Individuals' own insight into how often and in what ways they had achieved, or failed to achieve their career goals could partly account for the reduced role of career drivers and the increased role of career influences in the motivation for career progression of the older managers in this study. If career insight improved individuals' knowledge about what to do or not to do to in the future then it might explain why objective career progression for its own sake appeared to be less important for these older managers and why they had adopted a greater focus on intrinsic aspects of their work and improved work/life balance. This supports Ettington's (1998) view of the way in which expectancy theory acted in relation to the need for plateaued employees to replace promotion as a valued work outcome with other valued motivational drivers. A key finding from Ettington's study was that plateaued managers (those with a low likelihood of future objective promotion) were more successful in terms of job satisfaction and effective job performance when they did not view themselves as plateaued but found sufficient challenge in their role to replace objective career progression. Therefore, in terms of expectancy theory, individual perceptions of subjective career progression such as those experienced by the managers in this study could replace objective rewards as valued outcomes. This also supports Warr's (2002) suggestion that experience and learning modify feelings as well as knowledge (p.18) in that experience had led to apparent changes in attitude towards the importance of aspects of career progression, with variables such as interest becoming more important and those such as public recognition becoming less so.

The greater protean career orientation which, as discussed above, had been adopted by the managers in this study in response to uncertain career environments also demonstrates the way in which expectancy theory operates. Through career insight the managers appeared to have evaluated what it was about them and their relationship with the career environment that enabled them to remain employed, and consequently modified their expectations for the

future in line with these views. For example, as the managers saw themselves as having good transferable skills which they had been able to utilise in making previous career transitions, they believed that they would be able to use these skills similarly to make transitions into future and different career options – whether pre- or post-retirement. Some of the managers saw these later moves as a form of career continuation in terms of continuing the process of transferring and applying their skills and experience in a range of roles,

This study adds to existing knowledge about the application of expectancy theory by accentuating the complexity of the interaction of variables that may equate to “desirable outcomes” for older individuals and the way factors that may influence beliefs about those outcomes may influence the amount of effort to be exerted in their achievement. The majority of existing studies incorporating expectancy theory (including Ettington’s) have been quantitative, focusing on the measurement of particular, objectively-defined variables and outcomes in the workplace. Even though Ettington’s study acknowledged that it was possible to replace objective promotion with other subjectively significant rewards, this did not go far enough in exploring how expectancy theory may now operate within the careers of those in contemporary organizational environments. This study also extends the parameters of the theory by demonstrating that desirable goals may now be overlaid with those from outside the organizational environment. Greater clarity about this process in contemporary career environments may assist organizations and HR professionals to better motivate their older employees within organizational contexts, a subject which will be considered next.

## **7.9 The significance of context**

Careers are not developed within a vacuum and this study has confirmed that a wide variety of social, economic and employment variables exert an influence on the way they are conceptualised and developed at an individual level. In reviewing the significance of context in a study of women’s career development O’Neil and Bilimoria (2005) differentiated between societal, organizational and

relational contexts, a helpful approach for considering the contextual factors within this study. As factors concerning the influence of personal and organizational relationships have been dealt with elsewhere, societal and organizational context will be considered in turn. In terms of the impact of society on life and careers, demographic, economic and social change is becoming increasingly dramatic. The global economic downturn has meant many older people having to work longer while improved longevity has also led people to want to work longer for reasons such as social interaction, meaningful activity, and social value (Flynn, 2010; Maestas, 2010). The old pattern of a set, standard, shared retirement age has passed and the movement towards ever-earlier retirement of the 1980s and 1990s is disappearing. Workers' lives are becoming ever more diverse, influenced by such factors as later life career changes, the growth of fixed contract and interim working, marriage breakdown leading to second families, care responsibilities, and divorced women having to finance their own financial futures (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). Economic difficulties mean that many older employees are now part of what is known as "the sandwich generation" – supporting both children (and possibly grandchildren) and their own parents. All of the above factors could be seen as influencing the feasibility of certain career options for the older managers in this study and affecting their motivation for future career progression.

Organizational context relates to the effect of sector specific norms, organizational policies and practices and the effect of organizational culture on change. The effect of organizational context on the managers in this study can be considered from three perspectives: first, different managerial roles which had led to diverse career paths and structures; second, the implications of the specific organizational cultures and norms of the two organizations in this study; and third, the impact of specific organizational policies and practices on motivation for career progression. In relation to the first perspective, different managerial roles (see chapter 4) in terms of the difference between front and back office roles, or professional or more general managerial roles, appeared to lead to markedly different career paths and attitudes for the managers across both organizations. Each type of role had associated positive and negative



pressures, for example front office/general management roles tended to involve larger numbers of people to manage and supervise, wider responsibilities and more opportunities for objective advancement across the career whereas professional or back office roles usually involved fewer moves, more stability, greater task repetition and generally greater autonomy. As a result of a combination of organizational opportunities and individual managers' choices, the majority of the female managers in this study had back office or professional roles, which they viewed as having enabled them to attain a comparative degree of job security, whereas the majority, although by no means all, of the males had less secure, general management roles.

The second perspective, the implications of the specific organizational cultures and norms of the two organizations, related to the issue of "what does a career look like around here?" An important point to make in relation to this study is that the financial services industry by its nature is inherently volatile in career terms (Tempest, et al, 2004), an aspect which was exacerbated by the 2007-8 financial crisis. Although participants from both organizations alluded to organizational career structures and common career paths they also described how these had changed and were regularly impacted by the ongoing peaks and troughs experienced by their industry resulting in frequent mergers, acquisitions and restructuring. What this meant is that a number of the managers whose careers had developed within the financial services industry had experienced redundancy, some more than once. Others, particularly in the second more traditional organization saw that career paths and opportunities that were once available had been overtaken by changing structures and practices. Several of the managers described how they had survived successive rounds of redundancies and the extent to which they had considered whether it would be easier "to jump before I am pushed". Nevertheless, all were still employed. This point begs the question of whether or not these managers therefore all inherently possessed greater qualities of career resilience which enabled them to be able to continue their careers compared to others, and whether these qualities were objective or subjective. How much did they demonstrate to employers that they had "the right stuff" in terms of desirable managerial

qualities? How much did they have inner strength and a sufficiently flexible and resilient attitude? Even those who had experienced chequered career paths with frequent moves, some very recently, still seemed to believe they had the right qualities to ensure they would overcome career obstacles and remain employed. It may be suggested that in part this could relate to the particular characteristics of those who chose employment in the financial services sector and who have also chosen to continue their career in this environment despite its volatility, a factor which may be related to other subjective aspects of such careers such as prestige or excitement.

Within the investment bank (FS1) in particular, several managers and the HR representative commented that there were very few people over 50 working there. This was ascribed largely to the pressurised nature of the work leading to early burnout and also the ability of front office staff to earn large amounts of money at a comparatively early age, leading them to leave and work elsewhere, often making a career change. What this meant was that the managers in this organization had a much greater awareness of being “over 50” than those in the second organization. This culture of early withdrawal and career renewal might be seen also as influencing the career orientations of the older managers in this study. Nevertheless, although the culture at the second organization was much more traditional with many people working up to a ‘normal’ retirement age of 60 or 65, the managers there seemed to have similar aspirations concerning their career progression as those at the investment bank.

At a very basic level the geographical differences between the organizations also exerted an influence, with some of the managers at FS1 either valuing or wanting to escape the pressures of commuting to the City, whereas those who worked at FS2 which was located in the home counties, either valued the comparative peace or missed the ‘buzz’ of a metropolitan environment. The gendered nature of careers was also significant, with the investment bank in particular being seen as traditionally a very male-dominated environment with few roles for senior women. In the second organization this was less of a

concern but under-representation of women at very senior levels was still reported.

The third perspective, the impact of specific organizational policies and practices on motivation for career progression could only be evaluated through participants' own views. In FS1 (the investment bank) it was generally accepted that career management, talent management and career support was very much linked to younger people and that older managers were “left to get on with it”. In FS2 age appeared to matter less as a career variable although those with long tenure in functional roles reported that they felt overlooked such that there was “an emphasis on developing team members - but no one seems interested in my development”. As mentioned previously, those who were evidently considered useful to the organization in the role they were in – whether in general management or a functional role – were largely overlooked for any other opportunities. In both organizations training and development was not provided for older managers apart from training relating to IT, health and safety, etc. Although many of the older managers felt that training was irrelevant or inappropriate, some felt that they would value the opportunity to undertake further development through, for example, an MBA or retraining. One of the most significant organizational influences for those in FS2 was that of the company pension which, for many, was a final salary pension scheme. This impacted the changes that individuals were prepared to make for fear of damaging their entitlement but, again, changes to the scheme meant that many were having to work longer than they had anticipated when joining the company.

The implication of the above factors for this study is important in terms of the extent to which these findings may be generalised to older managers within other organizational contexts and supports the view of Rousseau and Fried (2011) that “Contextual differences can be a major source of conflicting findings” (p. 2). Although, as an exploratory investigation, this study by its very nature could not produce generalisable findings, nevertheless the way in which the two different organizational contexts both exposed differences and

emphasized similarities in terms of their impact on the motivation for career progression in older managers raised many unanswered questions. A key contribution of the study is that role (e.g. manager) and organizational context (e.g. Financial services) do have a considerable impact upon notions of career progression such that a similar study conducted in other contexts would undoubtedly reflect the variety of contextual factors such as norms relating to sector, organizational type (e.g. private or public sector), and organizational size; nature of managerial role, geographic location, and organizational policies. All of these variables would be bound to influence, to a greater or lesser degree, individual conceptions of the meaning of career progression if not individuals' motivation to pursue it.

## **7.10 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the ways in which the main findings from this study relate to existing knowledge concerning aspects of motivation for career progression in older managers. It demonstrated the interrelationship of career identity, drivers, influences and attitudes and the way in which the findings relating to the role of career orientations add a temporal element to existing theory and reveal a typology of different categories of motivation for career progression in later life. It examined the meaning of career progression and related this to existing notions of organizational and personal career progression demonstrating that for the majority of older managers this had now moved away from objective, organizationally defined models. It explained how the findings extend the understanding of London's career motivation theory and add complexity to the existing body of knowledge concerning the role of expectancy theory in goal setting and attainment. The chapter concluded with an examination of the significance of context and its implications for the overall findings of this study. The next and final chapter in this thesis will consider the conclusions to be derived from this study, its contribution and limitations, and suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

Following the detailed discussion of the research findings and their implications for existing theory in the previous chapter, this chapter summarizes the conclusions derived from this study in relation to the original aims of the research and the gaps in knowledge concerning later life motivation for career progression as identified in chapter 2. It also considers how the findings of this study contribute to theory and may also contribute to HR and organizational practice. The limitations of the study are also discussed here with suggestions for future research.

