CHALLENGES OLDER WOMEN FACE

RE-ENTERING THE WORKFORCE:

EXPANDING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

Older women face many employment barriers when looking to re-enter the labour market at a later stage in their life. These barriers can significantly challenge their economic and social independence. In some cases, they can be at risk for poverty and isolation. Their career trajectories move downward as they face decreasing salary scales, less mobility and lower status. In order to understand some of the impacts to this group, this research takes place in Ontario the largest provincial employer of full time workers in Canada. The research problem explored the employment barriers older women face and specifically focused on what could be done to assist these women as they transition in and out of the labour market. The research literature available does not pay sufficient attention to women of this age group and it is unclear as to how the individual, government, education sectors and the businesses could leverage career development initiatives to mitigate the risks for all stakeholders' but particularly the older women. It is, therefore, important to investigate what can be done to help older women in work transition. The purpose of this research was to determine challenges, if any, that older women (after the age of 50) face when re-entering the workforce and to explore what knowledge, skills and tools are needed to help them overcome barriers to employment. To investigate the problem, an interpretative qualitative study was undertaken using unstructured interviews with Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants familiar with helping older women find work. It was important to obtain candid and open perspectives from career development professionals to inform practice. Unstructured interviews allowed for in-depth responses and examples to enrich the outcomes. The research questions include: Do older women face challenges when looking to re-enter the workforce? What skills and knowledge can support older women looking for work? What tools or training are challenging for older women to access or find? What tools or training

can be enhanced or created to help older women look for or find work? These research questions are critical to uncovering specific challenges along with possible opportunities for support, such as coaching and/or job searching tools that can be enhanced or created to expand skills and knowledge related to older women finding work and being successful in their career trajectories. This thesis supports the findings in the research literature that older women face employment barriers and can benefit from career support and guidance. The outcomes draw our attention to the success of holistic and differentiated career support initiatives. Specific areas of focus for career planning practice should include confidence building, development of social capital and networking skills along with cost and time effective training on job finding skills and job skills training, if needed. These findings are relevant to women for their own research on career planning, as well as for coaching programs, employment hiring practices along with government policy and relevant legislation. These practice implications will help women navigate later life re-employment and guide them to achieve successful career trajectories.

Keywords: older women; labour market barriers; inequality; career development; career coaching and guidance

GENERAL SUMMARY

I am an older woman (over 60 years of age). I have found as I aged and as the women around me became older we shared stories about how difficult it was to find work. In some cases, these older female family, friends and associates were sole providers for themselves and their families. Some of these women were unemployed. Others had moved around from job to job taking what work was available without specific career plans. Alternatively, some had been in the same job with limited growth for many years. All of them wanted or needed good paying jobs, benefits and security when they were considering work transition. This research was designed to understand if older women face employment barriers when looking to re-enter the labour market, why and what could be done to assist. In order to understand the impacts to this group I decided to conduct research in Ontario, Canada, where I live, as it is the largest provincial employer of full-time workers. I found the research literature on this topic was limited. Also, it was not clear how women could help themselves and what the government, education and business sectors could do to assist with career development. Individuals, businesses and government could benefit from these findings. Specifically, my research purpose was to determine challenges, if any, that older women (after the age of 50) face when re-entering the workforce and to explore what knowledge, skills and tools are needed to help them overcome employment barriers.   In many cases, the women I knew did not really know why they were not successful finding work and did not know what they needed. They often were the go-to person of the family so their career planning was secondary. Also, they were reluctant to reach out for help if it was going to cost the family money. I selected Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants, familiar with helping older women find professional feedback. It was important to obtain candid and open perspectives in order to really find out what was needed and what changes would be effective.

Interviews with open ended questions allowed for in-depth responses and examples. The research questions were, do older women face challenges when looking to re-enter the workforce? What skill and knowledge can support older women looking for work? What tools or training is challenging for older women to access/find? What tools or training can be enhanced or created to help older women look for or find work? These were important to uncovering specific challenges along with possible opportunities for support, such as coaching and/or job searching programs/tools that can be enhanced or created to expand skills and knowledge. The research yielded complicated results however I found that older women did face employment barriers and can definitely benefit from career support and guidance. The Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants suggested women needed confidence building programs, that they should develop networks/networking skills and that they need help with cost and time effective training. This research will be helpful to older women and could inform career planning, coaching programs and employment hiring practices along with government policy and relevant legislation.

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Finally, I dedicate this paper to my two children, Shannon and Glenn. They are both in post graduate programs and I could not be more proud. They love me, believe in me, and cheered me on to the finish.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Older women face many employment barriers when looking to re-enter the labour market which can significantly challenge their economic and social independence. In some cases, they can be at risk of poverty and isolation. Although older women are competing in a global market place with an aging population they are less equipped to find sustainable work and less likely to embark on successful career trajectories. There is limited research about older women and the unique challenges they face therefore this study sought to understand specific challenges and practical implications that could mitigate some of the risks.

Around the world employment patterns for women are distinctly different from that of men. Women represent approximately 40% of the employed labour market however upwards of 48% of their productive potential is not used (Bimrose et al., 2014). Within human resources there are main domains: career development, training, and organizational development. These domains support individuals and while training and organizational development are well documented, career development has received much less attention (Bian & Wang, 2019). Career support for women has received even less attention (Bian & Wang, 2019; Froh & Spatz, 2016).

Women's careers are complicated with many internal and exterior barriers. These employment barriers include discrimination, lack of mentorship, gender roles and family responsibilities as well as issues such as sexual harassment which further exacerbate the problem (Coogen & Chen, 2007; Bimrose et al., 2014).

When women take on family responsibilities they often experience work interruptions that can reduce future employment opportunities (Coogen & Chen, 2007). Research shows that women with interrupted careers face a downward mobility in salary and status (Lovejoy & Stone, 2012). Work interruptions can also include health issues, for example, breast cancer which can create challenges for women who intend to return to work. Career support can expand beyond normal human resource initiatives and extend to informal support (Bilodeau et al., 2017).

In order to capitalize on women's productive potential, integrative career coaching and guidance can assist women as they attempt to re-enter the workforce (Brown & Yates, 2018; Filsinger, 2012). Further research into effective coaching, training and career development can help women navigate their own careers successfully (Bimrose, McMahon &Watson, 2013). Women typically are not supported in their career development and with the complication of multiple changes in and out of the labour market throughout their careers, support is even less common. However, career coaching can play a vital role here particularly because is considers individual needs and supports. Women with conflicting priorities of home and work could benefit from career coaching and enhance their careers no matter what the interruptions or number of times of re-entry in the workforce (Chae, 2002; Brown & Yates, 2018). Coaching can also play a valuable role in the reflective processes women need to consider all the career options that will support their needs on a long term basis and accommodate their possibly conflicting priorities (Bimrose et al., 2014; Filsinger, 2012)

It is not clear what resources older women need and sometimes people do not know what they do not know. For example, job searching behaviours of retirees is sometimes a function of personal

12

characteristics and the feelings of competency on how to job search (August, 2011). Effective

career guidance should include an understanding of structural factors such as gender, age and

ethnicity while at the same time being able to offer differentiated personalized programs

(Bimrose, et al., 2014). Older women, particularly, need differentiated and personalized

programs, especially those that pay attention to self-efficacy along with personal empowerment

(Rife, 1992; Dutta, 2019). Overall more research on older women's employment and how they

can be supported is needed (McMahon, Watson & Bimrose, 2012). Consequently, this is why it

is the focus of this research project.

This research focused on the need to understand the challenges older women face in order to

define effective support and career development initiatives. Traditionally career theories are not

sympathetic to women - of any age (Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2013). Also, women are not

a homogeneous group and factors such as age, race, ethnicity sexual orientation and able-ness

factor into the success of any interventions (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Many women experience

intersectionalities with multiple factors working against them, for example, age and gender

(Ainsworth, 2002). It is not clear how to meet the demands of the wide variety of individual life

circumstances (Brown & Yates, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to determine the challenges, if any, that older women (after the

age of 50) face when re-entering the workforce and to explore what knowledge, skills and tools

are needed to help them overcome barriers to employment.

After reviewing the current literature, the follow research questions unfolded: Do older women face challenges when looking to re-enter the workforce? What skills and knowledge can support older women looking for work? What tools or training are challenging for older women to access/find? What tools or training can be enhanced or created to help older women look for or find work? These research questions are critical to uncovering specific challenges along with possible opportunities for support, such as coaching and/or job searching tools that can be enhanced or created to expand skills and knowledge related to older women finding work and being successful in their career trajectories.

In order to answer the research questions a rigorous methodology was undertaken to ensure a reliable and valid research endeavour with trustworthy outcomes. The study was reviewed and approved by the interdisciplinary Committee on ethics and found to be compliant with Memorial University ethics policies. A careful research design and implementation included an interpretative qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) whereby the researcher relied on the professional insight and openness of participants who are Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants, and who were selected because of their experience and expertise.

Older women themselves may not recognize the challenges they face and or find possible solutions that are relevant to their gender or their age group. Through my work in the field of human resources I was led to me identifying this problem. The research took place in Ontario where I live and work. For this reason, it was decided to select participants belonging to the Human Resources Professional Association in Ontario and who had experience in helping older women look for work. A Recruitment Letter was distributed through LinkedIn and an Informed

Consent form provided an outline and the key constructs of the research. Participation was voluntary and several steps were put into place to ensure consent, confidentiality/anonymity along with withdrawal options. These were made clear throughout the research process. To best understand how older women were challenged and to establish possible solutions a series of unstructured interviews were arranged with the participants. An interview guide with open ended questions allowed the participants time for individual reflection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), to voice candid ideas and pose recommendations. Since not all the variables were known, unstructured interviews seemed like the best option (Creswell, 2012).

Each interview was completed by phone and the responses were transcribed by hand. The transcriptions were put into electronic files with pseudonyms for coding and analysis. In terms of data analysis, a thematic approach was used to uncover common challenges older women face and to understand complex ideas extracted from the individual participant interviews with (Creswell 2012). The responses were segmented, using a list format, labeled broadly and then narrowed to five themes Confidence, Networking, Self-evaluation, Skills Development and Career Support in order to make sense of the data (Creswell, 2012). Direct quotes and descriptions allowed for overall interpretation (Merriam, 2015). The interview outcomes from the Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants about their experiences helping older women look for work confirmed current research and provided further insights into future solutions.

Significance of the study

This research is significant because older women could possibly be a valuable resource in the labour market. Many women are also unnecessarily reduced to lower wages and downward career trajectories. In order to provide effective career support for older women we need to understand the challenges they face when re-entering the workforce and what can be done, if anything, to help. This research recognized that with improved practices, programs and initiatives to assist older women find work, the impacts of unsuccessful re-entry into the labour market could be mitigated and or eliminated. This Chapter introduced the topic and provided the context of the research. It framed the problem statement with the background to the research, outlined the purpose and significance as well as presented the research questions for the study.

In Chapter 2, the Literature Review, we will begin to define key concepts, including the context around the specific challenges older women face when re-entering the labour market. We uncover what is known about why this happens and what has been done to help women expand their career opportunities and employment trajectories, as they age. Chapter 3 discusses the rigor of the methodology with respect to the general paradigm, data collection methods, participants and sampling along with the data collection and analysis of data. Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings collected from the interviews with Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants along with the analysis of the data. In Chapter 5 the themes are defined to focus interpretations and recommendations for the discussion and conclusions covered in Chapter 6

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the topic, outlined the purpose of this study, identified the significance of the topic and highlighted the overall context surrounding the research. This chapter presents the review of literature which identifies the key concepts of how older women are challenged when they re-enter the labour market, what we understand about why this happens and what can or should be done to assist. This chapter also establishes the knowledge gap and highlights how career development for women, has received little attention in the research literature (Bian & Wang, 2019). Women are marginalized in the labour market and further challenged when the research establishment does not recognize and investigate the problem. This review begins with a general discussion about the role of career development in human resources. It then focuses on women's careers, career theories and career support for women. The chapter then turns to the focus of this study – aging – women and the challenges they face. Finally, the implications for practice in the research literature are reviewed.

Human Resources and Coaching

Career development, alongside training, and organizational development is one of the three main domains of human resource development. Yet, career development, generally, has received much less research attention (Bian & Yang, 2019). Studies on women's careers, particularly, career interruptions are even fewer in number. Women make up a large percentage of the world employed population, with figures around 40%. Even with this large number, an even larger number of women's productive potential is not used (48.4%), compared to 22.3% for men (Bimrose, et al., 2014). Generally, a gender gap exists in women's participation in the labour

force. Around the world, women's employment patterns are distinctly different from those of men. Research consistently shows that women with interrupted careers experience downward mobility in salary and status (Lovejoy & Stone, 2012). It is important, then, for women to have effective career guidance and counselling. Effective, in this instance, would mean an understanding of women's labour market experiences, including structural life factors (gender, age, ethnicity and other intersectionalities) as well as the interruptions and deviations of the usual work trajectory.

