A Grey Area: An Investigation of Organisational Decision-Maker Attitudes toward ‘Older’ Workers

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Abstract

Workforce ageing has been labelled the defining social issue of the 21st century. Projections of diminishing workforces and declining prosperity have led to the realisation that ‘older workers’ are required to remain in the labour market for longer. Yet, mounting evidence suggests the categorisation of workers as ‘older’ has a negative impact on their employability. How governments and organisations will negotiate this new work environment requires an understanding of the ways in which ‘older workers’ are perceived in organisations. This thesis therefore examines the attitudes of organisational decision-makers (i.e. those involved in the process of recruiting, selecting, training, and developing workers in organisations) toward ‘older workers’. In doing so, it draws on survey data from 243 organisational decision-makers across industries in Ireland in order to: first, clarify who they consider ‘older workers’ to be; second, to examine their attitudes toward these ‘older workers’; and, finally, to explore what specific individual and organisational factors appear to influence both how they define ‘older workers’, and their (positive or negative) attitudes toward them. The findings reveal that a worker is considered an ‘older worker’ at an average age of between 52 and 53 calendar years, which appears to be explained by both individual and organisational influences; workplace age demographics, the age of the decision-maker, and to some extent, industry type, play a role. Aside from calendar years, however, decision-makers adopt a number of differing approaches in defining an ‘older worker’, suggesting the need for a reconceptualisation of the term. Furthermore, decision-maker attitudes toward these ‘older workers’ are found to be largely negative in nature. Interestingly, organisational factors seem to have little impact on these attitudes. Rather, the findings show that the individual characteristics of decision-makers are significantly more influential. Specifically, the decision-makers’ age, gender, position, and to a degree, position tenure, emerge as unique contributors to their attitudes towards ‘older workers’. Where policy and practice aimed at increasing employment for ‘older workers’, directed at those aged 55 or 65, tend to focus on the organisational barriers that may inhibit age inclusiveness, the findings suggest the need for more innovative ways in which to address both the age variable, and the nature of ageist attitudes in organisations, in this ‘defining’ era of workforce ageing.
Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted to any other university or higher education institution, or for any other academic award. Where the work of others is reported, it is fully acknowledged and referenced.

________________________
Jean McCarthy
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As no woman is an island, I could not have accomplished this research without the help of many throughout the past three years.

Two people have played a particularly important role in this research as supervisors, mentors, and as true friends; Noreen Heraty and Christine Cross. You have never once failed to lend your support, your guidance, your encouragement, and most of all, your patience when needed. For all these things and more, I will be forever in debt. You are nothing short of inspiring.

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Dedication

To my parents, who always said their children deserve to get two things in life - a good education, and a good set of teeth! Your love, support, and encouragement know no bounds.
Respice, Adspice, Prospice
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Chapter 1 Introduction

Given the sheer size of (the) phenomenon and the centrality of work to people’s lives and livelihoods, as well as the importance of the workforce to organisations and the economy; researchers, organisational decision-makers, those interested in public policy, and even the general public, have shown an interest in better understanding the ageing workforce.

(Adams and Schultz, 2007:1)