### 8.1 The aims of the research

The over-arching aim of this research as stated at the beginning of this thesis was to add to knowledge about what motivates career progression in older managers and what career progression means for them in subjective terms. This study also sought to explore how, if at all, the motivational drivers of career progression in older managers were perceived to have changed over the career span and whether and in what ways the motivational drivers of older male and female managers differed. These aims were addressed through the following question and its two related sub-questions:

*What are the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50?*

- *In what ways are these motivational factors perceived as different from earlier in the career?*
- *Do the motivational drivers of female managers aged over 50 differ from those of male managers aged over 50?*

By investigating these questions this study also aimed to generate greater understanding of what motivates older managers in contemporary career environments, thereby providing improved insight into the practical needs of older managers in today's career contexts.

## **8.2 Overview of the study**

The fieldwork undertaken for this study comprised semi-structured interviews with 27 male and 13 female managers aged 50 and over from two large financial services organizations. A constructivist methodology was adopted using as a reference point a definition of career as “an individual’s work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organizations that form a unique pattern over the individual’s lifespan” (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009:1543). Career progression was taken as meaning within an individual’s career, “a gradual movement or development towards a destination or a more advanced state” (Compact Oxford English Dictionary, 2008). That said, no definitions of career or career progression, these or any other, were supplied to the research participants. The study adopted a phenomenological inductive approach to elicit an understanding of the meaning that each individual participant gave to these terms. Interviews involved the use of timelines (Mason, 2002) enabling participants to tell their own stories in their own way in terms of those things that were important to them, albeit within an imposed structure. Interviews were recorded and transcripts were analysed using template analysis and NVivo software. The findings were then considered in relation to London’s (1983) multi-dimensional career motivation framework which applies motivation theory to understanding career plans, behaviours and decisions, and Vroom’s (1964) Expectancy theory which explains how, in reacting to certain stimuli (in this case career-related opportunities) previous experience leads to the presence or absence of certain responsive behaviours.

## **8.3 Findings and conclusions**

The findings showed that the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50 comprise individually significant patterns of career drivers, personal and workplace-related influences, and attitudes towards career opportunities. These patterns, in the main, relate more to subjectively significant aspects of career and life rather than to objective variables such as pay and promotion. Career progression is subjectively assessed in terms of

past, present and future career progression leading to different orientations in respect of the nature and direction of the future career and exerting an influence on individuals' current attitudes and career decisions. In respect of how motivational drivers change from earlier in the career, individuals generally did perceive that their motivational drivers for career progression had changed over time. Changes occurred at both an extrinsic and intrinsic level and were felt to be linked less to age-related factors than to influences connected with life stage and career stage. The motivational drivers of female and male managers aged over 50 did differ in two important ways. First, the motivation of the older female managers continued to be heavily influenced by external factors relating to family needs; second, the majority of female managers wanted to either reduce the amount of time they worked in order to achieve improved work/life balance and/or to switch occupation in order to achieve greater self-realisation through their occupation. This was in contrast to men who, in general, continued to see their work and home lives as separate entities and who wanted to improve work/life balance for reasons of health and/or to pursue other interests.

Key motivational drivers for career progression in older managers were enjoyment, interest, challenge, contribution, recognition, and self-realisation (positive) and avoiding stagnation, reducing stress and retaining what had already been achieved (negative). Career influences were personal or work-related; personal influences included critical incidents; family and partner; quality of life; tiredness, stress or health; stability or security; lifestyle and interests; finances; and awareness of ageing. Workplace influences included organizational structure and change, relationships with colleagues and management, organizational attitudes and culture, and working conditions and benefits. This combination of drivers and influences was also affected by managers' attitudes towards career progression which ranged from optimistic, satisfied, and accepting, to disappointed and anxious. Managers' attitudes towards career opportunities were categorised in general as relating to luck, self-creation or job offers.

How managers viewed the meaning of career progression at an individual level related to both organizational factors – continuing advancement, maintaining the status quo, lateral movement, flexible working, and status; and personal factors - following interests or developing new skills, retaining power and autonomy, using knowledge and experience, continuing to learn and develop, and retaining enthusiasm and commitment. From these different meanings it was possible to devise a typology of career progression orientations representing aspirations towards four broad types of career progression. This typology, although not made up of mutually exclusive categories, helps explain how motivation for career progression is driven by what individual managers desire as their next stage of working life in terms of either maintaining the status quo (stick), changing career direction (switch), reducing their commitment (slow down) or continuing to pursue objective career advancement (strive). This contributes a temporal element to motivation for career progression by demonstrating that it is enacted within a framework of past, current and future ideas about what constitutes a career.

The findings extended London's (1993) multi-dimensional career motivation theory by introducing a temporal element showing that, in practice, older managers enact their careers within a cognitive framework of individually constructed meanings of past career progression, current progression, anticipated future career progression and what they envisage will be the ultimate end point of career progression. This finding challenges existing life stage theories (e.g. Super, 1957, Levinson et al., 1978) by demonstrating that each individual's motivation is linked less to their career or life stage in terms of age or objective achievement, and more to personal conceptualisations founded on achievement of individually meaningful past, present and future career and life goals. The study also extended the application of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory by showing that individuals' beliefs about outcomes within their existing career context, the traditional focus of expectancy theory, was superseded by more significant, longer-term beliefs about future outcomes relating to their own abilities to extend their own careers in the way they wanted.



Further detail about the contribution to knowledge made by this study and its practical contribution is discussed below.

## **8.4 Contribution to knowledge**

Prior to this study little was known about older managers' motivation for career progression and their own conceptions of what "career progression" meant to them in contemporary career contexts. Other studies had examined related concepts such as career success (e.g. Sturges, 1999) or examined work motivation in blue collar or non-professional older workers (e.g. Pollitt, 2009; Stoney and Roberts, 2003). This study focused specifically on the motivational drivers of career progression, and on the careers of UK managers aged 50 and over. The literature also revealed a lack of evidence surrounding the extent to which, if at all, motivation for career progression changes over the life course, and whether there are gender-related differences in motivation for career progression in older male and female managers. Addressing these issues the findings of this study contribute to knowledge in a number of different areas: first, career theory and subjective career mobility; second, career motivation; and third, gender studies.

### **8.4.1 Career theory and subjective career mobility**

The study revealed that the motivational drivers for career progression in managers aged over 50 are complex and comprise individually significant patterns of career drivers combined with personal and workplace-related influences and attitudes. Objective drivers for career progression such as pay and promotion were found in general to have been replaced by subjective drivers such as doing interesting, challenging, meaningful work. The most significant influences on decisions relating to these drivers were family, and outside interests, and workplace changes, relationships and culture. The key contribution in relation to these findings is that subjective drivers were not regarded by the managers as any less important to them as objective drivers previously had been. In general, they were not regarded as relating to "second best" options which operated only where further objective career progression

was no longer available. The findings also added new weight to earlier studies which suggested that retirement no longer marks the end of working life (Flynn, 2010; Maestas, 2010) by showing that it also no longer necessarily means the end of career progression. Rather it was perceived by the managers as being linked to receipt of a pension and leaving the career employer and, thereafter, by different orientations towards continuing work post-retirement. These findings make a significant contribution to understanding the meaning of career progression for older individuals, the complexity of its enactment and how and when career progression is viewed as ending. They addressed a need identified by Feldman (2007) for future research to investigate how much individuals are willing and able to overcome career embeddedness, i.e. the combination of willingness to change careers and the ability to change careers, by revealing that whereas financial influences acted to embed people in their careers, individuals in later life were also highly motivated towards planning for future career progression once their financial circumstances allowed.

The study also established that, regardless of the nature of their career path or history, the majority of the managers demonstrated a protean orientation (Hall, 1976) towards managing their own career, career opportunities, and work/life balance which they may not have possessed in early career. In adopting responsibility for their own career progression managers also made choices not to progress further in objective terms. This meant that although the majority of managers had careers that were objectively and organizationally plateaued (FERENCE et al., 1977), they accepted that this was due at least in part to their own career decisions and did not consider themselves to be personally plateaued (Allen, et al., 1999; Appelbaum and Finestone, 1994) . This finding contributed to knowledge about motivational drivers through the extent to which it demonstrated that although many of the managers acknowledged that they could have afforded to stop work, they intimated that they would remain satisfied with this situation as long their work continued to be stimulating and interesting. This extended extant knowledge about the role of psychological mobility (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Sullivan and Arthur, 2006) by demonstrating that the majority of individuals felt able to create sufficient

challenge in their job such that they experienced subjective progression and as a result chose overall quality of life over objective advancement for its own sake. The study further contributes by demonstrating clearly that, due to their individually diverse needs and aspirations, “older workers” cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group (Patrickson and Ranzijn, 2006). Gender, lifestage, financial position, and relative age, are all significant and job and role type may also be important; for example, this study suggests that notions of career progression in managerial workers may differ significantly from those who work in other roles.

#### **8.4.2 Changes in motivation over time**

The findings of this study introduce a temporal dimension to the meaning of career progression by showing that individual managers’ conceptions of career progression are based on a combination of past and current career experiences and future career and life aspirations. From this a new motivational framework emerged linked to future career progression which can be structured in terms of four different orientational categories: strive, stick, slow down, and switch. This typology of future career options reinforces the notion that individuals may be motivated by visualising their career as continuing in a different role and form after retirement (Maestas, 2010; Gobeski and Beehr, 2009). The study shows how motivation for career progression in general does change over time on an individual basis from a focus on employer-provided upward progression and accumulation of assets and reputation in early and mid-career, to a situation where individually significant subjective aspects of the career assume the greatest importance. It demonstrates that, with age, individual differences increase (Greller and Simpson, 1999); however changes are not related to chronological age *per se* but rather to the effects of lifestage, experience and tenure and also changing feelings about career and life (Warr, 2001). The findings also support the suggestion of Sterns and Miklos (1995) that with age, factors such as health, outside interests, and family and other responsibilities may exert greater and more diverse influences on individual motivation than in earlier life. In consequence, survival needs become less urgent and job

satisfaction more dependent on intrinsic work variables leading older individuals to adopt a different perspective on work than younger people. The particular contribution of this study in relation to this aspect is the insight it provides into how such variables exert widely differing influences across a tightly defined (by age and organizational role) group of people within two quite similar organizational environments. In doing so it provides weight to the argument that subjective variables do become both more important (Sturges, 1999) and more individually diverse (Sterns and Miklos, 1995) in later life.