Integrative career coaching can help women, particularly women who experience career interruptions or return to work mid-life (Brown & Yates, 2018). A career coach provides objective support, guidance and feedback. They can help identify goals and develop stages or steps in for the client to achieve the goals successfully. Coaching is often practical and solution-based. Coaches focus on actions and results and require clients to be accountable. They provide tailor-made personalized advice. These interventions can improve women's work experiences and overall well-being. Research has shown how coaching can help women re-integrate into the workforce. For example, Filsinger's (2012) study showed the value of maternity coaching for women re-entering the workforce and re-engaging with their careers after maternity leave. This type of coaching helped women on both emotional and practical levels and long-term career benefits resulted (Filsinger, 2012). Another example was a study of women who preferred to return to work after breast cancer. They study showed how women can benefit from their nurses helping them – preparing them physically – to return to work by developing progressive stages (Bilodeau, et al., 2017).

Chae (2002) suggests that career counsellors and coaches are in a key position to help women return to work because they can help women navigate a) gender-related career barriers; b) changing job markets and trends; c) re-entry into the workplace; and d) developing career opportunities. Counsellors and coaches need to possess knowledge of issues particular to women as well as the sensitivity to deal with the many challenges' women face (Coogan & Chen, 2007). To do this, knowledge of the research and scholarship on gender and career development is important, particularly the socio-cultural barriers women face. Career counselling, but especially coaching, can provide women with supportive opportunities to negotiate the complex journeys many women undertake in their work lives. The coach can help women through a reflective and reflexive process that allows the client to come to solutions in a holistic and analytical way (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

Women's Careers

Research tells us that women, generally, face internal and external barriers such as gender role orientation, family responsibilities and employment inequalities, therefore, career choices and opportunities for advancement can be complicated (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Women's career development are often be de-emphasized by organizations, career counsellors and often by women themselves. The consequences of this is that women's career choices are often limited to stereotypical female occupations. Women, and particularly older women, do not see themselves as career-oriented. Alongside this are a range of other barriers including discrimination, lack of mentorship and sexual harassment (Bimrose, et al., 2014; Coogan & Chen, 2007;).

Women are known to make career decisions based on family and friends. They will negotiate their own career needs based on the needs of others often to the detriment of themselves (August, 2011). Many women are encouraged from an early age to put others first, to take care of others and to be nurturing which may mean deferring their career priorities in favour of their partners, or perhaps relocating in order to allow their partner to be geographically mobile (Bimrose et al., 2014; Coogan & Chen, 2007,). When women take on more family responsibilities, such as caring for children or for elderly relatives, they often experience more career interruptions and advancement opportunities may be diminished (Bimrose, et al., 2014, Brown & Yates, 2018; Coogan & Chen, 2007). When women leave the labour market for family reasons and then re-enter the workforce later, they often experience a downward career trajectory; where they work in lower level positions, less prestigious occupations or care-oriented professions with lower pay (Bian & Wang, 2019).

Professional women are up to three times more likely than men to interrupt their careers and cite family responsibilities. Although there is limited research on professional women re-entering the labour market it is documented they often redirect their careers into new fields that allow for more time to be spent on family commitments and work-life balance becomes a priority because they need to be available at home. When women make these choices, they are often forced to leave former occupations where they had made significant career investments (Lovejoy & Stone, 2012).

Most women work out of economic necessity. Accordingly, loss of income is a serious threat to their economic and social independence. The issue of income loss for many women is further

complicated when they are the main or sole wage earners in their families (Rife, 1992). When women face these structural labour market disadvantages they can benefit from coaching and this type of formal support which often uses a process approach to discover effective paths forward (Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2013). Work in this thesis means paid employment at a variety of levels. Recommendations from the participants relate to general office workers, clerical and administrative positions that include entry level management and professional roles.

Career Theory

To understand women's careers, it's useful to examine the available career theories. There are several career theories relevant to women although many have been criticized for being inadequate (Bimrose, et al., 2014). As highlighted, socially constructed barriers often affect women's career development negatively which warrants the investigation into what can be done to understand and support their needs. Some key tenets from relevant career development theories may support researchers, scholars, practitioners and women themselves to understand their unique career pathways (Coogan & Chen, 2007). For these theories to be considered relevant they need to address the unique and relational nature of women's careers as well consider processes such as reflection, adaptability and transition. For example, linear models or theories that focus on traits are less helpful (Bimrose, et al., 2014). Several of these theories are outlined below.

Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription, Compromise, and Self-creation focuses around the notion that one's search for a life career is focused around one's self concept. He suggests that children, at an early age, develop gender-type boundaries around the occupations and decide

which occupations are appropriate for their gender. These boundaries feed into their self-concepts and can greatly inhibit women when they are exploring and making career choices. Other essential variables such as personal interests and social prestige become less important. Another theory, Super's (1990) lifespan and life-space theory can also be applied to women's career development (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Super (1990) discussed developmental stages that shape career decisions from childhood. He suggested that people have many life-roles and that these can impact on careers and that people recycle through career development stages depending on their life roles and the self-concepts developed through the stages. One chooses a career based on a self-concept. Consequently, women often find work in stereotypical female occupations because they developed particular self-concepts and because their domestic roles pull them in certain directions. The theory recognizes that self-concept is impacted by early gender-role orientations as well as various overlapping roles during their lives which increase work interruptions and employment inequities (Coogan & Chen, 2007). However, the theory does not address how, as women get older, these challenges are addressed.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett (2002) is a more recent theory that attempts to explain how career interests develop, how career choices are made and how career success is achieved (Coogan & Chen, 2007). It focuses on a general social cognitive theory where variables such as self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals interact with a person's environment. These variables allow a person to exercise agency within their career development. Self-efficacy is about a person's belief in their ability to perform certain actions related to careers. Outcome expectations refer to the beliefs about the consequences of performing certain actions or behaviours. Goals refer to one's intentions to engage in certain

behaviours or actions. In a nutshell, if people experience positive results from an activity, their self-efficacy grows, they expect positive outcomes and consequences. The converse is also true. In the case of women, for example, when women have low self-efficacy beliefs, they do not see themselves obtaining higher paying jobs, so limit their opportunities and choices. Other learning experiences also affect self-efficacy and subsequently influence their career interests and choices. These can include discrimination, sexual harassment and lack of childcare support, all of which affect self-efficacy. How individual women cope with these issues has direct career counselling implications (Coogan & Chen, 2007). As women age both self-efficacy and their coping mechanisms need to be carefully considered.

Since the general population is aging, women are valuable labour market participants, consequently, factors influencing women's career development grows increasingly important. Another theory that specifically examines women's later career development is the Kaleidoscope Career Model (August, 2011). This theory is different from previous ones and suggests that women mainly concern themselves with three key needs when it comes to career development: authenticity (making decisions about being true to oneself above others), balance (making decisions about work and non-work to form a coherent whole) and challenge (making decisions about pursuing autonomy, responsibility and control while learning and growing). August (2011) suggested that all three components have critical relevance for older working women. The theory specifically considers implications for employee retention, combating stereotypes pertaining to age and meeting the needs of older workers (August, 2011). The KCM theory is different because it highlights the relational aspect of women's career decision-making where they tend to negotiate their needs alongside others in their lives and it explains why some

women make decisions that seem counter to career development. The overarching implications of this model can provide potential career development opportunities for career coaches, consultants and employers when supporting older women in work and when re-joining the labour market (August, 2011).

The value of these theories is that they focus on women and attempt to address the complex nature of women's career development but they are far from holistic and are often drawn from positivist paradigms (Bimrose, et al, 2014). A more comprehensive framework would be multidisciplinary including both vocational, career psychology perspectives as well as career development theories. Yet, Coogan and Chen (2007) suggest, there is value in drawing from each of the theories mentioned above to understand and explain the unique needs of women. While all these theories provide useful insight, the SCCT and Kaleidoscope Career Model, are particularly relevant in helping to understand the uniqueness of women's careers, especially as they age.

Career Support for Women

Although the argument here is that women often have unique career opportunities and challenges. It is also true that the same could be said for some men. The main point to be made is that individual needs should frame the support. When career supports are flexible in nature and rely on narrative accounts, it allows for programs to focus on individual needs. The nature of women's careers and how they can be supported is further complicated when they experience multiple changes throughout their career. This makes it harder to find a one-size-fits-all response (Bimrose, et. al., 2014).

Women typically are not supported enough when dealing with work transitions as a result of family commitments. Organizations could be proactive in providing career counselling to help women with this transition but generally are not. Research indicates that some high-profile companies do have such policies and programmes that enable women to maintain their company ties and return to jobs after an extended period (Lovejoy & Stone, 2012). One example of this includes lactation policies where women can take breast pumping breaks (Froh & Spatz, 2016).

Even when organizations have programs and policies in place to help women re-enter the workforce after having children, they still often experience a lack of support (Bimrose et. al., 2014; Froh & Spatz, 2016). Both income and status are often negatively affected based on the length of departure and the reason (Arun et al., 2004). Women often experience being pulled in both directions (career vs. family) and this is often not accommodated in the workplace.

Career coaching can assist women in dealing with conflicting priorities. Career coaching can be described as a one-on-one conversation to support an individual's professional performance and support decisions that enhance one's career (Chae, 2002). Coaching thereby enables career work-life balance (Brown & Yates, 2018). While there is evidence from research studies that indicate the value of coaching with women returning from maternity (Filsinger, 2012), there is still a lack of understanding about the long-term influence of coaching of women coming from maternity and returning to the workforce. As well as the complicated nature of women's work and careers. For example, in some cases, organizations provide a flexible work program to balance work-life which appears beneficial while at the same time is often detrimental to their careers. For

example, women with family commitments may choose to remain with an employer that provides reduced hours which hinders their career re-engagement because they are offered work that is less responsible and pays less money (Filsinger, 2012). In the long term this can challenge a women's ability to support themselves and their families.

Career coaching can play a valuable role in navigating these complexities and helping women to make decisions that support their needs long term while at the same time leaving doors open for career advancement or maintaining their status. (Bimrose, et al., 2014), for example, identifies three components of coaching that can help in women's decision-making: Their external circumstances, their subjective experiences and the reflective process they engage in. Coaching can play a direct role in women's reflective processes. Filsinger's (2012) study on maternity coaching in three UK-based private law firms definitely showed the benefits of coaching. For example, with coaching, one woman negotiated flexible hours rather than changing her career.

Aging Women

If women's careers generally are complicated, older women's careers are even more so. In Western countries the demand for increased labour market participation of older workers is important to mitigating economic and social changes, particularly with the baby-boomers and the general aging population. It's important to support aging women through their work transitions (Lotherington et al., 2017). Yet, when it comes to aging women in the workplace, their experiences often reflect a range of disadvantages of segmentation and pay differentials in the labour market. Although both older men and women faced challenges in finding work they want to do and feel satisfied performing, and both have to balance flexibility, financial recompense

and autonomy (Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2013), women seem to have added disadvantages. The intersectionality of both gender and age further complicates work transition and destinations. Since one cannot be separated from the other there is the concern that age-related gender discrimination can reduce the quality of life, promote social exclusion and increase financial burdens for women (Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2013). Added to this, is the identity issue whereby the term "flexible" is associated with older women which results in low paid, contingent and low skilled jobs because of discontinuous work history (due to family responsibilities). In this case women are deemed valuable to employers, employable, but they "disappear" consequently which results in precarious employment and lower pay (Ainsworth, 2002).

There is limited research on career development for older women and more importantly their adaptability, as they navigate work transitions, and even how their work priorities change as they approach retirement. Although some researchers highlight the need for a holistic approach as mentioned earlier (Bimrose, McMahon, & Watson, 2013), women may not seek this support, or know what help is available or where they can get help. They may negotiate reduced hours or less pay to manage family commitments or health concerns without thinking through the consequences or alternatives (McMahon et al., 2012).

Sometimes it is not clear what resources older women will need or exactly when they will be needed. Sometimes people just do not know what they do not know while at the same time we understand the individual's views of their own needs are important. More research is needed around themes such as self-efficacy, identity and discrimination and how these challenges impact

on older women labour market participation and women's ability to self-care and support their families (McMahon et. al., 2012).

Job seeking behaviours for retirees, for example, has been described as a function of personal characteristics and the feeling of competency around job searching along with recognizing available social support (August, 2011). It has been argued that effective career guidance for older women needs to include an understanding of their employment experience as well as the structural factors of gender, age and ethnicity, while offering flexible and differentiated programs and pathways (Bimrose, et al., 2014). Practical methods that take into consideration aging women that build self-efficacy along with personal empowerment can be particularly valuable (Rife, 1992). Overall, there has been much less research on older women's employment and how they can be supported (McMahon et al., 2012).

Challenges: Identity and Self-efficacy

It's worth focusing on some of the crucial challenges older women face. Identity and self-efficacy are two key factors for older women entering the labour and are also likely to contribute to women's inability to find work. More knowledge about the subjective experiences that older women undergo would provide valuable practice implications for those wanting to provide support (Berger, 2005). If we describe "identity" as an individual's social face or how they believe they are being perceived by others it follows that having a professional work place identity will be important for women. Women want to be perceived as employable. Research has found older individuals who experienced long periods of unemployment experience identity "degradation" (Berger, 2005, p. 308). This means that although they continue to see past work

roles as part of their current identities, this erodes over time until they believe they cannot find work because of their age (Berger, 2005). Once they believe they are considered "old" they are susceptible to identity degradation. This belief around identity can have a profound impact on employment prospects. Perceptions of age stigmatization in later life (whether the stigmatization is real or not) can result. Sometimes negative experiences encountered during a search for employment when age is a factor can hamper women's success, even if the experience was minor. While women can negotiate more positive identities regarding age, their search for employment is structured and defined by age (Berger, 2005), and this presents a structural challenge. Coaches would need to take these structural limitations into account and navigate a re-positioning for women with regard to work identities.

Closed related to identity is the notion of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can find work. Although any difficulties that older women may face in this area when looking for work has also not been reported conclusively in the research literature, research on both men and women on continued job search activity has linked self-efficacy to success (Rife, 1992). The *belief* that one can find work impacts on the performance or the activities needed to be engaged in to be successful. In the case of women if they perceive their skills or knowledge as ineffective, they may not apply for work they could do and withdraw from the labour market rather than face perceived rejection. If women begin to perceive their skills and training as obsolete because of staying at home, they begin to lose confidence in job searching (Lovejoy & Stone, 2012) In addition, low self-efficacy beliefs about the ability to find and secure work are also related to depressive symptoms (Rife, 1992). Women's confidence around their ability to combat ageism could be linked to their own perceptions of their abilities, skills and training

(Lovejoy & Stone 2012). Working while dealing with the stress of coping with family responsibilities and few role models of returning women who have achieved success in similar circumstances, often adds to low self-efficacy (Filsinger, 2012). Providing support for women in later life job transition(s) will require an understanding of the individual's self-efficacy and perceptions of identity (Bimrose et. al., 2013). For example, helping women believe that they can find a job is critical to keep women engaged in the search.

Challenges: Intersectionality

In addition to identity and self-efficacy, women face the multiple labour market disadvantages of discrimination, ageism and gender. As they age, these challenges are exasperated (Bimrose, McMahon, & Watson, 2013). The impact of these multiple disadvantages is called intersectionality (Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2013). With intersectionality, a number of disadvantageous social sectors combine within an individual or social group. The consequences result in worse conditions for the individual or group (Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2013). Intersectionality is useful since it provides us with an insight into the cross-section of the multiple factors that create convergence on individuals (Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2013).

It would be impossible to separate individual factors, such as age, from other factors such as gender, race. Yet, this layer of intersectionality is a pervasive feature of older women returning to work. Intersectionality discrimination – discrimination across a number of factors - influences how women enter the labour market, what work destinations are available and the unequal distribution of resources once they are employed. Intersectionality penalties can include redundancy, forced early retirement and low wages. The consequences can be dire. If women

have not sustained continuous employment and end up facing age -elated gendered discrimination, this can lead to an impoverished old age (Bimrose et al., 2014).

Ageism, although included in relevant anti-discriminatory labour legislation is still evident across Europe and North America. Employers exclude older workers because they believe they are less productive, not able to adapt to organizational change or able to learn new skills (Lotherington, 2017). In Canada, despite liberal human rights laws with regard to retirement age, when older women are looking for work, they can face age discrimination, resulting from negative employer attitudes, according to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2000).

Despite this recognition of the importance of intersectionality, there is little research to confirm a connection between the challenges related to aging, gender and job searching or the effects of joblessness for older women (Berger, 2005; Rife, 1992). The research that does exist is often quantitative in nature and older women's subjective experiences are less well known (Berger, 2005). Research that has been completed reveals extensive structural barriers for older women, particularly related to gender (Chae, 2002). Research shows that women are discriminated against and older women even more so (Berger, 2005). For example, research shows that mothers are a discriminated group in the workplace just because they are mothers (Bian & Wang, 2019). The point here is that women face many challenges in the workplace generally but women's later life careers are even more fraught with the unique obstacles they may have to face during their job searching because of structural intersectionality, such as age, race, encountering the glass ceiling or being a target for sexual harassment or workplace discrimination (August, 2011).

Implications for Practice – Successful Approaches - Holistic Approach

It is clear from this review of the literature that career guidance for women needs to be nuanced

and take into account the unique challenges and the intersectionality older women face.

Women's career theories have been criticized for providing traditional career approaches that are

not sympathetic to the needs of women of all ages (Bimrose et al., 2014). As discussed women

cannot be seen as a homogeneous group and factors such as age, race, ethnicity, sexual

orientation and ableness will factor into the success of their career support programs (Coogan &

Chen, 2007). Age and gender, particularly, cannot be separated from each other (Ainsworth

2002). Organizations have been encouraged to implement programs to provide flexible work

plans for women that enable them to manage the demands of home and work life however many

find it challenging to to meet the needs of the many while still considering individual

circumstances and lifestyles (Brown, & Yates, 2018). Lack of formal career guidance and a need

for differentiated career programs suggest a need for non-traditional or non-linear approaches

(Bimrose et al., 2014). Successful support programs will need to consider the theory, the

available research and policy with an understanding of underpinning philosophies from women's

"cultural" perspective (Bimrose et al., 2014).

Since linear models for career coaching and counselling as well as career assessment methods

may not be able to address intersectional factors, we need alternative approaches to career

development. These need to include a holistic approach that fosters dynamic and individual

career development opportunities (Bimrose et al., 2014). A holistic approach that is client-

centred and that privileges the voices of women would be important. Providing a safe

environment for women to explore their challenges and opportunities is also critical (Brown &

Yates, 2018). Finally, there is need for support that has the capabilities of mass outreach but maintains an individualised focus (Bimrose et al., 2014).

Coaching seems to provide a ready solution. It can be a holistic method that provides a safe environment for women. Research shows that coaching enables women to be more confident and better prepared to return to work. Through coaching, women can learn how to request flexible working arrangements and be assisted in faster reengagement in career development (Brown & Yates, 2018; Filsinger, 2012). Filsinger's (2012) study really illustrates the benefits of coaching. This study examined the effect of coaching on career development for women after a maturity break. Coaching is also highlighted in older worker programs whereby older worker participants were able to maintain core identities through the purpose and structure provided by coaching (Berger, 2005). Coaching is client-centred and can incorporate levels of flexibility and can be tailored to the client's needs. Coaches are trained to be non-judgemental and non-directive but they can create interventions in line with the challenges women face. They can help women develop confidence and self-efficacy and visualise a career ahead of them (Brown & Yates, 2018).

Another successful approach that appears in the literature and one that sits well with coaching is a narrative approach. Coaches build a relationship through actively listening to stories told by their clients in order to interpret the narrative and provide recommendations. In this approach, storytelling and meaningful exchanges of information in a trusted environment is used to explore the multifaceted nature of older women's challenges. In other words, allowing women to tell their stories not only helps women in terms of confidence building but also allows the coach with

insight to begin developing holistic solutions. Research has found there is an important

relationship between career coaches and the ability to provide a safe supportive space in which

women can discuss their work-life balance (Bimrose et al., 2014; Brown & Yates, 2018). A

narrative approach privileges women's voices and highlights the relational nature of women's

careers.

When it comes to supporting older women much research on these methods still needs to be

conducted, particularly with regard to social support and programs that will meet the needs of

older people looking for to work and to help them navigate intersectionality and the individual

nuances they face. Although existing research helps us understand that career guidance can be a

positive support for women, it is still not clear how we can encourage women to factor

counselling into their decisions or how career practitioners or policy makers can promote

available services. Although we have some answers from the research literature, there are still

many questions.

Conclusion - Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of literature which identifies the key concepts of how older

women are challenged when they re-enter the labour market, what we understand about why this

happens and what can or should be done to assist. This chapter also establishes the knowledge

gap and highlights how career development for women, has received little attention in the

research literature (Bian & Wang, 2019). I conducted the research within Ontario as it is a large

employment region and the place where I live and work.

In order to capitalize on women's productive potential, integrative career coaching and guidance can benefit those who experience work interruptions (Brown & Yates). This requires human resources career support and coaching plans that understand women's labour market experiences particularly the implications of gender, age, ethnicity and other intersectionalities. Career coaching and employee development can mitigate the impacts of work interruptions on employment trajectories as well as help women through a reflective process to identify holistic solutions (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

Women's careers are complicated with internal and external barriers. When women choose to take on family responsibilities they can experience career interruptions that reduce future employment opportunities (Coogen & Chen, 2007). Research into effective coaching, training and career development will help women navigate these choices and their own careers (Bimrose, McMahon & Watson, 2013), and provide for future economic and social independence.

Linear career models, which focus on traits, have proven to be less impactful. When we look to career theories in general most have been criticized (Bimrose et al. 2014). However, the SCCT and Kaleidoscope Career Model, are relevant in helping to understand the uniqueness of women's careers, especially as they age. They help us to understand how women identify and how this affects their self-efficacy as they age, and what the implications are for coaching (Coogen & Chen, 2007).

Research shows that career support for women is limited (Froh & Spatz, 2016). Programs that are flexible and meet individual needs are most helpful although they do not provide for a broad

stroke approach. Some organizations do have work transition programs however women still struggle with career vs. family commitments.

Demands for increased labour participation identify a need to support aging women as they experience work transition. Specifically, this chapter presented challenges women face such as identify, self-efficacy and structural intersectionalities such as discrimination with ageism and gender. The chapter also discussed the implications for practice, making the argument for coaching as a way forward as a means to meet the demands of a large and diverse labour market sector.   The research shows the importance of female labour market participation therefore individuals, business and government can benefit from supporting this marginalized group. In an effort to avoiding older women's social exclusion and increasing financial burdens, knowing how to help older women be successful when they are looking for work becomes an important consideration for the aging population. The focus of this study is to examine how to help older women enter the workforce. In the next chapter, the research project is explained in detail.

Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction - Methodology

A review of literature in Chapter 2 identified key concepts around how older women are challenged when re-entering the labour market, what we know about why this happens and what can or should be done to assist. Chapter Three will discuss the methodology and provide an overview of the research paradigm, the research design, the data collection methods, participants and sampling along with the data collection and analysis process. Additionally, I will outline issues of trustworthiness, ethics and the limitations of the study.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is used to explore and understand a topic whereby the researcher asks questions to collect detailed perspective(s) in order to analyze the data and interpret meaning from past research and personal reflections. This type of study is flexible, and also often reflects the researcher's involvement in the research project. It is best used to address a research problem whereby not all the variables are known. The questions are designed to understand complex ideas and explore data such as extracts from interviews to gain a deeper understanding of emerging themes (Creswell, 2012).

The qualitative researcher seeks to understand the experiences from the participant's perspective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this research I focus on the experienced Career Coach and Re-employment Consultant's perspective and what they that can share about the challenges they identify when working with older women looking for work. Qualitative research helps us interpret the participant's experiences from the constructs of their own world. This type of

research is appropriate to this study as we are looking to understand if there are challenges women over fifty (50) experience when they re-enter the workforce in order to establish effective support programs, if needed. Since Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants have direct conversations with older women looking for work, we can get a perspective from human resources professionals working in the field of re-employment. Qualitative research will use words as data to interpret meaning, understand experiences and draw conclusions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Interpretive research, which is the most popular qualitative research design, assumes the participant's realities can be varied and different. The researcher will construct the knowledge from the subjective meanings of their experiences. Often individual subjective meanings come from social and historical references (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). As an example, earlier we discussed, women will make decisions about their career choices and overall success in the labour market based on family commitments and the meaning or need they find in changing jobs to manage work life balance. Career Coaches and or Re-employment Consultants can describe trends they identify with their clients - older women - looking to re-enter the work force. This focus allowed me to draw conclusions about what the participants learned from their client's experiences.

I decided to conduct an interpretive qualitative study because I wanted to explore not only the experiences of older women re-entering the workforce but the ideas Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants had about solutions. An interpretive qualitative study would give me

access to Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants perceptions, observations and reflections on their experience with this group.

Research Design

This study used a basic interpretive qualitative design with open-ended interview questions to exchange information. Even though interviews with older women themselves would be valuable the outcomes would not necessarily provide overarching solutions. In this research the participants were Career Coaches and or Re-employment Consultants who shared their experience when helping their clients who were older women over 50 re-enter the work force. They described their coaching and consulting experience(s) and then ideas about what could support these women. Research tells us a diversified approach to understand women's career interruptions was needed and interviewing is a frequently adopted technique (Bian &Wang, 2019). Some women's employment studies also confirmed a qualitative approach helped in the understanding of efficacy of aging women's career progression through coaching practices (Rife, 1992).

Data Collection Methods

Interviews are a common form of data in qualitative research projects. They are essentially person to person conversations with a specific purpose to understand what is not observable and helps us to understand what is on the mind of the participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It is helpful to get candid responses to key open-ended questions in order to understand what challenges older women face and what would help them be supported in work transition.

Drawing on Merriam & Tisdell (2015), in this research, unstructured, open ended questions, with a conversational format was chosen to allow participants to respond in unique ways and it encouraged a dialogue around potential solutions and helped me learn more for the purpose of future research. Further, as Merriam & Tisdell (2015) described, this provided the forum to uncover information that may not have been uncovered in a written format. I found that when speaking with the participants in this research they answered all the questions posed to them.

Research has shown that older women facing job market challenges can benefit from telling their stories (Bimrose et al. 2014). I wanted to access relevant women's stories from what Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants had heard and felt that unstructured interviewing provided the flexibility to achieve that goal. Unstructured interviews provided the opportunity to pose subsequent interview questions if and when needed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I could prompt the participant with questions but leave it up to them to identify what opportunities might be available to support women. For these reasons, interviewing was chosen as the method of data collection.