Most existing research has failed to acknowledge sufficiently that career progression in older individuals generally relates to maintaining a balance between physical motivators such as pay and promotion and psychological drivers and desires such as the need for influence and recognition *over a period of time*. This study therefore examined the relative importance of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators for individual older managers and how these may have changed on an individual basis over their lifespan. It also examined the effect of previous career experiences, current career perceptions and future career aspirations, including type of career experienced (e.g. relatively stable or including many changes) in order to examine the influence of contemporary career contexts and the relative influences of physical and psychological mobility (Sullivan and Arthur, 2009).

The findings demonstrated that individuals generally did perceive that their motivational drivers for career progression had changed over time. These changes occurred at both an extrinsic and intrinsic level (Locke and Latham, 2004; Maslow, 1954) and were felt to relate less to age than to lifestage. In extrinsic terms motivation had changed, in general, from an earlier drive for financial accumulation, status, and the ability to support a home and family to one of maintenance of lifestyle and financial security. At an intrinsic level, managers' motivation had altered from drivers relating to establishing themselves in a career and building a reputation, to retaining position and maintaining or extending influence. In later life, financial and status issues had largely moved to becoming influencing factors rather than motivational drivers,

although the desire to hold on to what had already been achieved was a key driver. A contribution in relation to this area is that these changes took place even in those managers who due to re-marriage now found themselves facing circumstances that are normally associated with earlier career stages e.g. a large mortgage and/or financial support for young children. In these cases career motivation did not revert to being focused on the objective needs associated with these factors, such as an overriding drive to earn greater amounts of money. With few exceptions, older managers were no longer driven by this, or by concerns relating to proving themselves, but by interest in the work, a desire to continue to apply their experience, and a wish to continue to develop themselves and others.

An analysis of career experiences revealed that these changes also reflected the influences exerted by the changing nature of careers (Sullivan, 1999), in particular the individualization of careers which has resulted from the breakdown of traditional career contexts (Sturges, 2004). The findings showed that, in general, regardless of the nature of their past and current career context in terms of a traditional (Levinson et al., 1978; Super, 1957) or boundaryless framework (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996), the majority of the managers could be said to exhibit a protean career orientation (Hall, 1976), i.e. psychological mobility as reflected in an ability to self-manage their own career and control its progress and direction. This finding represented a new contribution to career theory and extended the work of Sturges (2004) and Sullivan and Arthur (2006) in terms of demonstrating the way in which individual career competences develop in older managers leading them to adopt greater responsibility for managing the relationship between work and the non-work aspects of their lives. The key contribution is that this occurred regardless of the extent to which their career context could be said to be a traditional or boundaryless environment. It also demonstrated the extent to which, despite past or current traditional career influences, managers had moved away from these to develop independent motivational drivers based on their own needs and aspirations.

### 8.4.3 Gender-related differences

The findings revealed that although in many ways the career motivation of female managers aged over 50 appeared similar to that of male managers it differed in respect of female managers' aspirations for self-realisation, improved work/life balance and ultimate control in their continuing career progression. This both supported and extended O'Neil and Bilimoria's (2005) concept of reinventive contribution. Overall the findings also contribute to the under-researched areas of older women's careers and older female managerial careers (Still and Timms, 1998; Hansson et al., 1997). As would be expected due to the gaps in knowledge about all managers outlined above, little was known about potential differences in motivation for career progression in older male and female managers. The findings from the interviews of both the female and male participants indicated that they thought that the position of male and female managers had more or less equalized in later life such that there were few objective differences in the position of male and female managers in respect of opportunities for current and/or short to medium-term career progression. However the findings revealed that motivation for career progression did differ by gender in two significant ways. First, in older female managers it was heavily influenced still by external factors relating to family needs - which in some may have switched from child care to elder care, or just to a sense of continuing responsibility for adult children. This extended the findings of Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) that women's careers are essentially relational, with both families and careers being equally significant, by showing that despite women's decreasing practical responsibilities this extends into late career. Second, and the most significant difference, was the influence of longer-term career progression aspirations which saw the majority of female managers wanting to either slow down by reducing the amount of time they worked in order to achieve improved work/life balance and/or to switch occupation; a finding which extended Power's (2009) concept of career renewal to women for whom retirement and ceasing work entirely was an increasingly available option. What this showed was that for many women late career may be an

important time for making career changes to fulfil long-standing career ambitions which for various reasons have not so far been achieved.

The motivational drivers in this area were very much around self-realisation and discovering or extending a sense of personal identity that had been obscured or suppressed throughout their career to date. Tremblay and Roger (1993) proposed that women's careers are a "process of personal development which involves interesting and challenging work and balances with the rest of their life" (p.240). Reflecting this in late career the female managers in general wanted, to quote from their interviews, more "me" time and to escape the rigours of juggling work, family and personal needs that had characterised their lives to date, in order to "find themselves". This was in contrast to most of the male managers who, in general, felt that they had been able already to fully realise their identity and personal ambition throughout their career and focus relatively single-mindedly on their career development. This study also demonstrated that the female managers, from their own accounts of their career decisions, considered that their failure to achieve greater objective progression throughout their careers had been a matter of their own choice rather than repression (Cornelius and Skinner, 2005) and that, as they entered their final working years, they wanted to continue to exercise this choice over the nature and form of their future work involvement. Although the question of agency in female careers was not the focus of this study this nevertheless provides weight to the argument that women's careers may in part reflect their own wishes and desires rather than being a product of societal restrictions (O'Neil et al., 2008).

A fourth body of knowledge to which this study contributes is motivational theory, specifically Career Motivation and Expectancy theory, which will be briefly reviewed before considering the contribution of this study to practice.

#### **8.4.4 Motivational theory**

As explained above, the theoretical reference point for this study was London's multi-dimensional career motivation paradigm which applies motivation theory to understanding career plans, behaviours and decisions (London, 1993: 55).

Examining participants' individual career stories it was possible to identify and relate their career decisions and behaviours to this framework at a fundamental level. However, London's model, for the purposes of this research, appeared to lack the means of providing an explanation for changes in motivational career drivers over time, the role of internal and external influences on career drivers and the implications of the extent to which individuals saw that they were able to exert influence and control over career opportunities. From individual accounts of career aspirations it was possible to create a typology of career progression orientations which acted in a way that motivated and shaped individual career progression pathways. These related to both the nature and form of work which individuals sought to pursue in future, leading them to an orientation towards categories which were labelled, *strive (seek further career advancement)*, *stick (maintain the status quo)*, *slow down (reduce hours or role responsibilities)* or *switch (change job or career)*. These orientations embodied "progression" for the managers themselves and were the next significant career change that many of them were working towards.

This is one of the most significant findings in this study in that it introduces a temporal element into career theory. Whilst London's career motivation framework provides a means of understanding attitudes towards and drivers for current and short to medium-term career progression, it does not account for the ways in which people's motivation is underpinned in later life by future long-term life goals. These goals appear in older managers to take the place of aspirations for position, status and financial reward which were their motivational drivers earlier in the career. Thus in terms of how motivational drivers relate to individually defined concepts of what career progression means, this study reveals that in practice, older managers enact their careers within a cognitive framework of individually constructed meanings of past career progression, current progression, anticipated future career progression and what they envisage will be the ultimate end point of career progression. This finding challenges existing life stage theories by demonstrating that each individual's motivation is linked less to their career or life stage in terms of age or objective achievement, and more to personal conceptualisations founded on



achievement of individually meaningful past, present and future career and life goals. Thus, two individuals of a similar age and career status could have radically different conceptions of their identity and lifestage and completely dissimilar motivation for future career progression.

A further area in which this study contributes is that of the role of expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) in older managers' career decisions. The findings showed that subjective aspects of individuals' careers such as challenge and interesting and varied work had replaced objective rewards as desired outcomes, but rather than this acting to stifle future aspirations concerning career progression it created two scenarios. First, individuals conceptualised career progression in terms of what they found rewarding about their career on a day to day basis with these factors now becoming key motivational drivers. Thus 'career progression' was, in general, defined in terms of interest, increasing or maintaining skills and knowledge, enjoyment, and contribution. This reinforced Ettington's (1998) findings concerning the way in which, in line with expectancy theory, plateaued employees replaced promotion as a valued work outcome with other valued motivational drivers by demonstrating exactly what those drivers were within the managers in this study.

Second, on a longer-term basis, the majority of the managers adopted responsibility for their own career progression, showing evidence of a protean career orientation (Hall, 1976) such that they believed that achievement of desired career outcomes would result from their own behaviours. Thus, in terms of expectancy theory, belief about outcomes within the existing career context was superseded on a longer-term basis by more significant beliefs about future outcomes relating to the managers' own abilities to extend their own careers in the way they wanted. This clear development of career agency is significant in demonstrating the way in which alternative channels for career aspiration and energy may be found by those for whom objective channels are no longer available and/or attractive. It shows that expectancy theory may operate in different ways in that, although some of the managers perceived that they may still be able to achieve objective advancement (in line with expectancy theory),

their experiences of what such advancement would mean in terms of, for example, increased stress and pressure (also based on expectancy theory) meant that this option was no longer desirable for them.

## **8.5 Contribution to practice**

With the abolition of the Default Retirement Age in October 2011, employers throughout the UK face having to manage the careers of older workers who, in general, can now keep working for as long as they wish. The implication of this for organizations may be considerable in terms of motivating and maintaining the productivity and engagement of older people at all levels most of whom will have few career prospects in terms of objective advancement, and many of whom will be working, in the main, for financial reasons.

These findings provide a helpful insight into one subset of those older workers, older managers, who this study has shown want in the main to keep working in the latter stages of their career but may want to work in different ways. For the majority of the managers in this study 'retirement' signified the receipt of a pension and leaving their career employer but continuing to work thereafter. The implications of this for employers are wide-ranging. As these findings demonstrate, older managers may have different conceptions of the meaning of 'career progression' than employees at earlier career stages (although the extent to which they differ in light of new career contexts requires further investigation).

Furthermore, as the managers in this study have been shown to have particular characteristics which appear to be strongly linked to the nature of their role (e.g. innate drive and self-efficacy derived from their management skills), it underlines the fact that employers cannot devise policies that assume that all older workers are the same for the purposes of addressing engagement, performance and career progression. A contribution of this study is therefore to accentuate that employers need to devise a range of policies and practices to accommodate a range of different career progression orientations for older managers such as those indicated here and to investigate the career

aspirations of other types of older workers in their employ. This is essential if they are to maximise the business benefits of older individuals working longer, retain the engagement and commitment of their older workers, and ensure that they support them into part and then full retirement at a mutually beneficial time.

Recommended employer practices in response to these findings would include the introduction of flexible working and flexible retirement policies to support those who wanted to slow down; training and development opportunities and including older managers and other older workers in talent management reviews for those who still strive for further promotion, and providing support for career and role change, including career coaching or counselling for those who want to switch to a different occupation in later life, either within the organization or outside. Most of all, giving greater emphasis to job enrichment for older managers in order to support them to remain interested and engaged within their current role may be highly beneficial for those who want to stick in their current role until they make the decision to leave the organization.

The benefit to organizations of implementing these recommendations may be improved workforce planning (being clearer about the way individuals want to retire and when), improved engagement through job enrichment and flexible working, and older individuals' continuing productivity right up to the point of departure from the organization. Bearing in mind that the majority of the highly skilled and experienced subjects in this study wanted to continue to work in some capacity in retirement, employers also could usefully promote role models and case studies of successful later life career transitions while commencing the "retirement" planning process much earlier to assist individuals to focus on their future options. Employers also need to think about how to create meaningful post-retirement jobs to utilise some of their older workers' skills and experience post-retirement to the benefit of their organization and society as a whole.

This study reinforces the message that employers and older managers themselves need to openly acknowledge that changes do take place – positive and negative – as individuals reach the latter stages of their career and should

plan for these from a much earlier stage. An employment culture needs to be developed whereby it is seen as a positive step for older people to work in different ways in late career, rather than this being viewed as symptomatic of devaluation and decline. The outcome of such actions would enable employers to better recognise the positive role that older managers can play in the workforce and the innovation that they themselves can contribute in devising later life career options to meet the needs of both the organization and older managers themselves. This said, employers need to be cognisant of the extent to which employees are “doing it for themselves” in line with Sullivan and Baruch’s conclusion that:

*Increasingly, individuals are driven more by their own desires than by organizational career management practices. Thus while organizational leaders are struggling to identify positive strategies and practices to tackle the changing work environment and workforce ... individuals are adapting to a more transactional employer-employee relationship and taking more responsibility for their own career development and employability (2009:1543)*

What this means is that policies and practices must be developed in partnership with older employees rather than as independently created and imposed solutions which may be found to be inappropriate and unworkable.

## **8.6 Limitations of the study**

As Derr and Laurent (1989) observed, careers link individuals to the social structure by fusing the objective and subjective, the observable facts and the individual’s interpretation of their experiences (p. 454). Grappling with individual meanings in relation to more widely socially accepted connotations of constructs is a challenge; consolidating and making sense of fragmented accounts of people’s life histories and experiences in relation to topics under investigation is a complex and laborious process. At the end of it the researcher has no way of knowing the extent to which they have adequately addressed the

challenge of “making sense of the participant’s own sense-making activities” (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

The challenge posed here by the research aims and questions of this study was to access and explain subjective meanings of career progression and participants’ own accounts of their motivation in relation to this. It also required participants to assess how, if at all, over time their motivation for career progression may have changed. Even more challenging, both male and female older managers were asked to consider the implications of gender in relation to motivation for their own career progression, aside from any views they may have had about how these issues related to other people. This meant that throughout it all, in both undertaking the fieldwork and analysing the results, the issues of reflexivity and bias needed to be at the forefront of the researcher’s mind. Feedback from the pilot interviews had established at an early stage that many of the older managers would speak more openly because they were being interviewed by someone from their own age group. They were able to speak of “we” or simply to talk about aspects of being older, in terms of reference points which they knew would be easily understood; they would not have to justify or explain in the same way as they may have had to when speaking to someone younger (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002). That said, there was constant awareness of the danger of letting the researcher’s own preconceptions or knowledge influence interpretation of what people were actually saying. This was particularly the case when considering gender issues; often it was necessary to step back from an assumption that women’s careers were necessarily harder, or more challenging, or substantially different from those of male managers when the evidence suggested that in many ways there were few differences. This was addressed in part by asking a colleague to look at de-personalised parts of some of the interview transcripts to see whether they could ascertain if they related to a male or female interviewee. Often this was difficult to establish, which led to some useful discussions around gender preconceptions which helped inform the researcher’s further thinking and reading (e.g. papers such as Gordon, Beatty and Whelan-Berry, 2002, and Jackson and Hirsch, 1991).

Another issue related to a possible bias towards social desirability in the participants' accounts of their careers due to a desire to create a good impression with the interviewer (Fisher, 1993). This bias was a factor which was considered in analysing the findings, particularly in relation to individuals' accounts of their promotion opportunities and/or lack of them and the reasons that they believed underpinned this situation. An extension of this bias which became apparent in undertaking the initial exploratory interviews was connected with the role of the interviewer in relation to the narrative accounts which participants provided. What appeared to happen was that by asking people to recount their career/life history, particularly through the use of a timeline, individuals seemed implicitly encouraged to present their life as a story, one that sounded convincing and had a satisfactory ending (Lawler, 2002). As explained in chapter 3, the possible implications of this were explored by undertaking a researcher self-interviewing exercise. Doing so, brought to life the extent to which there is no reality or no perfect depth of knowledge that can be reached when communicating with individuals in the way which was required by the nature of this study. However it appeared that it may have improved the depth of researcher reflexivity and insight in relation to managers' interviews and analysing their interview transcripts.

Aside from these issues, when considering the specific limitations of this study, a further three seem apparent: First, as mentioned earlier, there was a question around the extent to which the managers in this study were "survivors" in terms of having come through various rounds of redundancies and other such setbacks during which their colleagues had retired early or gone elsewhere and downgraded their careers. Bearing in mind the economic circumstances now facing all organizations in the UK, it would be difficult to find employment environments that were not reflecting such stresses to a significant degree, although these may be being experienced in different ways. The issue here was the extent to which a balance can be achieved between restricting the environmental i.e. workplace variables that may have an impact by restricting the numbers of companies involved and, on the other hand, ending up with subjects that share much the same characteristics due to the fact that they have

retained their position within the context of one or two work environments. Obviously this study was not focusing on career resilience *per se* so the influence of personality, skills, etc could not be addressed. That said, it is still an issue which must be acknowledged in relation to this study.

Linked to this was a second limitation: an awareness that those who had volunteered to participate in the study may have done so because they had a particular interest in issues relating to age; these issues and perspectives may not be shared by older managers as a whole who may have seen some of the emergent issues as less significant. Finally, the third limitation is self-evident. Although it has been demonstrated that the careers of older individuals cannot be studied in general by treating “older workers” as a homogeneous group, the findings of this study do only relate to one particular group – managers – and within that, only to the particular managers within the two organizations studied, at a particular point in time. This limitation leads to the first of several recommendations for further research.

## **8.7 Further research**

The findings revealed that there were a number of influences on the careers of the managers in this study that related to the financial services industry. These included, for example, notions of “older”, general retirement patterns, and the career paths of female managers. As a result it would be useful to replicate this study with managers from a different industry sector to see what differences might occur that could be linked to different sector or organizational norms and cultures. At another level, developing a questionnaire to allow quantitative analysis of the extent to which the retirement orientations model proposed in this study applies across all older managerial workers, and all older workers in general, would reinforce its validity. The findings from this study also identified that the managers were influenced by their future career progression orientations but it was impossible to assess how much of an influence these orientations would exert in terms of their actual influence on future career decisions. It would be useful therefore to undertake longitudinal research to

explore the extent to which the future career intentions of today's older workers or managers were later realised. A further area for future exploration might be in the arena of agency and control in relation to career progression. This study revealed that the managers exhibited a protean (Hall, 1976) career orientation in respect of their current and future careers but it was not possible to conclude whether this was a result of their career type or age-related factors such as tenure or experience. A further study might usefully compare those who had experienced "traditional" careers with those who believe they had experienced essentially boundaryless career types, to investigate the influence that career patterns may have on the development of a protean mindset in late career.

As research in this field represents the intersection of rapidly increasing longevity and global economic and social change, many more areas for future research could be suggested. What appears clear however is that the challenges which will emanate in respect of longer working lives and inter-generational diversity will mean that this will be a rich and valuable research landscape for the foreseeable future.

## **8.8 Final thoughts**

This study adds to existing career theory by providing a subjective perspective to what, to date, largely have been studies of objective career progression in undifferentiated "older workers" in traditional career contexts. It has provided both a greater understanding of the meaning of career progression for older managers in the context of new contemporary career environments and generated improved insight into the needs and aspirations of a particular group of older employees - managers - in the latter stages of their career.

Our ageing population has been viewed as one of the biggest challenges facing our society (United Nations, 2011). Feedback at the end of the interviews from several of the managers indicated that at an individual level they shared this view.

*I think this is really important stuff for individuals. I think it is really*



*important stuff for companies and I think it is really important stuff for the country because we have this talent pool that can still contribute. I think it's [about] the right attitude of people of staying forever young, but I think we stereotype people too easily [as being past it]. I think there are great opportunities; there are win–wins but it will take a bit of sorting... employers have to think about opportunities and the government has to think more proactively. Brian, age 52*

However, perhaps more compelling was the extent to which at a personal level some of the participants were seeking clarity about the way ahead and what it means to be “older” today. Many of those interviewed said that they had found both the research topic and the interview itself interesting. Their comments accentuated how much people felt that they wanted and needed to understand their motivation and its implications with comments such as: “You’ve really made me think about things. It’s really galvanized me. I think we should all have to do it (this interview) every five years” and “It’s good to talk about this (career) with people you’re not close to. It’s good to question yourself about what you’re doing”.