Participants and Sampling

The location of my study is Canada and since Ontario is one of the largest employers (https://www.statista.com/statistics/464167/number-of-full-time-workers-in-canada-by-province/), I have selected this area to gather information on older women looking for work. Also, I live in Ontario and would like to affect positive change in my province.

Labour force characteristics, such as population, participation and employment rates as well as the percentages in types of employment (full time or part-time) may differ by province however research on challenges experienced by older women in Ontario would be useful for other provinces as well. In addition, the Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA https://www.hrpa.ca/), support and provide services for women in Ontario and was a valuable resource for me in this research.

The HRPA was founded in Toronto, Ontario in 1936 and regulates 24,000 Human Resources members in the public interest (https://www.hrpa.ca/). In 2013, the Human Resources Professionals Act was passed and the HRPA was recognized as a Tier 1 regulator in the province of Ontario, Canada. Ontario is one of largest employers in Canada and would be representative of many women in North America. There were a total of six (6) participants for this research.

I selected the HRPA group to source participants from for my research in order to obtain their input on what issues women have described they encounter. Rather than ask women what they need to help them, I chose Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants as they have specific re-employment expertise where older women may not know or have access to the information they need in order to be successful.   Specifically, the HRPA's mandate is to uphold a standard of excellence in the field of human resources in order to optimize employee potential and help businesses grow.   I wanted to use Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants as they have experience helping older women looking for work. I chose to consider their expertise in order to reflect on what they hear women are experiencing and gather information on what they recommend will help them. I also selected the HRPA organization to source a trustworthy

participant group of professional career coaches and re-employment consultants who by their work know and support both men and women looking to participate in the labour market.

Data Collection

Recruitment
The participants were selected from the Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA) networking group and their associates. The criterion for participating in this study was being a Career Coach and or Career Re-employment Consultant who has supported women over the age of 50 to re-enter the workforce. The Recruitment Letter was distributed to the membership via their LinkedIn social media group in order to invite participants. The Recruitment Letter (see Appendix C) encouraged members to pass along information to Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants and included an introduction as well as the purpose of the study, which was to investigate if women over the age of fifty (50) were challenged when re-entering the workforce.

Recruitment Letter
The Recruitment Letter confirmed that the study included a volunteer interview and any participation would remain confidential. The study was not a requirement of the HRPA LinkedIn group and no one would be identified as having participated or not. The invitation provided confirmation that the study was reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics and found to be compliant with Memorial University's ethics policy. My contact information was included for interested Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants to contact me directly for further information.

Informed Consent Form

Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants interested in obtaining more information and

participating contacted me by phone or email to obtain and review the Informed Consent Form

(see Appendix D) as well as arrange an Interview date and time. Contacting the me and

arranging an interview (after obtaining the details of the informed consent) constituted consent

however each participant was advised that withdrawal from participating, or declining to answer

any question would have no effect on them or their status with the HRPA. Withdrawal before the

interview or up to two weeks after the interview was possible and after that time all identifying

information would be removed from the study. No participants withdrew from the study.

Prior to each interview the Informed Consent Form was reviewed in detail. Each participant was

encouraged to keep a copy of the form. The information in the form included an introduction and

the purpose of the research, what will happen with the participant during the study, the benefits

and risks (with participant Distress Center contact information), confidentiality and anonymity,

data details such as recording, use and storage and reporting. Each form also included a full list

of consent statements for their agreement, and confirmed an ethics review by Memorial

University had met policy standards. Also, the participants could ask questions before, during

and any time after the interview.

Interviews

At the interview stage the Informed Consent Form was reviewed again before beginning the

interview. Each participant was reminded that they could skip any question, withdraw at any

time during the interview and up to two weeks after the interview. It was highlighted that in

responding to any question, no confidential information about their clients - women over the age

of fifty (50) - was to be included. The questions were open ended and specific to the nature of the study. Six (6) participants elected to be interviewed and each will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The following open-ended questions were used as the Interview Guide (see Appendix E):

1. What obstacles, if any do women over the age of fifty (50), experience when re-entering the Canadian workforce for paid work?

2. From your experience as a Career Coach and or Re-employment Consultant what advice have you given most often to women over the age of fifty (50) looking to re-enter the workforce?

3. What specific skills and knowledge have you recommended they add to their job search tool box?

4. What job search tools and/or training seem to be the most difficult for women over fifty (50) to access, if any and why?

5. As a Career Coach and or Re-employment Consultant what tools and/or training should be created or developed that would help women over fifty (50), secure work related to their experience?

6. Without divulging any confidential information, please share some of your experience(s) as a Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants of supporting women over fifty (50) who are re-entering the workforce.

The study interviews were 30 minutes in length and took place via phone. During the interview the responses were transcribed by hand. The transcriptions were saved in an

electronic document. Identity markers were removed. The participant names were not used and each interview was coded with a letter. Since the participants may know or recognize others participating removing identifiable information was important to anonymity and confidentiality. It was not disclosed who participated in the study, what questions were answered or not, nor was participation required by HRPA. Protecting anonymity also included removing company and Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants client name.

Data Analysis
In qualitative research, we look to analyze inductively to address the research question(s). In this study data was collected through interviews and then a thematic approach was used to uncover and interpret meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Themes in qualitative research involve coding aggregate details together which form a major idea from within the database (Creswell, 2012). Confidential and anonymous coding for the study included review of a list of central themes that were collected from the open-ended questions. The next step involved segmenting the list and narrowing to five themes in order to make sense of the data (Creswell, 2012). Each of these were labelled and then described in detail using quotes from participants as evidence for the theme. These recurring patterns that were identified lead to inductive and comparative opportunities. Direct quotes and description from the participants allowed an overall interpretation by the researcher to be reached (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The themes that came to the forefront were: confidence, networking, self-evaluation, skills development and career support. Adhering to a rigorous data analysis process supported the trustworthiness of the study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be described as the reliability and validity of qualitative research. Interpretive qualitative research relies on the rigor of a careful design and implementation of the study. The competence of the researcher and openness of the participants, acting within the event, are critical (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For example, understanding the rationale for the research and implementation method(s) helps define the criteria for trusting the study. Descriptions and details throughout the investigation show the researcher's conclusions make sense. I have made every attempt to establish a clear rationale and audit of the research design and the data collection as a way of establishing trustworthiness. In addition, in this study, a key element of trustworthiness was the participants. The participants, Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants, provided their professional insight through interview responses to help me understand key issues and provide possible solutions for women over fifty (50) looking for employment. As I mentioned earlier, older women may not be able to identify the challenges and/or solutions themselves or see the structural challenges across their gender or age group with respect to employment as these consultants can. The selection of participants from the HRPA as professional Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants who are experienced with older women seeking employment, helped with the trustworthiness of the data.

Methodological rigor alone does not ensure trustworthiness. The reliability or validity in qualitative research is also about the credibility of the researcher(s) and ethical practices embedded in the investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this research I describe my

membership to the HRPA and confirmed that there was no relationship to any of the participant Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants. Several steps were put into place to ensure consent, confidentiality/anonymity and withdrawal options were clear throughout the process as outlined in the methodology and highlighted in the ethics section below.

Ethics

Guidelines for the ethical conduct of research have been in place since the 1940's; however, more recently ethics has received attention due to the unique concerns specific to qualitative research. The credibility of a study hinges on its ethical implementation and the rigor of its methodology, according to ethical standards (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This study was reviewed and approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics and found to be compliant with Memorial University's ethics policy. Each step of the research process was conducted in an ethical manner, whereby participants were informed and privacy and anonymity was maintained. Information was given to participants through the Recruitment Letter (Appendix C) and Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). Also, before arranging and conducting the Interview the participants could ask questions before, during and after the Interview. The process, purpose, use and benefits/risks, of the study, along with withdrawal options were provided to all those interested in participating.

 The electronic documents were saved on the hard-drive of my computer. These electronic data files were stored on a password-protected computer. Hard copies of the electronic files were stored in a secure location – a locked filing cabinet until they can be shredded. Consent forms were stored separately from the data. Only myself and my supervisor had access to the data. The

data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research, after that time period, it will be destroyed.

Limitations

The limitations of the study included the difficulty in obtaining participants. Although the HRPA members generally all have re-employment experience only six (6) participants agreed to be interviewed. I would have liked to interview many more participants to get a complete picture.

Despite the interest from Career Coaches and Re-employment it would be valuable to also interview women themselves to gain their perspective. In some cases, the participants may not have obtained all the information from their clients or understand their circumstances in the same way the women would. Many Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants are self-employed and busy with work related to their businesses and this study was not incentivized. Another shortcoming was that the interviews were no more than 30 minutes in duration. More respondents with longer interviews would have provided a more detailed perspective. The depth of response thoroughness from each participant, by question, varied based on the Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants experience and knowledge on the matter. More respondents would have provided additional information about challenges older women face when looking for employment and additional ideas to support them would have been ideal. However, working through the HRPA meant that those that did participate had relevant background and experience and consequently, provided rich data. Another limitation was around participants not wanting to commit perspectives on long term solutions as the participants, in some cases, felt they did not have the answers. It was helpful to speak to participants individually by phone rather than using

a paper survey as they felt comfortable sharing what they did recognize as issues and most shared examples of what they were able to do with clients to support them on a one to one basis which was very useful.

Conclusion – Methodology

The methodology chapter outlined the rigour used to conduct this qualitative study. It was important to investigate what Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants found when they supported older women looking for work in order to better understand barriers and improve current practices. Ideally, additional research interviewing women themselves would provide insights into their experiences and challenges. Speaking with participants by phone individually allowed them to share candid ideas. A thematic analysis uncovered common challenges older women face and some of the issues participants found when supporting their success in re-joining the labour market. The outcomes and recommendations provided confirmation on current research and insights into future solutions for training and skills development. Additionally, solutions included tools that could be enhanced or created to enable older women during their job searching endeavours.

To best understand how older women are challenged when re-entering the work force a qualitative study was chosen because it provided flexible and individual reflections from the participants especially in this case where not all the variables are known (Creswell, 2012). Using an interpretative research method, meanings was derived from Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultant's responses to questions in interviews. Specifically, participants were selected because who supported older women when they looked for work. The research followed a basic qualitative design with open ended questions in an unstructured interview platform to

allow for personal insight, and prompting of additional questions for the purpose of clarity and obtaining candid recommendations throughout the discussions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The goal of the research was to investigate what Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants identify as challenges women face and to uncover their suggestions to mitigate employment barriers. The sample was selected from a recognized human resources professional group, The Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA) from the Ontario region, a province that is the largest employer of full time workers in Canada. In order to invite participants a recruitment letter was distributed to the members through LinkedIn and an Informed Consent form provided the key constructs of the research. Participation was voluntary, confidential and anonymous. Interviews were conducted using an interview guide with open ended questions, again, to encouraged suggestions and new ideas. A thematic approach was used to uncover common threads from the discussions and analyze inductively (Creswell, 2012).

Career Coaches and Re-Employment Consultants provided professional insights openly and the research implementation supported a trustworthy interpretation of results. A rigorous methodology maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of each volunteer to meet ethical standards. Although there were limitations to the study, such as sample size, participants were found to have relevant experience supporting older women in work transition. The next chapter will outline the interview outcomes and key discussion points around specific challenges and possible solutions.

Chapter 4 FINDINGS

Introduction - Findings

The research methodology, outlined in Chapter 3, described the research design with the

participants, Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants in order to identify challenges

older women face as they look for work to re-enter the workforce. It discussed the research

paradigm along with sampling, data collection and the analysis process. Chapter Four will

introduce the participant profiles and present the interview results. The research findings were

gathered from interviews and the outcomes are recorded in this chapter. Each participant was

asked a series of open-ended questions (see Interview Guide Appendix E) to provide input on

their experience. The participants provided professional recommendations and advice which will

be presented in this chapter.

Each section of the findings chapter highlights the outcomes from the open-ended interview

questions as they relate to the topics covered during the interview: older women re-entering the

workforce; advice from Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants; accessibility of job

search tools and training; recommendations on job search skills; and job search tools and training

to be created or developed further. The chapter begins with an overview of the participants.

Participant Profiles

Participant M1 is currently working as re-employment and corporate human resources

consultant with a focus on supporting male and female business development executives and

human resources professionals. His background includes several decades of experience

managing large complex employee relation projects for small and medium sized businesses as well as networking and re-employment for both men and women. He has been successful in maximizing employee potential through human resources initiatives focused on organizational development. He describes himself as a results-driven team leader that gains maximum yield through the delivery of engaged employees which generates business growth.

Participant - M2 is an accredited career coach and executive re-employment consultant as well as a human resources professional working with both men and women looking to work in small to medium-sized businesses. He coaches individuals and companies to help them meet and exceed their potential. He has over thirty (30) years of professional work in his background which includes hiring hundreds of employees and dealing with a variety of employee and workplace issues. Whether someone is mid-career, a professional struggling to get ahead or an older employee who has experienced downsizing, he supports returning to the workforce, even if it there has been a prolonged work absence. His coaching includes support and guidance in the areas of resume writing, interview preparation, branding and advice on networking.

Participant - F3 is currently a senior human resources leader with a large post-secondary education institution. She started in the financial services sector approximately twenty-four (24) years ago and progressed to management level positions within the human resources field. She spent the last fourteen (14) years focused on human resources work related to organizational development, recruitment, and executive coaching. Having worked with search firms and other re-employment groups she has successfully navigated work transition, career planning and job

search processes for the employees and employee prospects aligned to her companies. Her internal company coaching includes guiding individuals to understanding their skills and contributions that help them gain employment and thrive within the company once on boarded.