Today there are still insufficient role models for older people entering the latter stages of their careers. Although the research participants were extremely forthcoming about their aspirations, throughout the interviews and their analysis a question seemed to remain about the extent to which the individuals being interviewed would, or would be able to realise their ambitions in respect of the type and quality of work they aspired to do in late career. It was heartening therefore to receive this email a few months after completing the field work from one of the female participants who, when interviewed, had just resigned from her position:

*I had handed in my notice as I wanted to make some changes in my life; I thought you might be interested in how I've got on since. I am now working part-time, two days a week at a national charity.... It met all my criteria of what I wanted to do: part-time, learning something new, something in the charity sector, with a medical/science slant, and no long*

*commute. I'm really, really enjoying it. On the days I don't work I have been able to visit family members (ageing parent/in-laws, son at university)... I have also continued with a singing workshop and piano playing. I have taken on an allotment and I go to a knitting and crochet class every week and continue also to be a charity volunteer, mentoring pupils. I'm just as busy as before, but I'm now doing just what I want, when I want.*

## REFERENCES

- Acas (2011), *Employing older workers*, available at:  
<http://www.acas.co.uk/index.aspx?articleid=801> (accessed 12 March, 2011).
- Adamson, S. J., Doherty, N., and Viney, C. (1998), The Meanings of Career Revisited: Implications for Theory and Practice, *British Journal of Management*, vol. 9, no. 4, p. 251-259.
- Alban-Metcalf, B.M. (1989), What motivates managers: an investigation by gender and sector of employment, *Public Administration*, vol.67, p. 95-108.
- Allen, T. D., Russell, J. E. A., Poteet, M. L., and Dobbins, G. H. (1999), Learning and development factors related to perceptions of job content and hierarchical plateauing, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 20, no. 7, p. 1113-1137.
- Allen T. D., Poteet, M. L., and Russell, J. E. A. (1998), Attitudes of managers who are 'more or less' career plateaued, *Career Development Quarterly*, vol. 47, no.2, p.159-172.
- Amabile, T. M. (1993), Motivational synergy: Toward new conceptualizations of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the workplace, *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 3, no. 3, p.185-201.
- Anderson, D., Vinnicombe, S., and Singh, V. (2010), Women partners leaving the firm: choice, what choice? *Gender and Management*, vol. 25, no. 3, p. 170-183.
- Appelbaum, S. H. and Finestone, D. (1994), Revisiting career plateauing: Same old problems - avant-garde solutions, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol. 9, no. 5, p.12-21.

- Armstrong-Stassen, M. and Schlosser, F. (2008), Benefits of a supportive development climate for older workers, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol. 23, no. 4, p.419-437.
- Armstrong-Stassen, M. and Cameron, S. (2005), Factors related to the career satisfaction of older managerial and professional women, *Career Development International*, vol. 10, no. 3, p.203-215.
- Arnold, J. (1997), *Managing Careers into the 21st Century*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Arthur, M. B. and Rousseau, D. M. (1996), The boundaryless career as a new employment principle, in: Arthur, M. B. and Rousseau, D. M. (eds.) *The boundaryless career*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.3-20.
- Bailyn, L. (1989), Understanding individual experience at work: comments on the theory and practice of careers, in: Arthur, M. B., Hall, D. T. and Lawrence, B. S. (eds.) *Handbook of Career Theory*, Cambridge University Press, UK, p.487-489.
- Baker, D., Ravichandram, R. and Randall, D. (1989), Exploring contrasting formulations of expectancy theory, *Decision Sciences*, 20, 1, p.1-13.
- Baltes, P.B. and Baltes, M.M., (1990), *Psychological perspectives on successful aging: The model of selective optimization with compensation*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Barclays Wealth, (2010), *The Age Illusion*, available at:  
<http://www.barclayswealth.com/insights/volume12.htm>, (accessed 20 November, 2010).
- Bartholomew, K., Henderson, A., and Marcia, J. (2000), Coding semi-structured interviews, in: Reis, H., and Judd, C. (eds), *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology*, Cambridge University Press, UK.

- Baruch, Y. (2006), Career development in organizations and beyond: Balancing traditional and contemporary viewpoints, *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 16, no. 2, p.125-138.
- Baruch, Y. and Rosenstein, E. (1992), Career planning and managing in high tech organizations, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 3, no. 3, p.477-496.
- Bedeian, A. G., Ferris, G. R., and Kacmar, K. M. (1992), Age, tenure, and job satisfaction: A tale of two perspectives, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 40, no. 1, p. 33-48.
- Beehr, T., Glazer, S., Neilson, N., and Farmer, S. (2000) Work and nonwork predictors of employees' retirement ages, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol.57,no.2, p.206–225
- Blaikie, N. (2007), *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, (2nd ed.), Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bown-Wilson, D. and Parry, E. (2009), Career Plateauing in Older Workers, in: Baugh, S.G. and Sullivan, S.E. (eds) *Maintaining focus, energy and options over the career*, Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, Inc., p. 75-107.
- Briscoe, J. P., Hall, D. T., and Frautschy DeMuth, R. (2006), Protean and boundaryless careers: An empirical exploration, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 69, no. 1, p. 30-47.
- Bultena, G. L. and Powers, E. A. (1978), Denial of aging: age identification and reference group orientations, *Journal of Gerontology*, vol. 33, no. 5, p.748-754.
- Burr, V. (2003), *Social Constructionism* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), UK: Routledge.
- Bytheway, B. (1995), *Ageism*, Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

- Caprara, G.V., Caprara, M. and Steca, P. (2003), Personality correlates of adult development and aging, *European Psychologist*, vol. 8 no. 3, p.131-47.
- Carlson, D. S. and Rotondo, D. M. (2001), Differences in promotion stress across career stage and orientation, *Human Resource Management*, vol. 40, no. 2, p.99-110.
- Chao, G. T. (1990), Exploration of the conceptualization and measurement of career plateau: A comparative analysis, *Journal of Management*, vol. 16, no. 1, p.181-193.
- Chartered Management Institute,  
[http://www.managers.org.uk/content\\_1.aspx?id=10:293andid=10:290andid=10:9](http://www.managers.org.uk/content_1.aspx?id=10:293andid=10:290andid=10:9) (accessed 2 February, 2011).
- Chia, R. (2002), The production of management knowledge: philosophical underpinnings of research design, in: Partington, D. (ed), *Essential Skills for Management Research*, London: Sage Publications, p.1-19.
- Claes, R. and Heymans, M. (2008), HR professionals' views on work motivation and retention of older workers: a focus group study, *Career Development International*, vol. 13, no. 2, p. 95-111.
- Clark, A., Oswald, A., and Warr, P. (1996), Is job satisfaction U-shaped in age? *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 69, (1), p.57-81.
- Coetzee, M. (2008), Psychological career resources of working adults: A South African survey, *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, vol. 34, no. 2, p.10 - 20
- Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English* (2008) Third edition revised, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cornelius, N. and Skinner, D. (2005), An alternative view through the glass ceiling: Using capabilities theory to reflect on the career journey of senior women, *Women in Management Review*, vol. 20, no. 7/8, p.595-609.

- Daniel, K. and Heywood, J. S. (2007), The determinants of hiring older workers: UK evidence, *Labour Economics*, vol. 14, no. 1, p.35-51.
- DeFillippi, R. J. and Arthur, M. B. (1996), Boundaryless contexts and careers: a competency-based perspective, in: Arthur, M. B. and Rousseau, D. M. (eds.), *The Boundaryless Career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 16-131.
- Derr, C. B. and Laurent, A. (1989), The internal and external career: a theoretical and cross-cultural perspective, in: Arthur, M. B., Hall, D. T. and Lawrence, B. S. (eds.) *Handbook of Career Theory*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, p. 454-471.
- Desmette, D. and Gaillard, M. (2008), When a "worker" becomes an "older worker", *Career Development International*, vol. 13, no. 2, p.168-185.
- Duncan, C. (2003), Assessing anti-ageism routes to older worker re-engagement, *Work, Employment and Society*, vol.17, no.1, p.101-120.
- DWP [Department for Work and Pensions] (2006), *Helping people to work*, available at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/easyread.pdf>. (accessed 20 September, 2010).
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., and Lowe, A. (2002). *Management Research: an introduction*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), London: Sage.
- Edmondson, A.C. and McManus, S.E. (2007), Methodological fit in management research, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 32, no. 4, p.1155-1179.
- Erickson, E., (1968) Generativity and Ego Identity, in: Bernice L. Neugarten (ed.), *Middle Age: A Reader in Social Psychology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Erickson, E. (1963), *Childhood and Society*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), New York: Norton.

- Ettington, D. R. (1998), Successful Career Plateauing, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 52, no. 1, p.72-88.
- Evans, M. G. and Gilbert, E. (1984), Plateaued managers: Their need gratifications and their effort-performance expectations, *The Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, p.99-108.
- Feldman, D. C. (2007), Career mobility and career stability among older workers, in: Schultz, K. and Adams, G. (eds), *Aging and Work in the 21st Century*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Feldman, D. C. and Bolino, M. C. (1996), Careers within careers: Reconceptualizing the nature of career anchors and their consequences, *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 6, no. 2, p.89-112.
- Feldman, D. C. and Weitz, B. A. (1988), Career plateaus reconsidered, *Journal of Management*, vol. 14, no. 1, p.69-80.
- Ference, T. P., Stoner, J. and Warren, E. (1977), Managing the Career Plateau, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 2, p.602-612.
- Fisher, R. (1993), Social desirability bias and the validity of indirect questioning, *The Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 20, no 2, p.303-315.
- Flick, U. (2004), Constructivism, in: Flick, U., von Kardoff, E., and Steinke, I. (eds), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London: Sage Publications, p.88-94.
- Flick, U., von Kardoff, E., and Steinke, I. (2004) What is Qualitative Research? in Flick, U., von Kardoff, E., and Steinke, I. (Eds), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London: Sage Publications, p.3-12.
- Flynn, M. (2010), Who would delay retirement? Typologies of older workers. *Personnel Review*, vol. 39, no. 3, p. 308-324.
- Francis, D. (1985), *Managing your own career*, London: Fontana.