Participant - F4 is currently working with a government funded local re-employment program supporting special interest groups such as male and female baby boomers with career planning, job searching and pre-retirement employment. Her background also includes about twenty (20) years of experience in recruitment and employee coaching within the employment agency industry. She is skilled at working with men and women from a wide variety of industries and representing a broad range of clients with different levels of experience. She describes herself as energized by meeting new people and guiding them towards their strengths in order to help them find new career opportunities and happier work lives.

Participant - F5 is currently retired from an executive level position in the insurance industry. Now she supports older women with career coaching and advice to help them find meaningful work within the insurance and financial services industry. With over three (3) decades of experience working her way up the corporate ladder she includes sourcing talent for a variety of companies, individual career planning and transitioning employees into key roles, as an important part of her background. She has been working directly with individuals looking to change their career focus due to personal and/or work-related challenges.

__Participant - F6__ is currently is providing one-on-one coaching for individuals looking to work in small to medium sized businesses and not-for-profit organizations. Her background also includes working in corporate sales for many years in the Toronto's financial industry. As an astute sales professional, she recognized that both companies and individuals needed help in the area of career planning and employment/re-employment. Both men and women could take advantage of her mentorship, new job searching skills and getting help accessing jobs that recognized their career/sales successes. She explains she used her own employment experiences, gained new human resources skills and then provided individuals with the confidence to maximize their potential.

Although there were only 6 participants in the study, it is clear that they represent a sector of the industry with deep knowledge and experience of the issues relevant to this study. They have professional knowledge and were willing to share what they had learned. In the sections below, summaries of their responses to each of the interview questions will be presented.

Older women re-entering the workforce

All the respondents in the study felt strongly that older women re-entering the workforce need assistance and that the assistance they get should be tailored to women specifically. Some were ambivalent about the exact nature of assistance and some suggested that all groups of people who re-enter the workforce need specific support, as Respondent M1 said, "Both older men and women face similar challenges when re-entering the workforce" Another respondent disagreed and noted that women's experiences were very different from those of men and as such, they

require different approaches. She said, "Men may have specific job and/or industry experience which could reduce women's eligibility for certain jobs".

Table 1 - Summary of Responses to Interview Question# 1

Responses to Interview Question 1: *What obstacles, if any, do women over the age of 50 experience when re-entering the Canadian workforce for paid work?*
All the participants felt older women experience obstacles.
All the participants identified acquiring either soft and/ hard skills as an obstacle older women face.
One male participant said older women and men face similar obstacles.
One male participant said older women lack trust that they will secure another job and often have an embittered attitude after job loss.
Four participants, the majority, said older women lack confidence.
Three participants, half the responses, said older women lack job search skills.
Three participants said older women face ageism-corporate attitudes.
Two participants said older women lack the resources or do not know how to find help (job search programs, finances).
Two participants said older women do not have a network or access to reliable mentorship.
Two participants said older women lack formal education.
One participant said older women have/had family commitments interfere with their work/career.
One participant said older women lack related industry experience for certain jobs.

Table 1 shows the summary of responses to question 1: What obstacles, if any, do women over the age of fifty (50) experience when re-entering the Canadian workforce for paid work? Participants had a lot to say about this question. Opinions were divided but overall all participants felt that older women faced serious obstacles. One male participant was careful to

point out that, older men face similar obstacles to those of women and that the focus should not be on women only. However, the rest of the participants recognised that older women, particularly, had to deal with many obstacles when they tried to return to work. Some mentioned that women face emotional obstacles such as lack of belief that they would find another job (1 participant) and lack of confidence (4 participants).

One participant mentioned that some women are often bitter after leaving the workforce and that this attitude can hurt their chances of re-employment. Some of the obstacles mentioned related to job-searching skills. If women are not familiar with job searching it may become a challenge which affects their overall attitude towards looking for a job. Having the ability to find and secure a job would support their confidence levels. The job searching skills the Coaches and Re-employment Consultants refer to would include a variety of tasks or steps taken to locate and secure a job within the labour market. This can include looking for jobs online using a job search tool such as Indeed or positions advertised directly by hiring companies on their website(s), using personal (family and friends) networks and or social networking groups (online or in person), applying and resume submissions, interviewing, following up and even negotiating salary, job duties and responsibilities, hours of work and benefits. For example, three participants noted that women often lack the job searching skills therefore may not know where to look for positions or how to present themselves if they do find work advertised. Added to this, two participants said that women often do not have the resources or do not know how to find help. They may not be familiar with online job search networking tools such as LinkedIn or they may not have the finances they need to ready themselves for re-employment. Two participants noted that women in this age-group often do not have the networks available to tap into current

employment openings. Women also often do not have access to reliable mentorship that would help groom them to be employable again. They lack the social capital necessary to move back into the workforce.

Two participants mentioned that women often do not have the formal education necessary for the current market and they would have to re-skill themselves which often they do not have the resources or finances to do. In the time that many women have been out of the workforce, skill demands have changed and these women are left behind. Participants also mentioned job context related issues. For example, many companies or corporations do not want to hire older women and these attitudes of ageism can be detrimental to women trying to find their way back into the employment market. In addition, industry experience and skills change over time and companies are often not willing to train newcomers, particularly if they are older women. Finally, one participant noted that older women often have family commitments which undermine their commitment to the employer. Overall, respondents were concerned about women over 50 entering the workforce and identified numerous obstacles.

A key concern for all participants was that all the participants identified that acquiring both soft skills and hard skills are needed to secure work. The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes skills as the "ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance" (Merriam-Webster.com, no page number). The Coaches and Re-employment Consultants discussed hard skills as teachable and measurable abilities which included computer software knowledge used for researching companies online and writing used to create a resume as well as trainable tasks and duties to perform a specific job. In contrast soft skills were the traits

that make you a good employee such as someone with good interpersonal skills, confidence, good listening and communication skills as well as a positive attitude, which are more difficult to teach and learn. Job specific hard skills enable the employee to do the job however their soft skills or traits would support their success in the job and their ability to get hired. Both types of skills, at the required level suitable for the job, are needed. A lack of either of these skills presents a challenge for older women.

Advice from Coaches and Re-employment Consultants

All the respondents in the study felt strongly that older women re-entering the workforce needed assistance and that they, the respondents, provided assistance which was specifically tailored to those women. The advice was individual as each person faced different obstacles. However, all the participants coached around two challenges specifically, confidence and social capital. These areas of challenge were highlighted as key barriers to being successful when looking for work and more difficult to train as they fall in the category of soft skills training.

Table 2 – Summary of Responses to Interview Question #2

Responses to Interview Question 2: *From your experience as a Career Coach and/or Consultant what advice have you given most often to woman over the age of 50 looking to re-enter the workforce?*
All the participants identified they had provided specific advice to older women looking for work which related to confidence and social capital.
Four participants suggested older women should know themselves; their weaknesses, transferrable skills and career options based on a self-assessment.
Three participants said it was necessary to create better job search programs to help older women increase their skills and abilities.
Two participants said it was necessary to create confidence building programs to help

older women know their strengths.
Two participants said it was necessary to create networking training for older women.

Table 2 shows the summary of responses to question 2: From your experience as a Career Coach and/or Consultant what advice have you given most often to woman over the age of 50 looking to re-enter the workforce? The majority of responses (4 participants) said confidence skills such as the ability to explain job specific skills and one's transferable skills is needed. M1 said, "Older people looking for work need to do a full self-evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses to know what value they will bring to the organization from their skills and background. Older people may have a unique ability due to their in-depth knowledge or experience however they need to know what that contribution will be to the employer." F1 said, "Older women need to focus on their strengths and successes". All the participants agreed job skills were needed to look for a job, however it was critical to have the confidence and a positive attitude to actually go out and find a suitable job and then get it. M2 said, "When women present themselves they need to exhibit a positive attitude".

All the participants said social capital was important to being successful when looking for a job. Half agreed (three participants) women could benefit from asking for help. It was not clear why they felt women were not asking for help however most agreed that even talking with peers, family and friends was a start. It seems a key question may be: Do women lack the confidence to ask for help? Half the responses (three participants) mentioned women should definitely seek assistance ideally from a coach, consultant or mentor trained in re-employment. Three participants mentioned better job search programs were needed however they did not identify who should offer the programs. Most (four participants) agreed women needed career

networking skills, which involves good communication skills and the ability to connect with people in their area of work or industry.

Additionally, two participants suggested it was important to seek out training in the area of jobs search skills such as, the ability to use online research tools to locate job openings, researching companies to learn about the organization(s) and resume writing which can be described as mainly hard skills. Interviewing skills and networking, also job search skills use both soft skills and hard skills such as knowing how to exchange information in an interview through the question and answer stage and then good communication (listening, speaking), interpersonal, confidence and attitude to come across and promote oneself defining their transferable skills. For example, one participant said, "confident people can express themselves and create a positive impression with the employer during the job application and interview stages".

Accessibly of Job Search Tools and Training

Each of the participants said that it was difficult for women to obtain and ask for help with soft skills and hard skills training. In some cases, it was due to not knowing who or what to ask and in some cases the help they needed was not readily available. This was attributed, by participants, to a variety of things, such as a lack of confidence, the availability of specific skills training such as networking and the financial ability or time available for training. Most agreed women's willingness and ability to network within their own career community was critical to job search success.

Table 3 - Summary of Responses to Interview Question #3

Responses to Interview Question 3:
What job search tools and/or training seem to be the most difficult for women over 50 to access (if any) and why?
All participants said the most difficult help to find is around networking training and asking for help.
Five participants found finding professional and community help difficult for older women to access.
Four participants found professional help may be difficult to find or finance (i.e. coaching and or government programs).
Most responses indicated help was needed in finding resources to help with job search skills (including: job searching/online tools/interviewing and salary negotiations).

Table 3 shows the summary of responses to question 3: What job search tools and/or training

seem to be the most difficult for women over 50 to access (if any) and why? Access, being the

ability to source or take advantage of job search training tools and training is important to older

women as they support the ability to find suitable work. As mentioned earlier job skills training

can relate to both soft and hard skills therefore some skills will be more difficult to teach and/or

find at all. Unanimously the participants agreed seeking assistance to guide the re-employment

process was challenging. F5 said, "Women must be prepared to ask for help." M2 said, "Getting

tapped into the hidden job market is no small feat. It requires career connections and knowing

where to find opportunities within mid or small sized organizations that may not be well known."

M1 said, "There are no real schools on networking which would help older women find jobs".

The majority of responses (five participants) centered on finding a community of people; family,

friends, ideally professional peers and associates or mentors was difficult for women to find if

they had not fostered relationships over time or learned to network. M1 and F3 similarly stated,

"Finding professional help could be difficult if you don't know someone or where to look." F3 said, "Finding cost effective or community-based government support services was challenging for women, which means they would not be able to take advantage of available training or coaching". Programs built around career planning or even job negotiating skills are not readily available. F5 said, "Communication skills training can be expensive". F6 said, "Confidence building programs and networking skills are difficult to find and teach."

With regard to the question around access to job search tools and training, it was clear from all the respondents that even if women do know what skills and training they need, they may find it difficult to access these skills and training. Even more concerning is when training, coaching or programs do exist, they are too expensive for many older women to take advantage of. The participants did not offer any suggestions about existing programs or resources.

Recommendations on job search skills

Further to the question on career advice, coaches and re-employment consultants offered that it was important to understand what tools they felt would be most beneficial to older women looking for work. The outcomes to this question and the previous one are similar however here the participants provided more specific options and described why they were important. They all agreed at one time throughout the interview that networking is an important soft skill older woman need to develop. Additionally, more hard skills, such as knowing how to look for jobs online, researching companies, putting in an application through a job posting site portal or submitting a resume to a company via their website as well as knowing yourself (skills and abilities) are beneficial to finding work.

Table 4 – Summary of Responses to Interview Question #4

Responses to Interview Question 4: *What specific skills and knowledge have you recommended they add to their job search tool box?*
Four participants recommended job search skills.
Three participants recommended networking skills.
One participant recommended strength based surveys to understand yourself.
One participant recommended accessing resources from community-based libraries.

Table 4 shows the responses to question 4: What specific skills and knowledge have you

recommended they add to their job search tool box? Apart from networking most participants

agreed, the ability to look up advertised work, perhaps online or through job boards along with

making application and going through the recruitment process are important. Most of the

responses (4 participants) said good job search skills are needed such as where to source jobs

online, how to submit a resume and successful interviewing would be beneficial to older women.

Information and training on these skills may be available for older women however the

confidence to seek out help and acquire this knowledge is a different consideration for older

women. F3 said, "Women need to be more assertive and genuine" and as mentioned, F5 said,

"women must be prepared to ask for help" More than half the respondents (four participants) felt

good interviewing skills were needed. Interviewing requires both confidence and competence.

Everyone agreed the job interview with the employer needs to be a clear exchange of

information about the skills and abilities about the potential employee. Interviewing competence

includes the ability to describe your specific ability to handle the tasks of the job with direct or

transferable skills during your meeting. Good communication skills and an understanding of your contribution are needed to present an image of someone that is valuable to the organization. M1 said, "Older women need to understand themselves and do a full self-evaluation. Older people looking for work need to rebrand themselves to align with what the labour market needs in order to fit in." F3 said, "It can be helpful to women to do strength-based surveys to provide insights into their strengths and abilities." This can also build confidence and help women learn the value they will bring to the organization from their skills and background.