- Freund, A. M. (1997), Individuating age salience: A psychological perspective on the salience of age in the life course, *Human Development*, vol. 40, no. 5, p.287-292.
- Gagne, M. and Deci, E. L. (2005), Self-determination theory and work motivation, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 26, no. 4, p.331-362.
- Gallos, J. V. (1989), Exploring women's development: implications for career theory, practice, and research, in: Arthur, M. B., Hall, D. T. and Lawrence, B. S. (eds.) *Handbook of Career Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.110-132.
- Gammie, B. and Gammie, E. (1997), Career progression in accountancy - the role of personal and situational factors, *Women In Management Review*, Vol. 12, no. 5, p.167-173.
- Geertz, C. (1973) Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Anthropology, in: Geertz, C. (ed.), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p.3–30. New York: Basic Books.
- Gerson, K. and Horowitz, R. (1992), Interviewing and observation: Options and choices in qualitative research, in: May, T. (ed.), *Qualitative Research in Action*, London: Sage, p.199-224.
- Gibson, D. (2004), Role models in career development: New directions for theory and research, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol.65, no.1, p.134-156.
- Gobeski, K.T. and Beehr, T.A. (2009), How retirees work: predictors of different types of bridge employment, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol.30, no.3, p.401-425.
- Goffee, R. and Scase, R. (1992), Organizational change and the corporate career: The restructuring of managers' job aspirations, *Human Relations*. vol. 45, no.4, p.363-386.

- Gordon, J., Beatty, J., and Whelan-Berry, K. (2002), The midlife transition of professional women with children, *Women in Management Review*, vol.17, no 7, p.328-341.
- Greller, M. M. and Richtermeyer, S. B. (2006), Changes in social support for professional development and retirement preparation as a function of age, *Human Relations*, vol. 59, no. 9, p.1213-1234.
- Greller, M. M. (2006), Hours invested in professional development during late career as a function of career motivation and satisfaction, *Career Development International*, vol. 11, no. 6, p.544-559.
- Greller, M. M. and Stroh, L. K. (2004), Making the most of "late-career" for employers and workers themselves: Becoming elders not relics, *Organizational Dynamics*, vol. 33, no. 2, p. 202-214.
- Greller, M. M. and Simpson, P. (1999), In search of late career: A review of contemporary social science research applicable to the understanding of late career, *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 9, no. 3, p.309-347.
- Greller, M. M. and Stroh, L. K. (1995), Careers in midlife and beyond: A fallow field in need of sustenance, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 47, no. 3, p. 232-247.
- Gunz, H.P., Jalland, R.M., and Evans, M.G (1998), New strategy, wrong managers? What you need to know about career streams, *The Academy of Management Executive*, vol.12, no. 2, p.21-37.
- Gunz, H.P. and Jalland, R.M. (1996). Managerial careers and business strategies. *Academy of Management Review*, vol 21, no.3, p.718-756.
- Guthrie, J. P. and Schwoerer, C. E. (1996), Older dogs and new tricks: Career stage and self-assessed need for training, *Public Personnel Management*, vol. 25, no. 1, p.59-72.

- Hall, D.T. and Moss, J.E, (1998), The new protean career contract: Helping organizations and employees adapt, *Organizational Dynamics*, Winter, p.22-37.
- Hall, D. T. and Mirvis, P. H. (1995), The new career contract: Developing the whole person at midlife and beyond, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. *Special Issue: Careers from midlife*, vol. 47, no. 3, p.269-289.
- Hall, D. T. and Richter, J. (1990), Career gridlock: baby boomers hit the wall, *The Executive*, vol. 4, no. 3, p.7-22.
- Hall, D. T. (1976), *Careers in organizations*, Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.
- Hammersley, M. (1990), *Reading Ethnographic Research: A critical guide*, London: Longmans.
- Hansson, R.O., Dekoekkoek, P.D., Neece, W.M., and Patterson, D.W. (1997), Successful aging at work: annual review, 1992-1996: the older worker and transitions to retirement, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 51 no. 2, p. 202-233.
- Hatch, M. and and Cunliffe, A., (2006), *Organization Theory*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Herzberg, F. (1966), *Work and the nature of man*, Cleveland, Ohio: World.
- Heslin, P. A. (2005), Conceptualizing and evaluating career success, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 26, no. 2, p.113-136.
- Holsti, O.R. (1969), *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Isabella, L. (1990), Evolving interpretations as a change unfolds: how managers construe key organizational events, *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 33, no.1, p.7-39.

- Isaksson, K., Johansson, G., Lindroth, S., and Sverke, M. (2006), Women's career patterns in Sweden: A life event approach, *Community, Work and Family*, vol. 9, no. 4, p.479-500.
- Jackson, C. and Hirsch, W. (1991), Women managers and career progression: The British experience, *Women in Management Review and Abstracts*, vol.6, no.2, p.10-16.
- Janson, P. and Martin, J. K. (1982), Job satisfaction and age: A test of two views, *Social Forces*, vol. 60, no. 4, p.1089-1102.
- Judge, T. A., Higgins, C. A., Thoresen, C. J., and Barrick, M. R. (1999), The big five personality traits, general mental ability, and career success across the life span, *Personnel Psychology*, vol. 52, no. 3, p.621-652.
- Kanfer, R. and Ackerman, P. L. (2004), Aging, adult development, and work motivation, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 29, no. 3, p.440–458.
- Karp, D. A. (1987), Professionals beyond mid-life: some observations on work satisfaction in the fifty to sixty year decade, *Journal of Aging Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 209-223.
- King, N. (2004), Using templates in the thematic analysis of texts, in: Cassell, C. and Symon, G. (eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*, London: Sage, p.256-270.
- Kooij, D., de Lange, A., Jansen, P., and Dikkers, J. (2008), Older workers' motivation to continue to work: five meanings of age, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol. 23, no. 4, p.364-394.
- Kvale, S. (1983), The qualitative research interview: a phenomenological and a hermeneutical mode of understanding", *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, vol.14, p.171-196.
- Langdridge, D. (2007), *Phenomenological Psychology*, Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

- LaPointe, K. (2010), Narrating career, positioning identity: Career identity as a narrative practice, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 77, p.1-9.
- Latham, G. P. and Pinder, C. C. (2005), Work motivation theory and research at the dawn of the twenty-first century" *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 56, no. 1, p.485-516.
- Lawler, S. (2002), Narrative in social research, in: May, T. (ed.), *Qualitative Research in Action*, London: Sage, p.242-258.
- Lawrence, B. S. (1988), New wrinkles in the theory of age: Demography, norms, and performance ratings, *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 31, no. 2, p.309-337.
- Levinson, D. J., Darrow, C. N., Klein, E. B., Levinson, M. H., and McKee, B. (1978), *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, New York: Knopf.
- Lips-Wiersma, M. and Mcmorland, J. (2006), Finding meaning and purpose in boundaryless careers: A framework for study and practice, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 46, p.147-167.
- Locke, E.A and Latham, G. P. (2004), What should we do about motivation theory? Six recommendations for the twenty-first century, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 29, no.3, p.388-403.
- London, M. (1993), The relationship between career motivation, empowerment and support for career development, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 66, no. 1, p.55-69.
- London, M. and Greller, M. M. (1991), Demographic Trends and Vocational Behavior: A Twenty Year Retrospective and Agenda for the 1990s, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 38, no. 2, p.125-164.
- London, M. (1990), Enhancing career motivation in late career, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, vol. 3, no. 2, p.58–71.

- London, M. (1983), Toward a theory of career motivation, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 8, no.4, p.620-630.
- Lord, R. and Farrington, P. (2006), Age-related differences in the motivation of knowledge workers, *Engineering Management Journal*, vol.18, no.3, p.20-26.
- Loretto, W. and White, P. (2006), Work, more work and retirement: Older workers' perspectives, *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 5, no. 4, p.495-506.
- LV Working Late Index, available at:  
[http://www.lv.com/media\\_centre/press\\_releases/4.5\\_m\\_over-50s\\_expect\\_to\\_work\\_past\\_retirement\\_age](http://www.lv.com/media_centre/press_releases/4.5_m_over-50s_expect_to_work_past_retirement_age). (accessed 17 November, 2010).
- Maestas, N. (2010), Back to work: Expectations and realizations of work after retirement. *Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 45, no.3, p.718-748.
- Mainiero, L. A. and Sullivan, S. E. (2005), Kaleidoscope careers: An alternate explanation for the "opt-out" revolution, *The Academy of Management Executive*, vol. 19, no. 1, p.106-123.
- Marshall, V. and Bonner, D. (2003), Career anchors and the effects of downsizing: Implications for generations and cultures at work: A preliminary investigation, *Journal of European Industrial Training*, vol. 27, no.6, p.281-291.
- Maslow, A. (1954), *Motivation and Personality*, New York: Harper.
- Maslow, A. (1943), A theory of human motivation, *Psychology Review*, 50, p.370-396.
- Mason, J. (2002), Qualitative interviewing: Asking, listening and interpreting, in: May, T. (ed.), *Qualitative Research in Action*, London: Sage, p.225-241.

- Maurer, T. J., Weiss, E. M., and Barbeite, F. G. (2003), A model of involvement in work-related learning and development activity: The effects of individual, situational, motivational, and age variables, *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 88, no. 4, p.707-724.
- Maurer, T. J. (2001), Career-relevant learning and development, worker age, and beliefs about self-efficacy for development, *Journal of Management*, vol. 27, no. 2, p.123-140.
- Meijers, F. (1998), The Development of a Career Identity, *International Journal for Advancement of Counselling*, 20, p.191-207.
- Merkens, H. (2000), Selection procedures, sampling, case construction, in: Flick, U., von Kardoff, E., and Steinke, I. (eds), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, London, p.165-171.
- Mintzberg, H. (2009), *Management*, Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Mirvis, P.H. and Hall, D.T. (1996), Psychological success and the boundaryless career, in: Arthur, M.B. and Rousseau, D.M. (eds), *The Boundaryless Career*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.237-255.
- Mirvis, P. H. and Hall, D. T. (1994), Psychological success and the boundaryless career, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 15, no. 4, p. 365-380.
- Morse, J., 2000, Determining sample size, *Qualitative Health Research*, vol.10, no.1, p.3-5.
- Near, J. P. (1984), Reactions to the Career Plateau, *Business Horizons*, vol. 27, no. 4, p.75-79.
- Near, J. P. (1980), The Career Plateau: Causes and Effects, *Business Horizons*, vol. 23, no. 5, p.53-57.

- Neugarten, B., Moore, J., and Lowe, J. (1965), Age norms, age constraints and age socialization, *American Journal of Sociology*, 70, p.710-717.
- Nicholson, N. (1993), Purgatory or place of safety? The managerial plateau and organizational age grading, *Human Relations*, vol. 46, no. 12, p.1369-1382.
- Noe, R., Noe, A., and Bachhuber, J. (1990), An investigation of the correlates of career motivation, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol.37, no.3, p.340-356.
- OECD (2006), *Live Longer, Work Longer: A synthesis report*, available at: [www.oecd.org/els/employment/olderworkers](http://www.oecd.org/els/employment/olderworkers), (accessed 20 September, 2010).
- Office for National Statistics [ONS], <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>, (accessed 10 February, 2011).
- O'Neil, D., Hopkins, M. and Bilimoria, D. (2008), Women's careers at the start of the 21st century: Patterns and paradoxes, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 80, no. 4, p.727-743.
- O'Neil, D. and Bilimoria, D. (2005), Women's career development phases: Idealism, endurance, and reinvention, *Career Development International*, vol. 10, no. 3, p.168-189.
- Ornstein, S., Cron, W. L. and Slocum, J. W. (1989), Life stage versus career stage: A comparative test of the theories of Levinson and Super, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 10, no. 2, p.117-133.
- Ornstein, S. and Isabella, L. (1990), Age vs stage models of career attitudes of women: A partial replication and extension, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 36, no. 1, p.1-19.
- Partington, D. (2002), Grounded Theory, in: Partington, D. (ed), *Essential Skills for Management Research*, London: Sage, p.136-157.



- Patrickson, M. and Ranzijn, R. (2006), Workforce ageing: The challenges for 21st century management, *International Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, vol.10, no.4, p.729-739.
- Peiperl, M. and Baruch, Y. (1997), Back to square zero: The post-corporate career. *Organizational Dynamics*, vol. 25, no.4, p.7-22.
- People Management (2010), *If you want to be loved, it may not be the place to be*, 14 October, pp. 18-21, London: CIPD.
- Pogson, C. E., Cober, A. B., Doverspike, D. and Rogers, J. R. (2003), Differences in self-reported work ethic across three career stages, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 62, no. 1, p.189-201.
- Polden, J. (2002), *Regeneration: Journey through the midlife crisis*, London: Continuum.
- Pollitt, D. (2009), BT connects with older workers, *Human Resource Management International Digest*, vol. 17, no. 2, p.17-20.
- Powell, G, and Graves, L. (2003), *Women and Men in Management*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed), London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Powell, G. N. and Mainiero, L. A. (1992), Cross-currents in the river of time: Conceptualizing the complexities of women's careers, *Journal of Management*, vol. 18, no. 2, p. 215-237.
- Power. S. (2009) Midcareer renewal: A research agenda for the twenty-first century, in: Baugh, S.G. and Sullivan, S.E. (eds), *Maintaining focus, energy and options over the career*. Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, Inc., p.107-134.
- Pringle, J. and Mallon, M. (2003), Challenges for the boundaryless career odyssey, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 14, no.5, p.839-853.

- Prime Initiative (2009), *Generations forgotten*, available at:  
<http://www.primeinitiative.co.uk/category/prime-reports/> (accessed 16 October, 2010).
- Quigley, N. and Tymon, W. (2006), Toward an integrated model of intrinsic motivation and career self-management, *Career Development International*, vol.11, no. 6, p.522-543.
- Reitman, F. and Schneer, J. A. (2003), The promised path: A longitudinal study of managerial careers, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol. 18, no. 1/2, p. 60-75.
- Roberts, B. W. and Friend, W. (1998), Career momentum in midlife women: Life context, identity, and personality correlates, *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 3, p.195-208.
- Rousseau, D. and Fried, Y. (2001), Location, location, location: contextualizing organizational research, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22, p.1-13.
- Savishinsky, J. (2000), The unbearable lightness of retirement: Ritual and support in a modern life passage, in: Gubrum, J. and Holstein, J. (eds), *Aging and Everyday Life*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Scase, R. and Goffee, R. (1990), Women in management: towards a research agenda, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 1, no. 1, p.107-125.
- Schein, E. H. (1996), Career Anchors Revisited: Implications for Career Development in the 21st Century, *Executive-ADA*, vol. 10, p.80-88.
- Schein, E.H. (1987), Individuals and careers, in: Lorsch, J. (ed), *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*, Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Schein, E. (1978), *Career Dynamics*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

- Schein, E. H. (1985), *Career anchors: Discovering your real values*, London: Pfeiffer and Co.
- Sherman, S. R. (1994), Changes in age identity: Self perceptions in middle and late life, *Journal of Aging Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4, p.397-412.
- Schutz, A. (1963), Concept and theory formation in the social sciences, in: Natanson, M.A. (ed), *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, New York: Random House.
- Silverman, D. (2006), *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed), London: Sage.
- Smith, J.A. and Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, in: Smith, J.A. (ed), *Qualitative Psychology*, London:Sage.
- Smola, K. and Sutton, C. (2002), Generational Differences: Revisiting Generational Work Values for the New Millennium, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 23, p.363-382.
- Snead, K. C. and Harrell, A.M. (1994), An application of expectancy theory to explain a manager's intention to use a decision support system, *Decision Sciences*, vol. 25, no. 4, p.499-513.
- Standard Life (2009), *The Death of Retirement*, available at [http://www.standardlife.com/media/business\\_reports.html](http://www.standardlife.com/media/business_reports.html).(accessed August 10, 2009)
- Steers, R., Mowday, R. and Shapiro, D. (2004), Introduction to special topic forum: The future of work motivation theory, *Academy of Management Review*, vol.29, no.3, p.379-387.
- Sterns, H. L. and Miklos, S. M. (1995), The aging worker in a changing environment: Organizational and individual issues, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 47, no. 3, p.248-268.

- Still, L. and Timms, W. (1998), Career barriers and the older woman manager, *Women in Management Review*, vol. 13, no. 4, p.143-155.
- Stoney, C. and Roberts, M. (2003). The case for older workers at Tesco: an examination of attitudes, assumptions and attributes. *Conference paper: Age, Work and Employment: Thinking About the Future*: Stirling, Scotland.
- Stroh, L., Brett, J., and Reilly, A. (1992), All the right stuff: A comparison of female and male managers' career progression, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol.77, no.3, p.251-260.
- Sturges, J. (2004), The individualization of the career and its implications for leadership and management development, in: Storey, J. (ed.) *Leadership in Organizations: current issues and key trends*, Routledge, UK.
- Sturges, J. (1999), What it means to succeed: Personal conceptions of career success held by male and female managers at different ages, *British Journal of Management*, vol. 10, no. 3, p.239-252.
- Sullivan, S. and Baruch, Y. (2009), Advances in career theory and research: a critical review and agenda for future exploration, *Journal of Management*, vol. 35, no.6, p.1542-1571.
- Sullivan, S. E. and Arthur, M. B. (2006), The evolution of the boundaryless career concept: Examining physical and psychological mobility, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 69, no. 1, p.19-29.
- Sullivan, S., Martin, D., Carden, W., and Mainiero, L. (2003), The road less traveled: How to manage the recycling career stage, *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, vol.10, no.2, p.34-42.
- Sullivan, S. E. (1999), The changing nature of careers: A review and research agenda, *Journal of Management*, vol. 25, no. 3, p.457-484.
- Super, D. E. (1957), *The psychology of careers*, Harper, New York.

- Super, D.E. (1984) Career and life development, in: Brown, D. and Brooks, L. (eds), *Career choice and development*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Svejenova, S. (2005), The path with the heart: Creating the authentic career, *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 42, no.5, p. 947-974.
- Tempest, S., McKinlay, A. and Starkey, K. (2004), Careering alone: Careers and social capital in the financial services and television industries, *Human Relations*, vol.57, no.12, p.1523-1545.
- Thomson, S.B. (2005), *Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory - Sample Size and Validity*, unpublished paper, available at:  
<http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/research/studentdocs/mgt.pdf> (accessed Sept. 12, 2009).
- Tremblay, M. and Roger, A. (1993), Individual, familial, and organizational determinants of career plateau, *Group and Organization Management*, vol. 18, no. 4, p.411-435.
- Turner, N. and Williams, L. (2005), *The Ageing Workforce*, London: The Work Foundation.
- (United Nations (2011), <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/call.html> (accessed February. 12, 2011).
- Veiga, J. F. (1981), Plateaued versus nonplateaued managers: Career patterns, attitudes, and path potential, *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 24, no. 3, p.566-578.
- Vickerstaff, S. (2006), I'd rather keep running to the end and then jump off the cliff. Retirement decision: who decides? *Journal of Social Policy*, vol.35, no.3, p.455-472.
- Vroom, V. (1964), *Work and motivation*, New York: Wiley.

- Wang, M. and Schultz, K. (2009), Employee retirement: A review and recommendations for future investigation, *Journal of Management*, vol. 36, no. 1, p.172-206.
- Warr, P. (2001), Age and work behaviour: Physical attributes, cognitive abilities, knowledge, personality traits and motives, *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 16, p.1-36.
- Warr, P. and Fay, D. (2001), Age and personal initiative at work, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 10, no. 3, p.343-353.
- Wengraf, T. (2000), *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic, Narrative and Semi-structured methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wilson, T. and Davies, G. (1999), The changing career strategies of managers, *Career Development International*, vol.4, no.2, p.101-107.
- Yardley, L. (2000), Dilemmas in qualitative health research, *Psychology and Health*, vol.15, no.2, p.215-228.
- Yeandle, S. (2005), *Older workers and work-life balance*, York Publishing and Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Yeatts, D., Folts, W., and Knapp, J. (2000), Older workers' adaptation to a changing workplace: Employment issues for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *Educational Gerontology*, 26, p.565-582.
- Young, R.A. and Collin, A. (2004), Constructivism and social constructionism in the career field, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol.64, no.3, p.373-388.

## Appendix A Interview protocol

[NB: Questions marked with an asterisk \* are only to be asked if the respondent has not already covered the topic.]

*Warm up: introduction: brief description of research, interview structure, confidentiality*

1. Please tell me about your career. I'd like you to draw a timeline and explain to me how your career has developed from when you started work, highlighting the main changes that have taken place in your career over time. *[probe: investigate what motivated each transition]*

*\*Has your career progressed in the way you expected when you started your career? [establish how/why, or why not]*

*\*How does it match up to what you hoped you would achieve when you first started out?*

*\*How, if at all, do you feel your career overall has changed from when you were younger?*

2. Looking back on your career, what would you say are the decisions which have had the most impact on the way your career has progressed?  
*[prompt: what was your motivation for making each decision? Could your career have progressed faster/differently?]*

3. What does the phrase "career progression" now mean to you at this stage in your life?

*\*Who do you feel is now responsible for decisions about your career progress?*

*\*Has this changed from in the past? [prompt: If so, how?]*

*\* Would you see a sideways move or even a downwards move as representing "career progression"? [prompt: If no, why not? If yes, under what circumstances?]*

4. What will “career progression” look like for you in the future? Can you extend your timeline to show me?

*[prompt: If includes changes, what will change and why? Who will be responsible for change? Is this a winding down process? If unclear or no plans, what are the barriers?]*

*\*Do you see retirement as marking the end of your working life?*

5. If you were to undertake a career change prior to stopping work, for example a move to part-time working, would you regard this as continuing career progression or as something different?