All the participants noted that networking skills are important as previously mentioned. F3 and F6 suggested using LinkedIn, an online social networking tool to build a network of career-based support. LinkedIn is described as the world's largest networking tool available on the internet. It is used to connect people to jobs, internships and strengthen professional relationships. It takes some skill to learn to use this internet tool however the benefit comes from the building of one's social capital in the form of a career network to access, job opportunities, mentors and training as well as support from career coaches and consultants. Additionally, F4 said, "It would be helpful for older women to source help from sales people, as a resource, in order to understand "how to sell your-self" in order to be proficient at presenting themselves to a prospective employer".

Finally, one respondent, F5 said, "Access community based career planning programs" and F3 said, "Consider use of the library to source information about the recruitment process, local jobs and companies as well as people and other resources that can help."

Job search tools and training to be enhanced or created

Although throughout the interviews everyone agreed networking was a skill that needed to be developed for older women looking for work in this question the participant responses focussed on skills that would build confidence and competency. Without those skills, the network cannot be as effective. For example, perhaps a network contact recommends an older woman to a new job opportunity where she has the skills for the job. When she goes to the interview she does not have the confidence to describe her experience or worse she does not feel confident enough to approach the contact to make application to the job. Overall improvements in job search skills, confidence building and networking ranked high in all the responses. With confidence women can understand themselves more fully, ask for help, source resources and training for what they will need, build networks and use/develop their job skills successful.

Table 5 – Summary of Responses to Interview Question #5

Responses to Interview Question 5: *As a Career Coach and Re-employment Consultant, what tools and or training should be created or developed further that would help women over 50 secure work related to their experience.*
Three participants said create better job search programs to help women know/increase, their skills and abilities.
Two participants said create confidence building programs to help older women know their strengths.
Two participants said create Networking training programs for older women.

Table 5 shows the summary of responses to question 5: As a Career Coach and Re-employment Consultant what tools and or training should be created or developed further that would help women over fifty (50) secure work related to their experience? When we consider what should

be created we also look to understand who is responsible for new or changing resources. All the respondents agreed viable job search tools should be updated to support older women. Three participants agreed job search skills training to help women understand the recruitment process; such as finding available jobs online, applying for jobs and interviewing were important as well as training to help them build specific job skills and abilities is needed. F3 said, "Training to assist older women navigate the many different job applications and resume submission portals would be helpful". For example, in this case, companies would need to make their sites more user friendly or offer instructions and training to access their online jobs. Currently companies are not required to provide this, however government does require enhanced access to job opportunity applications to those with disabilities and perhaps that could be expanded to include more information for older applicants?

Additionally, participant F4 said, "Training that can help older women understand their skills and abilities is needed in order to demystify transferable skills and allow them to confidently apply for work that they can do but may not have done in the past." Hence they are using transferable skills. F6 agreed and said, "It would be ideal if a tool could easily translate job skills into those that could be used for another job" Although knowing what transferable skills are and how to apply them to different jobs does not guarantee more confidence, it helps women when they understand and can communicate what they contribute to the organization during an interview or within a resume. Women would, then, be coming from a more informed position. M2 said, "Programs based on career planning and understanding opportunities for advancement would help women be successful in their careers long term." Currently the onus on understanding your contribution, career plans and options remains with the job applicant. If

hiring companies, training providers (including coaches and re-employment consultants) and government (including schools) could enhance learning options in this area older women could benefit. M1 suggested older women could benefit from a full self- examination and then seek out positions by re- branding what they can contribute accordingly. The participants did not suggest any specific existing resources.

Two participants specifically named confidence building training as most needed and would be helpful for older women looking for work. This is a skill that individuals may not recognize they need or know where to search for this kind of help. M2 said, "Training that helped women dispel old stereotypes and that is foundationally strong is needed. Women need to build their confidence and a makeover won't do it". Although this statement seems patronizing the participant intended to highlight that women needed systematic training to build their confidence professionally. Women need to understand how they can contribute to the labour market. M1 similarly said, "Women need to understand what they bring to the table in order to brand it and explain it to potential employers." That message needs to be delivered with confidence. F3 said, "When you do your own research on ways to find work you build confidence and coaches can work as a partner to guide their clients. Confidence building training is something older women are responsible for themselves and all the coaches and re-employment consultants agreed it is based on the individual."

Again, networking ranked high with the participants. M1 reiterated that networking schools are not available and training on this is often limited to coaches and consultants that focus on

personalized training. Women that operate at different levels will have different challenges. M2

said, "Typically women that are not in executive positions lack a viable network". F3 said,

"Even women with a network may benefit from training on how to navigating a networking

meeting or event." For example, using a networking tool such as, LinkedIn does not mean

someone will have the knowledge and skill to use that network in a way to secure a job.

Conclusion - Findings

The participants in this study were Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants with a

breadth of experience directly related to supporting people looking for work. Although they

came from different industries and backgrounds, each one had experience helping older women

re-enter the workforce and each felt strongly about what needed to be done. The data

summarized in the Tables about each interview question uncovered a unanimous agreement from

the participants that older women did face challenges when looking for work and that learning

was an obstacle either due to accessibility of learning programs (available or not) or due to the

cost (time and money) to engage in upgrading skills and find career development needs.

Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants found they provided advice to older women

looking for work that revolved around confidence building and social capital most often. Also

they agreed it was most difficult to find help or training around both. Additionally, there was

much agreement that professional help that was differentiated due to individual needs, although

crucial, was difficult to implement due to time constraints or financial accessibility. Most

suggested job *searching* skills were what older women should focus on as opposed to actual *job*

skills. Women needed to understand themselves and gain skills based on self-evaluation. The enhancement or creation of programs recommended was around confidence building, networking and job searching skills. Five important themes were identified and these were confidence, networking, self-evaluation, skills development and career support which are discussed at length in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 THEMES

Introduction

In Chapter 4, the participant profiles were outlined and the interview data was summarized and presented. The Participants were Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants with a breadth of experience and each one had experience helping older women re-enter the workforce. Developing themes in qualitative research involves coding aggregate details together which form a major idea from within the database (Creswell, 2012). In this research the findings were narrowed into key themes which informed the overarching research questions, 1) Do women over 50 experience a challenge when looking for work? 2) If so what can be done to help them? 3) What skills, knowledge and tools do they need? and 4) What skills, knowledge and tools can be enhanced or created to help? The research questions provided an outline for the participant interview questions and the themes represented areas of importance for women over fifty (50), looking for work. The findings from the interview question responses uncovered the following four themes described in more detail in the sections below: confidence, networking, self-evaluation, skills development and career support.

Confidence

All the participants described a lack of confidence as an obstacle that older women face when looking for a job. The Merriam-Webster's dictionary describes confidence as a feeling or reliance on one's circumstances, a state of certainty and also a relation of trust (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/confidence). In the discussions with the participants about confidence, it was clearly an important aspect of their support for older women; each had worked with clients individually in this area. From their perspective on re-

employment, confidence, would lead women to feel they could be successful looking for work and ultimately being able to do the job. M2 mentioned, "Older women may not feel they can get another job", which demonstrated a lack of confidence.

Confidence was an important theme because when women look for work their level of confidence is demonstrated at all stages of the re-employment process. A lack of confidence could discourage women from beginning to looking for work (Berger 2005, Mulhal 2013). Some of the comments participants shared were: women need to feel confident, to ask for help if they need it, they need to believe they will get another job and that they can take action and apply for the work. Then women need to be able to confidently communicate the benefit of their skills to prospective employers and this includes negotiating the terms of employment.

Participants suggested confidence was the foundation of being successful in a job search and separate from the skills and ability to do the job. F4 said, "When older women lack confidence they do not demonstrate their skills and abilities during the interview." This does not mean they cannot do the job but they do not or cannot describe their expertise and experience. Several participants advised getting help or that women should do their research on job searching to shore up knowledge on the matter which was a stepping stone to being more confident throughout the process.

Since confidence levels vary between individuals a tailored approach to confidence building and supporting women's job search needs was a consequence of one-on-one coaching. One participant F6 suggested raising women's confidence levels increased their (the women's)

potential productivity and employers are always looking for confident workers. Although she

described self-confidence as difficult to teach, she directs women to online tutorials about job

searching, interviewing and networking. She believed the more knowledge women gathered the

more confident they became. Participant F3 agreed and suggested even using a community

library to research their own job searching methods can set women on their way to becoming

more confident. That they can learn to focus on their strengths and successes rather than focusing

on their deficits was mentioned by several participants. M2 mentioned a positive attitude, which

can come from being confident in yourself would also support women's job search success. The

participants identified confidence-building as underpinning much of the work they do when

supporting older women looking for work. They guided women to relevant resources to gain

knowledge, build trust and helped them be confident which included tapping in on supportive

personal and business relationships.

Networking

There was overwhelming agreement from all the participants that networking was one of the

most beneficial skills to ensure job search success, barring the confidence to cultivate a group of

people that could provide assistance. Chae (2002) describes networking as an energy

opportunity used in re-employment whereby one forms connections to gain advice, information

and ultimately employment opportunities. Women's tenacity, resilience and adaptability were

increased with networks they constructed (Bimrose et. al, 2014). Productive relationships could

be used to increase confidence, knowledge and skills needed to find work. Formal, informal and

local networking, were discussed throughout the interviews.

Networking emerged as a theme because all the participants discussed it as a skill older woman needed to develop. It was highlighted as an important skill to learn and use while looking for a job and throughout ones working career. The participants mentioned informal networks such as friends and relatives could provide the support needed to gather information about how to go about job searching from their own experience, help women identify their strengths and generally provide encouragement. F3 suggested, "Establishing a network can begin with those people closest to you then one would look to mentors, work associates and the business community". Formal networks included mentors, work associates/peers, past leaders and mentors and M2 said, "In my experience women that were not in executive positions lack a viable network" and F3 said, "Women sometimes do not even know where to go to get help and lack mentors". F5 said, "Women must be prepared to ask for help" In a review of how women could cultivate good networks both M1 and F6 suggested that although networking is a needed skill it is can be difficult for women to learn how to create networks.

It was apparent through the interviews that the most important aspect of networking was to provide needed support and advice which could lead to finding a job and increase confidence in the process of searching for a job. Several participants suggested using local networks such as libraries to learn about job searching and to access information, as suggested by F3, and local government community programs, even if it was not directly in their job area. If it was designed to help women look for work, they should join. F5 said, "Women should source community workshops and information sessions" Although the participants suggested ways to access one's network it was clear they felt training was limited on how to network and women may need help in navigating local informal network meetings, as mentioned by F3.

Most participants suggested the online networking tool LinkedIn to help women reach out to their local business contacts and prospective employers.

Self-Evaluation

During the interviews, discussions of self-evaluation, regarding older women looking for work was a common theme amongst the participants. It was important to them as their work included making some evaluation of the women they supported in order to guide their job searches based on each person's individual skills and abilities. Self- evaluation, for the purpose of job searching, was described by the participants as taking an inventory of their skills and abilities which would inform further skills development, possible transferable skills and identify knowledge gaps. The coaches felt if women were self-aware it was less difficult for the coaches to make recommendations and less difficult for women to agree to updating skills, if needed. F3 suggested strength-based surveys such as personality assessments or job skills testing, as a way for women to understand what core strengths they have that would support them in getting a job and being successful in that role.

M1 said, "Older women need to do a full self-evaluation to understand their strengths and weaknesses and then rebrand themselves to what organizations are looking for". He provided the following example: skills developed over a full career of work, perhaps within many different jobs and industries can present a unique opportunity for employers to capitalize on a wider variety of transferable skills. Someone with less work background may not bring that breadth of skills and knowledge to the organization. While a woman may not see the breadth of skills in her repertoire immediately, self-evaluation could bring this to the surface. It was widely

agreed that a self- evaluation provided an opportunity to understand what skills development was needed. It was important for women to understand and describe their successes, to the best of their ability and consider what they would be bringing to prospective employers. Self-evaluation extends to an evaluation of interviewing skills and the ability to negotiate the work as well as the compensation package.

Most participants felt women needed help understanding what skills they had and were transferable. The important component of that was to know what they could do and then help them relate those skills to a wider variety of jobs. F4 said, "It was difficult to coach women on what types of skills could be considered transferable." F3 said, "Women needed to review and understand their successes and focus on their strengths." Knowing strengths also identified areas that were not considered strengths which were helpful in evaluating skill development options. Also M2 said, "Women need to present a positive attitude and those familiar with their strengths were more adept at presenting a positive attitude throughout the job search process".

Skills Development

Most of the participants agreed self-evaluation was very important to older women as it provided an inventory of skills and identified knowledge and skill gaps. Skills development was described by the participants as knowledge and skills older women may need to update or develop entirely in order to be eligible for jobs of interest. This was important to many participants because they wanted their clients to have a realistic outlook as to what was required for certain jobs. They needed their older female clients to understand what skills they needed to upgrade and or develop. M2 said, "Older women need to have a realistic understanding of what employers are

looking for". The participants wanted their clients to openly consider knowledge and skills that they could develop, if needed.