*\* What does the word “retirement” mean to you?*

6. Do you feel you have any underlying career or vocational identity which has influenced your main career choices and decisions, for example, have you always sought positions in which you have had opportunities to be creative or innovative?

*\*If yes, do you feel that this is still the same now as it was earlier in your career? [prompt: if no, what has caused changes?]*

7. What do you feel are now the main influences on your decisions regarding career progression – both from within your working life or outside it?

*[prompt as necessary to cover opportunities, training, health, stress, relationships. Are these likely to have a greater or lesser influence in the future?]*

*\* If I asked someone close to you what motivates you now in respect of your career what do you think they would say?*

*\* What, if any, people, changes or events might lead you to alter your ideas and plans about further career progression?*

8. What, if anything, do you think might be different in career terms for a younger person in your role?



9. What, if anything, do you think might be different in career terms for a [woman/man] in your role?
  
10. What, if anything, would you like to see happen differently that might impact your ideas and plans about further career progression?
  
11. How would you describe your overall feelings about your future career?  
*[prompt: optimistic/ pessimistic; welcoming/dreading; worried/unconcerned.]*
  
12. Finally, is there anything else that you would like to add in relation to your career that we haven't spoken about?

End: thanks



## Appendix B: Email to prospective participants

Dear ...

I met recently with Dianne Bown-Wilson from Cranfield University School of Management. She is conducting a study into motivation for career progression in older managers . The project forms part of her PhD research at Cranfield - known for the importance it places on the practical application of its academic output. Dianne is a mature student whose background is in marketing and management consultancy. She is also a founder of a consultancy which specialises in age diversity management.

Her PhD study aims to explain how the careers of older managers are influenced by their own individual motivational drivers and how these may differ over time and by gender. Vitally, it is intended to contribute to the current debate about the relative importance of objective factors such as pay and promotion and subjective career aspects such as value and recognition for those in the later stages of their career. It will also help elucidate how different motivational drivers may or may not differ by gender.

As very little research has been undertaken in this area to date, this study aims to provide employers and HR professionals with evidence which they could use to help design appropriate policies and practices to meet both the needs of the business and those of older employees. Alongside this, the study should produce useful information about the relationship between age and career progression that older employees themselves can use to shape their own career aspirations and decisions.

As Dianne has good links with government and policy bodies she hopes that her work will eventually contribute to future developments in the arena of extended working lives.

I am writing to ask if you would be interested in participating in this study. If you do agree to participate, you would be required to complete a short online questionnaire followed at a later date by an in-depth interview of up to an hour and a half. During this interview you will be asked about your career and its development to date, changes which may have taken place in your attitude towards your career, and your feelings about future career plans and opportunities. The interview will be held in the strictest confidence and any comments included in subsequent analysis will be completely non-attributable. Interviews will be held at your place of work, or a location nearby which is convenient to you.

I know Dianne would be extremely grateful if you could find the time to take part. She believes that input from key opinion leaders in the sector will help inform national policy and be a part of the important skills agenda, as well as hopefully be an interesting project to be involved in from your own personal perspective. If you are interested, her contact details are:

Dianne Bown-Wilson  
Doctoral researcher  
Cranfield School of Management  
Cranfield University  
Cranfield, Bedford  
MK43 0AL  
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 841541

E-mail: [dianne.bown-wilson@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:dianne.bown-wilson@cranfield.ac.uk)

All best wishes



## Appendix C: Initial coding structure

1. Drivers for career progression
  - 1.1 Drivers / challenge
  - 1.2 Drivers / financial reward
  - 1.3 Drivers / career plan
  - 1.4 Drivers / life plan
  - 1.5 Drivers / fulfilment
  - 1.6 Drivers / security
  - 1.7 Drivers / status/ formal advancement
  - 1.8 Drivers / giving back
  - 1.9 Drivers / interest
  - 1.10 Drivers / peer pressure
  - 1.11 Drivers / development
    - 1.11.1 Drivers / development / personal
    - 1.11.2 Drivers / development / functional
  - 1.12 Drivers / ageing
    - 1.12.1 Drivers / ageing /final challenge
    - 1.12.2 Drivers / time left
  - 1.13 Drivers / values
2. Influences on career progression
  - 2.1 Workplace
    - 2.1.1 Influences / relocation
    - 2.1.2 Influences / colleagues or peers
    - 2.1.3 Influences / mentor or coach
    - 2.1.4 Influences / workplace restructuring
    - 2.1.5 Influences / manager / colleagues./ employer relationships
  - 2.2. Personal
    - 2.2.1 Influences / spouse or partner
    - 2.2.2 Influences / relationship breakdown
    - 2.2.3 Influences / children

- 2.1.4 Influences / parents
  - 2.1.5 Influences / friends
  - 2.1.6 Influences / health
  - 2.1.7 Influences / financial situation
  - 2.1.8 Influences / role models
- 3 Opportunities for career progression
- 3.1 Opportunities / self-created
  - 3.2 Opportunities / job offers
    - 3.2.1 Opportunities / job offers/ internal
    - 3.2.2 Opportunities / job offers external
- 4 Attitudes related to career progression
- 4.1 Attitudes / ageism / age discrimination
  - 4.2 Attitudes / gender discrimination
  - 4.3 Attitudes / personal feelings
- 5 Change and career progression
- 5.1 Change / working hours
  - 5.2 Change / commitment/enthusiasm
  - 5.3 Change / stress levels
  - 5.4 Change / nature of work
- 6 Career progression in future
- 6.1 Career progression / no plans
  - 6.2 Career progression / external sideways move
  - 6.3 Career progression / greater control
  - 6.4 Career progression / new career
  - 6.5 Career progression / retirement

## Appendix D: Preliminary (online) questionnaire

- Full name
- Your age - [NB explanation given as to why this information required]
- Marital status
- Number and ages of children
- Are there any people, for example children or elderly parents, for whom you have caring responsibilities? (please give details)
- Do you have any health problems or disabilities that affect the kind of work that you do? (if yes, please give brief details) - [NB explanation given as to why this information required]
- How many years have you been employed by this organization?
- How many years have you worked in this role within the organization?
- What is your job title or role?
- What are your key job responsibilities? (please give brief description)
- Year of last promotion
- When do you anticipate retiring?

[NB: Participants were also asked in advance of the interview to:]

- Think about the main career decisions they have made which have had the most impact on their overall career progression, and their motivation for making these decisions.
- Consider whether they feel they have any underlying career/vocational identity or driver which has influenced their career choices and decisions over the length of their career.





## Appendix E: Final coding structure

### Tree nodes:

1. Drivers for career progression
  - 1.1 Positive Drivers
    - 1.1.1 Drivers / Interest/enjoyment/variety
    - 1.1.2 Drivers / Challenge/growth
    - 1.1.3 Drivers / Contribution/ making a difference
    - 1.1.4 Drivers / Relationships
    - 1.1.5 Drivers / Recognition
    - 1.1.6 Drivers / Further advancement/promotion
    - 1.1.7 Drivers / Financial reward
  - 1.2 Negative Drivers
    - 1.2.1 Drivers / Avoiding stagnation
    - 1.2.2 Drivers / Avoiding loss
    - 1.2.3 Drivers / Reducing pressure and stress
  
2. Influences on career progression
  - 2.1 Personal influences
    - 2.1.1 Influences / Critical incident
    - 2.1.2 Influences / Family – partner, children, parents
    - 2.1.3 Influences / Quality of life
    - 2.1.4 Influences / Health / tiredness / stress
    - 2.1.5 Influences / Security/stability
    - 2.1.6 Influences / Lifestyle/ other interests
    - 2.1.7 Influences / Financial situation
    - 2.1.8 Influences / Awareness of ageing
  - 2.2 Organizational influences
    - 2.2.1 Influences / Organizational structure and change
    - 2.2.2 Influences / Relationships: peers/reports/manager
    - 2.2.3 Influences / Organizational culture/attitudes
    - 2.2.4 Influences / Working conditions/benefits

- 2.2.5 Influences / Age Discrimination / ageism
- 2.2.6 Influences / Employer policies
- 3. Opportunities for career progression
  - 3.1 Opportunities / Luck
  - 3.2 Opportunities / Self-created
  - 3.3 Opportunities / Job offers
- 4. Attitudes towards career progression
  - 4.1 Attitudes / Optimism / confidence/excitement
  - 4.2 Attitudes / Satisfaction/contentment
  - 4.3 Attitudes / Acceptance/resignation
  - 4.4 Attitudes / Anxiety/disappointment/resentment
  - 4.5 Attitudes / Vacillation/uncertainty
- 5. Attitudes towards retirement
- 6. Meaning of career progression
  - 6.1 Objective career progression
    - 6.1.1 Objective career progression / Maintaining the status quo
    - 6.1.2 Objective career progression / Lateral movement
    - 6.1.3 Objective career progression / Flexible working hours
    - 6.1.4 Objective career progression / Status
  - 6.2 Subjective career progression
    - 6.2.1 Subjective career progression / Developing interests/new skills
    - 6.2.2 Subjective career progression / Retaining power and autonomy
    - 6.2.3 Subjective career progression / Using knowledge or experience
    - 6.2.4 Subjective career progression / Retaining enthusiasm and commitment
- 7 Career motivation
  - 7.1 Career motivation / Career identity

- 7.2 Career motivation / Career insight
- 7.3 Career motivation / Career resilience
- 8 Future career progression
  - 8.1 Future career progression / No plans
  - 8.2 Future career progression / External move or change
  - 8.3 Future career progression / More of the same
  - 8.4 Future career progression / Upward move
  - 8.5 Future career progression / Slow down
- 9 Age-related change
- 10 Gender-related differences

**Free nodes:**

Career embeddedness

Career expectations

Pensions

About older workers

Boundaryless and protean careers

Feedback