Skills development was a common thread amongst the entire participant group. They commented mainly on skills development in the area of confidence building and networking discussed above however most also identified job searching skills, rather than just job skills upgrading, as a key to being successful while looking for work. Although job skill training (the ability to do the tasks of a job) could be necessary, most of the participants talked about the ability to look for work and communicate well during the interview as more important. They agreed once women were confident in the job search process and had confidence in their skills it was important to locate applicable work through networking and or by making online applications. Once they were selected for interviews it was critical that they could describe what they would contribute to the job and employer.

The participants often advised, beyond confidence building and knowledge of networking as helpful, upgrading job researching skills such as looking for job postings, applying online to jobs, interviewing and overall communication skills upgrading should be considered. F5 said, "Older women may benefit from communication skills upgrading", while participants; F3, F4, F5, and F6 mentioned interview skill training specifically as very important since that is the job search stage where impactful impressions are made with prospective employers. Many participants also advised older women to review which skills they had that were transferable and could be used in positions they may not have had experience in in the past. Transferable skills

were described by the participants as skills used in one role that were also needed in another job by nature of the skills itself. For example, if someone had good interpersonal skills they could use this in a customer service job or an insurance clerk position. Participants felt older women needed to be trained on how to identify their transferable skills. What came up about transferable skills that was interesting was when F4 said, "Older women are difficult to coach that they have transferable skills" and several participants highlighted it as an area where women may need training or help identifying what transferable skills are and which ones they can use to their advantage while looking for work.

The participants highlighted job skills training and job searching skills would require both hard and soft skills training. As mentioned above soft skills training is more difficult to train and track progress, as most individuals have individual or specific needs. For example, confidence building and communication skills, used during the interview stage were described by the participants as soft skills training. F6 said, "Confidence building and networking training are both difficult to find and train". M1 said "There is no school on how to network." Alternatively training on how to search for online jobs or applying for work online would be considered a hard skill and training may be more readily available.

Career Support

It was very apparent from all the participants that a lack of career support was an obstacle older woman faced and evident from their work. Most advised that women were lacking career networks and support to access training in the area of soft skills upgrading such as confidence

building, networking and communication skills. Without career support, the participants suggested that women needed to research knowledge gaps and skills, around job searching, on their own and that it was necessary and important.

The participant suggested that coaches and career re-employment consultants could provide one on one training specific to an individual's needs. F3 said she suggested women "Approach mentors and get professional help from career consultants when possible". Help in soft skills training such as confidence building, networking or communication skills was identified as more difficult to find and teach which is why they recommended women network to get help from mentors and one-on-one coaches in order to get their own support system going. Research suggests career coaches and consultants can help women build and expand their own social networks (Chae, 2002). M2 said, "Get a coach that provides foundationally strong support rather than just makeover suggestions". F3 said, "Older women can lack mentorship" and they should try to "Access community-based career planning programs, if available in their area". F5 said, "Women can seek out government programs where available". It was not clear from the discussions if local community or government programs would be available.

Also mentioned in the research literature, career support programs were helpful, when women were alongside those in similar situations of unemployment (Berger, 2005). In most cases the participants talked about the individual taking responsibility to source, select and gather information related to supporting their re-employment initiatives and gaining social and business network support.

In some cases, the participants identified a lack of formal education for women as an obstacle when they were looking for work. Career support in this area would be dependent on the individual's ability to finance upgrading their credentials and or ability to finance soft skills training. F5 said, "skills training can be expensive and family commitments could make the time needed to complete upgrades very challenging'. In all cases of career support for older women looking for work, it was a matter of time and money and who would provide the resources.

Conclusion –Themes

The interview data was analyzed through coding the interview from major ideas which uncovered themes within the database (Creswell, 2012: Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Five important themes were identified confidence, networking, self-evaluation and skills development and career support which informed the overarching research questions. Although the participants did not discuss age and or gender discrimination directly it was implied that women, specifically older women, were at a disadvantage and could use support as it related to re-employment.

The participants agreed women over 50 do experience challenges when looking for work but these challenges relate less to qualifications and job-related skills and more to job-searching and presentation-of-self skills. The participants indicated that the confidence to ask for help, the skills to search for a job and the ability to present ones experience and background in a positive way was important for older women. Many older women needed to understand and take advantage of social capital and their networks in order to find jobs. In order to develop and consider skills development self-evaluation was an important part of re-entering the labour market to ensure older women were competitive. Finally, career development options, access and

availability were key considerations when looking at career success and the trajectory of older women. Answers to the overarching research questions and ideas about what can be done to help older women re-enter the labour market, such as programs geared to confidence building, networking and job searching skills are further discussed in Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion.

Chapter 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The interview data was analyzed in Chapter 5 using a comparison of responses to develop themes. Chapter 6 will make sense of the data. It will provide an overview of the findings along with an interpretation of the data. This section, the interpretation of the data takes us back to the research questions and uncovers what this research found. To highlight the outcomes further, unexpected results are presented along with the limitations of the research. To inform practice a variety of recommendations are included as well as a conclusion of the overall research endeavor.

Overview of study

This overview will re-cap the important components of the study. Women, as a group, are important participants in the labour market. As they age there is evidence of intersectionality whereby age and gender discrimination complicate work transition and career destinations. Traditionally women have put family and work-life balance first which can challenge their re-employment opportunities. To avoid, reducing their quality of life, social exclusion and financial burdens (both individual and economic), a strategy to fully understand barriers benefits individuals, business and government.

The methodology of this study included a qualitative approach using an unstructured interviews with open-ended questions to understand what Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants

found when they helped older women look for work. In an effort to improve practice these professionals contributed by providing candid responses and valuable ideas. Although the older women they supported came from different backgrounds with individual issues, a thematic review of their responses found common challenges. The outcomes provided new information, confirmation of current research and insights into future solutions for training and skills development.

Summary of Findings

In summary of the findings from this study, Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants found that older women did face challenges when looking for work. Some challenges identified in research were identity/self-efficacy and intersectionality discrimination based on gender and age. This study also uncovered confidence, networking, self-evaluation, skills development and career support as key themes. A lack of confidence was impactful to women when they needed to ask for help, establish social capital such as personal and business networks as well as if/when they faced discrimination or needed to present themselves to prospective employers throughout the job search process. There was a rich response as to what Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants identified as important for older women and what skills and knowledge they needed to be successful while searching for a job. An important message around confidence, skills and knowledge included: women needed to be realistic about what was required for certain jobs and understand themselves in order to communicate what they can contribute. A full personal review of successes to understand their contribution in the form of a self-evaluation was identified as a stepping stone to knowing what skills and knowledge was needed or would need to be enhanced. When older women understand themselves it informs requirements for skills develop. Finding

career support to build confidence, evaluate oneself and then develop skills was an area that participants suggested begins with personal responsibility and every person has individual needs. Career support in these areas, regardless of who is responsible, needs to be available (accessible). It was clear from the input from Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants that older women need help with their job searching skills such as: online job research skills and searching for work skills, and skills for applying to jobs, interviewing and negotiating. There were gaps in knowledge as to what was available to support older women that was not time consuming, such as formal education upgrading or expensive, such as one-on-one coaching to develop confidence and networking skills.

From this research we can begin to understand that it is not a simply a matter of job skills training when we look to support older women find work but there is a need to change values, perceptions and attitudes in order to reduce employment barriers . Overall conclusions based on these research themes include; women's priorities such as family and work life balance can challenge their re-employment whereby they need to re-evaluate their knowledge and skills. Skills and knowledge are individual and older women are ultimately responsible if upgrading is needed in order to be competitive in the labour market. They need to have access to helpful information; perhaps through social capital and skills training that is time and cost effective. Women may not ask for help and therefore do not establish a viable network. For example, they are typically a resource themselves and used to being the support system for their families. Asking for help is something that often sits uncomfortably with this age-group of women and this contributes to the challenges they face when seeking employment. When there is a lack of knowledge confidence can be diminished which is critical for success in job searching.

Interpretation

The purpose of the study was to determine challenges, if any, that older women (after the age of 50) face when re-entering the workforce and to explore what skills and tools are needed to bridge knowledge gaps and help overcome barriers. In review of current literature the following research questions unfolded: Do older women face challenges when looking to re-enter the workforce? What skills and knowledge can support older women looking for work? What tools or training is challenging for older women to access (find or use)? What tools or training can be enhanced or created to help older women look for work? These questions along with the interpretations from this study are highlighted below.

Do older women (over 50) face challenges when looking to re-enter the workforce?

This research did uncover several obstacles women face when looking for work. The most talked about included lack of confidence, lack of social capital and limited knowledge of current hiring practices, as they may have entered and exited the labour market a number of times throughout their working careers. Confidence was important throughout the recruitment process and without a clear understanding of what to do, older women were challenged. The participants, Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants felt confidence was needed to communicate with companies during interviews, finding jobs through networking as well as negotiating on their own behalf for the jobs and salary. If women were more informed about what was needed to find work it did help them build confidence. Networking was a key part of searching for work therefore a measure of confidence was needed to ask for help and build relationships for the purpose of networking.

The findings were consistent with the literature to date, albeit limited, and confidence was identified as an issue older woman faced. If women begin to perceive their skills are obsolete they begin to lose confidence in job searching (Lovejoy, Stone, 2012). Although research tell us women face discrimination, ageism and gender discrimination, as described by Bimrose, McMahon and Watson (2013), the main focus of these findings were around what women could do to build their confidence levels by increasing knowledge around job search skills and how they can leverage opportunities with a strong network. Networking can help women gain valuable job searching information as well as increase tenacity, resilience and adaptability (Chae, 2002, Bimrose et. al, 2014). Coaches and Re-employment Consultants that were interviewed advised seeking one-on-one help and or gathering information from ones network was beneficial, as some skills development training may not be easily accessible, such as confidence building and networking training/programs.

What skills and knowledge can support older women looking for work?

This study found women were at different levels of need when considering what knowledge and skills could assist them in finding work. Beyond a lack of confidence and building networks/networking women needed to be able to access knowledge about job searching which included skills they needed to help them at different stages of the recruitment process. Specifically, knowledge of researching jobs online, making application(s), understanding their transferable skills, interviewing and negotiating were noted as important skills to increase success. The Coaches and Re-employment Consultants suggested coaching and taking advantage of online training to learn how to navigate job application portals and the use of networking tools such as LinkedIn. Additional support could include one's social network,

perhaps from family, friends, community or local job searching events. In order to understand what support would be most beneficial a self-evaluation can inform skills and knowledge upgrading was also recommended.

The outcome of this study aligned with current research and confirmed older women re-entering the workforce needed career development support, mentorship and coaching to help them gain skills and training specific to finding work. August (2011) highlighted retirees' feelings of competency around job searching and recognizing available social support was a function of personal characteristics, thereby individual in nature. Additionally career guidance to enhance skills and knowledge needs to include an understanding of the individual's employment experience and structural factors such as gender, age and ethnicity while offering flexible and differentiated programs (Bimrose, et al., 2014). Professional counselors can help women with reflective and reflexive processes to come to the appropriate holistic approaches (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

What tools and or training is challenging for older women to access (find/use)?

Extended absence from the workforce or priorities such as family care giving sometimes places older women in a position where they may need to upgrade skills and knowledge due to exiting and then re-entering the job market. Women may be advised to update job skills, credentials or even formal education which may present significant time and financial issues. This research found women may be directed to tools and training however it was not clear they would be able to find the resources they needed or afford individualized programs. In some cases ,government/community programs were suggested however some may not be available by area or provided for the skills needed. Also Career Coaches and Re-employment consultants

identified that women may not recognize the need for updating their skills, understand what transferable skills they have or know the advantages of networking. This research found skills assessments may identify areas of need however older women may not know how to assess themselves in terms of current market conditions or know how to go through that process on their own. In some cases, they may not ask for help with job finding tools and or ask for help.

Research tells us women are known to make career decisions that consider the needs of their family and friends first (August, 2011). They may experience a downward career trajectory, with lower level positions and less pay (Bian &Wang, 2019). This is further complicated when they are the sole wage earner (Rife, 1992), which will impact on financial considerations. Research also tells us differentiated programs will help women when they are looking for work.

Career coaching can play a valuable role in helping women make decisions that support their needs (Bimrose et al., 2014). Career support is critical, however, the time and cost to enlist help remains a problem, as mentioned above. Programs were found helpful to women looking to transition into employment and provided some enhancement for their confidence levels. Ultimately it was not clear if resources would be available for women to access on their own. Women may not know where to find training to enhance their job searching skills or where and how to access programs.

What tools or training can be enhanced or created to help older women look for work?
Throughout this research and the interview process it was clear there were gaps in access to tools, skills and knowledge upgrading for older women. The most talked about gap was around confidence-building programs, networking workshops and training on searching for work. There

were limited, if any tools and training in these areas. Confidence building was something that needed an individualized approach however more knowledge in job searching in general helped some older women with their confidence levels. The Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants participants suggested sourcing one-on-one coaching for a holistic and differentiated approach to training older women but again the challenge with that was time and financial costs for some older women. Focus on networking workshops was suggested however there is no widely known training in this area.

The Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants also recommended more confidence building exercises such as strength-based surveys and easy to follow re-employment job searching skills training was needed. Older women could use additional help working with online tools, learning about effective interviewing, negotiating and support for networking workshops/programs. Enhanced job searching skills programs would provide more knowledge and help them with confidence. What seemed to be missing was an emphasis on the benefits of networking and how to go about it. Educating women on the benefits of social capital development and training in this area was a key area for success. Also women needed to learn what transferable skills were, which ones they had and how to communicate them to prospective employers. It was suggested as an area of training particularly because we were discussing older women that may have several transferable skills not all employers would be familiar with unless they were brought to the foreground by the applicant (older women looking for work).

From the literature review we learned career counseling and the benefits of social capital specifically, a strong business network, was important for women (Chae, 2002). Also, re-

employment programs were helpful when women needed to be more confident returning to work (Filsinger, 2012, Lovejoy & Stone 2012) . Although in this research it was not clear how older women would find necessary training it was found that better programs and the creation of some new opportunities would be helpful.

Unexpected Results

Having social capital was an important tool and skill older women needed to help them look for work. This study found older women lacked viable networks which was unexpected as women are generally focused on relationships such as with family and friends. Older women were found not to ask for help and they did not expect business relationships to translate into work opportunities in the future. Since networking was identified as so important, a lack of training programs/workshops in this area was also unexpected.

Also, from this research, it was eye opening to hear Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants suggest women undertake a full self-evaluation to understand their skills and knowledge as it related to looking for a job and their transferable skills. Older women did not know what they were lacking and did not understand the value of transferable skills. It was suggested they consider uniquely marketing themselves to employers because of their diverse employment background, which was a forward-thinking opportunity as employers typically identify the background they need. It was suggested older women communicate their value and also apply to jobs they may not have considered in the past solely based on industry or job experience, An example of this would be an older women with past finance experience may be

helpful to the healthcare industry as a data specialist, tracking healthcare trends and statistics which she may not know if she was not familiar with the skills she brings to the role.

Limitations

Although the study yielded valuable results, there were limitations. These included: limited sample size, participants focused on helping older women and the short interview times. It would have been ideal to interview more participants, women themselves and perhaps those from different sectors such as business and government. This would have provided diverse responses and possibly more solutions around what could be done to assist. The participants did not limit their practice by age of women clients. Some interviewed did not remember specific details about their clients that were women over 50 and therefore did not identify re-employment issues as exclusive to older women. The Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants were self-proclaimed professionals on the matter and had varied backgrounds and experience. For example, one felt older men experienced similar issues and challenges specific to being older. It was difficult to generalize based on issues of all older women only. Ideally longer interviews may have provided additional knowledge about access to training outside of what coaches provided. Since the Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants did have experience with older women looking for work, their input was still relevant.

Recommendations

As Canada is a country that competes in a global market place we will continue to rely on women as active members of the labour market. It is in our economic favour to investigate what support can be found to help women transition back into the work force, as they age. It is our responsibility as a country to ensure women are not marginalized and disadvantaged into poverty without viable work as they age. Additional research which includes input from older women in order to understand what they would find helpful when searching for work is recommended.

Both government and business should investigate what programs can be enhanced and developed to help older women find work. Business will benefit from a larger pool of participants and government will benefit as older working women will be contributing to the economy and sustaining their livelihood without subsidy.

From this research I would provide the following advice to government:

1. Recommend schools strengthen programs to introduce young women to job searching skills and the advantages of social capital early so they understand the importance of business networks and continuous skills/transferable skills development.

2. Incentivize business based on programs they have that support age diversity and re-employment initiatives such as programs/online training material and tools geared to

helping women back into the workforce after leaves and/or hiring of older female workers.

3. Require businesses provide accommodation for older job applicants such as enhanced information on job application processes and protocols to reach older applicant pools.

4. Encourage and communicate the advantages of life-long learning, personal growth and development to build confidence early in school curriculum.

From this research I would provide the following advice to business:

1. Create internal programs designed to help re-employ older women. Consider new ways and places to advertise in order to reach older female candidates.

2. Design job application platforms that are easy to access such as providing accommodation in the form of training, if needed.

3. Identify transferable skills and be clear and transparent with job opportunity requirements.

4. Ensure online training material and tools are created or clear to support older women when they look for work.

From this research I would provide the following advice to career coaches and re-employment consultant:

1) Build confidence through guiding older women to resources that allow them to research job searching skills on their own. Help them focus on their successes.

2) Help women build strong social capital and develop networking skills.

3) Advise older women on what is needed and expected in the labour market, such as how their transferable skills can be used to contribute to employers.

4) Create online tools and training to support women when they look for work.

Since there is limited research on older women re-entering the labour market more information is needed about impacts to women, business and the economy. Further research is recommended.

Conclusion

Chapter 6 provides an interpretation of the data and overview of the findings. In this chapter, I tried to make sense of the research data and to address the research questions to uncover what this study has found. The goal of this research was to understand what challenges older women face when re-entering the job market, if any. More specifically what can be done, to assist them navigate the labour market and be successful when looking for work, if needed. The findings indicated that older women certainly experienced challenges, such as a lack of confidence, limited networking skills and they needed to develop skills to look for work. This was the most interesting finding of the study. The participants, Career Coaches and Re-employment Consultants suggested that older women need job-searching skills more than they need further qualifications. They suggested that women need to know how to understand the skills they have and then have the confidence to market these skills. In terms of providing support, coaching seemed to be a key way forward because it provided a holistic approach as women had diversified backgrounds and different individual needs.

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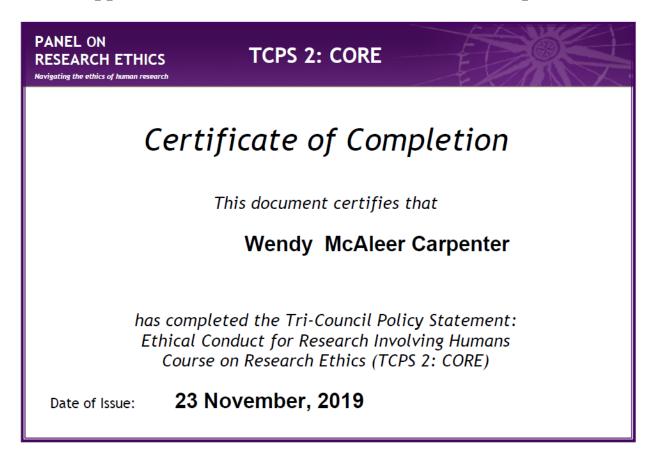
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Appendix A - TCPS 2: Core - Certificate of Completion

Appendix B - Ethics Letter

MEMORIAL
UNIVERSITY

Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

ICEHR Number:	20201394-ED
Approval Period:	March 17, 2020 – March 31, 2021
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Cecile Badenhorst Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	*Challenges facing women re-entering the Labour Market after age fifty*

March 17, 2020

Wendy McAleer
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Wendy McAleer:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to March 31, 2021. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

The *TCPS2* requires that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before March 31, 2021. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. If you need to make changes during the project which may raise ethical concerns, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes for the Committee's consideration prior to implementation. If funding is obtained subsequent to approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR before this clearance can be linked to your award.

All post-approval event forms noted above can be submitted from your Researcher Portal account by clicking the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Kelly Blidook, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

KB/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Cecile Badenhorst, Faculty of Education

Appendix C – Recruitment - Invitation Letter

Recruitment– Invitation Letter

My name is Wendy McAleer Carpenter, and I am a student in the Faculty of Education, Memorial University. I am conducting a research project called, *Women Re-Entering the Workforce - After Fifty*, for my master's degree under the supervision of Dr. Cecile Badenhorst. The purpose of the study is to investigate if women over the age of fifty experience challenges when re-entering the workforce and what can be done to assist them.

I invite you to participate in this project. If you are a career coach and/or re-employment consultant who has supported women over the age of 50 to re-enter the workforce, I would like to arrange a 30-minute interview with you online (Skype or other video tool) or by teleconference (phone). If you are interested in participating, please contact me at wendymcaleer@gmail.com and I will send you further information. Participation is completely voluntary and your answers will be confidential.

This study is not a requirement of the HRPA LinkedIn group and no one, including members, will know who decides to participate or not.

If you know of anyone who may meet the criteria for this study and would be interested in participating, please pass on a copy of this information and ask them to contact me.

If you have any questions about me or my project, please contact me at the above email address or by phone at 905-616-6306.

Thank-you in advance for considering my request,

Wendy McAleer Carpenter

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr.chair@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Appendix D - Informed Consent Form

Women Re-Entering the Workforce - After Fifty Researcher(s):Wendy McAleer Carpenter, Master's student, Faculty of Education, Memorial University, wendymcaleer@gmail.com Supervisor(s):Dr Cecile Badenhorst, Faculty of Education, Memorial University, cbadenhorst@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled *"Women Re-Entering the Workforce - After Fifty."*

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, Wendy McAleer, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. A reason is not needed. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:

My name is Wendy McAleer Carpenter and I am a student in the Faculty of Education with Memorial University of Newfoundland. This study is part of my Master's degree. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Dr Cecile Badenhorst, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of the study is to determine what challenges women re-entering the workforce after the age of fifty (50) face and to explore what tools and skills are needed to bridge knowledge gaps and help overcome barriers. Question include: What coaching opportunities are available? What skills and knowledge should be added to their job search tool kit? What new resources should be developed further or created to help them? This research is significant because in order to provide effective support, we need to understand the challenges women over 50 face when they re-enter the workforce.

What You Will Do in this Study:

I would like to interview you. This 30-minute interview will take place online (Skype or other video tool) or by teleconference (phone) at a time of your convenience.

Length of Time:

While the interview is scheduled to last 30 minutes, it may be slightly longer or shorter depending on your responses.

Withdrawal from the Study:

You can withdraw your data at any time during the interview and up to two weeks after the interview. If you withdraw during this period, all data collected from you (my interview notes) will be destroyed. Two weeks after the interview, the data will be coded and combined with other interviews. After that, it will be impossible to withdraw your data.

Possible Benefits:

You may find it beneficial to talk about the challenges facing women over 50 re-entering the workforce and sharing your experiences. The scholarly community will also benefit from this research since this study will add to our knowledge and may even provide practical recommendations.

Possible Risks:

Since we will be talking about a vulnerable group, there may be some emotional risks and you may feel upset or emotional. We anticipate that the risk is minimal, however, if you do become emotional, please refer to the Toronto Distress Centre - Call this number 1-416-408-4357.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality means safeguarding your identity and personal information. I intend to transcribe notes from your interview. I will remove any identifying markers from my notes and once I begin data analysis, my notes will be coded and all names and other identifying material removed. Although the data from this research project may be published and presented at conferences, the data will be reported in a combined form, so that it will not be possible to identify individuals. The informed consent forms will be stored separately from my transcribed notes, so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses. Although I will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information will be removed. Because the participants for this research project have been selected from a small group of people, many of whom are known to each other, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said.

Anonymity:

Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance. Identifying markers and information will be removed from my interview notes and every reasonable effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. You will not be identified in publications without your explicit permission.

Recording of Data:

The interviews will take place via a 30-minute interview with you online (Skype or other video tool) or by teleconference (phone). During the interview, I will take hand-written notes which I will transcribe onto an electronic document.

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:

The electronic documents will be saved on the hard-drive of my computer. These electronic data files will be stored on a password-protected computer. Hard copies of the electronic files will be stored in a secure location – a locked filing cabinet. Consent form will be stored separately from the data. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data. Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research, after that time period, it will be destroyed.

Reporting of Results:

The data will be published as a thesis and may be published in scholarly journals or presented at academic conferences. Results can be obtained by contacting me directly. Upon completion, my thesis will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, and can be accessed online at: http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses. The data will be reported through using direct quotations but these will be anonymized.

Sharing of Results with Participants:

Results can be obtained by contacting me directly.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Wendy McAleer Carpenter at wendymcaleer@gmail.com or call 905-616-6306.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Online consent form:

Consent:

By completing this interview you agree that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been advised that you may ask questions about this study and receive answers prior to continuing.
- You are satisfied that any questions you had have been addressed.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation from the study without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw, you may request that your data be removed from the study by contacting the researcher, Wendy McAleer by email wendymcaleer@gmail.com up to two weeks after your interview.

Please retain a copy of this PDF consent form for your records.

By consenting to this online form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Please retain a copy of this consent information for your records.

Agreeing to the interview by contacting the researcher Wendy McAleer by email wendymcaleer@gmail.com or phone 905-616-6306 constitutes consent and implies your agreement to the above statements.

Appendix E - Interview Guide

Before the interview begins a review of the consent form will take place. Participants will be reminded they may skip any question they do not wish to answer. They will be asked not to include any confidential information about anyone they coached or helped.

For my online video or phone call interview with career coaches and/or re-employment consultants, I intend to ask questions such as:

- *What obstacles, if any, do women over the age of 50 experience, when re-entering the Canadian workforce for paid work?*

- *From your experience as a career coach and/or re-employment consultant what advice have you given most often to woman over the age of 50 looking to re-enter the workforce?*

- *What specific skills and knowledge have you recommended they add to their job search tool box?*

- *What job search tools and/or training seem to be the most difficult for women over 50 to access (if any) and why?*

- *As a career coach and/or re-employment consultant what tools and/or training should be created or developed further that would help women over 50 secure work related to their experience?*

- *Without divulging names or confidential information, please share some of your experience(s) as a career coach and/or re-employment consultant of supporting women over 50 who are re-entering the workforce.*