1.1 Introduction

The ageing workforce has been described as the defining social issue of the twenty first century (Pitt-Catsouphes, 2007), posing as it does significant challenges to the economic and social structure of society. Changing demographic landscapes worldwide expose the impending loss of the baby boom generation from the workforce (the large cohort born in the post-war baby boom era, between 1946 and 1964) as they reach their sixties and seventies over the coming years. At the same time, decreasing birth rates will likely lead to labour shortages of younger workers. Combined, the consequences of such phenomena include heightened long-term pressure on national social security and pension systems further expidited by insufficient replacement rates, as well as problems associated with experience and knowledge loss across organisations. These issues have prompted a recent global policy orientation toward extending working life, and encouraging ‘older workers’ to remain in the labour force (cf. Burkhauser and Quinn, 1997; Lee, 2004; OECD, 2005; CARDI, 2010). The continued labour force participation of ‘older workers’ is now recognised as critical in facilitating economic growth (DELSA, 2006; Feyrer, 2007), and reducing fiscal strain on social protection (Walker, 2007). It is steadily emerging, however, that many organisations across the globe have serious reservations about employing ‘older workers’ (Johnson, 2007), to the extent that negative attitudes toward ‘older workers’ now appear widespread (DELSA, 2006; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). ‘Older workers’ are often stereotyped as being less productive (Rosen and Jerdee, 1977; Gordon and Arvey, 2004), less
trainable (McGregor, 2002; Weiss and Maurer, 2004), and consequently less hireable (Raza and Carpenter, 1987; McCann & Giles, 2004), or less promotable (Waldman and Avolio, 1986; Cleveland and Shore, 1992) than younger workers. These stereotypes operate as barriers to the continued employment opportunities of ‘older workers’ (Taylor, 2001; Gordon and Arvey, 2004; Schultz and Adams, 2007).

The study of ageing and work (Industrial Gerontology) represents a burgeoning field of research with an extensive focus on exploring these negative stereotypes and some of the barriers faced by older people in the labour market. We know, for example, that the categorisation of workers as ‘older’ has a negative impact on their employability (Taylor, 2001; Schultz and Adams, 2007), not only in terms of re-entering the labour market following a period of unemployment, but also in terms of their access to training and promotion. That being said, progress in the field has been somewhat curtailed by persistent difficulties in specifying who ‘older workers’ are actually considered to be (cf. Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005; Cleveland and Lim, 2007; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007). Similarly, and rather surprisingly, insufficient attention has been paid to the multi-dimensional nature of ageist attitudes at work, as well as the factors (positive or negative) that may influence these attitudes (Perry, 1994; 1995; Chiu et al, 2001; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). In the context of workforce ageing, a better understanding of these issues becomes extremely important if we now require ‘older workers’ to remain in the labour market for longer. Given the recent global economic crisis and the resultant rise in the numbers of workers over 50 who are now unemployed (Browning and Silver, 2008; CSO, 2011), the attitudes of those charged with the recruitment, development and retention of employees in organisations toward ‘older workers’ are especially of concern. When decision-makers in organisations hold ageist attitudes, it can ‘affect the decisions which are taken to recruit, promote, re-train or dismiss an employee’ (Brennan et al, 2007:7). This thesis, therefore, investigates the attitudes of organisational decision-makers (i.e., those involved in the process of recruiting, selecting, training, and developing workers in organisations) toward those they consider ‘older workers’. This investigation is set specifically within an Irish context, where the Centre for Ageing Research
and Development in Ireland has highlighted the urgent need to address current attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in organisations (CARDI, 2010) as it has largely remained a ‘grey area’ of understanding.

This chapter introduces the thesis. In doing so, it delineates the background to the research, highlighting the 21st century phenomenon of workforce ageing and the political, economic, and social challenges this phenomenon brings. In light of these challenges, some persistent empirical, conceptual and theoretical shortcomings in addressing the issues associated with an ageing workforce are underscored. Derived from this, the rationale for this thesis and its central research questions are set down. The methodological approach is summarily presented and the structure of the remainder of the thesis is outlined.

1.2 Background to the Research

The ‘demographic transition’ (Kirk, 1996) of declining mortality and fertility rates currently taking place represents a shift toward an ageing society whereby, as the population ages, the workforce ages. These changes to population demographics are well established in most developed countries worldwide, while developing nations are beginning to experience similar transitions (UN, 2002). The United Nations Population Division (2010: 11) states that ‘the number of older persons has tripled over the last fifty years; it will more than triple again over the next fifty years’. The older population is growing faster than the total population. In Europe, it is projected that those aged 65 years or more will account for 30 percent of the European Union’s population by 2060, compared with the current rate of 17.3 percent (Eurostat, 2010). The trends evidenced globally toward an overall ageing of the population are mirrored in the Irish situation. Over the short to medium term, however, population ageing in Ireland is unique; the ‘bulge’ in the older population is significantly younger than in most European countries.
Ireland has been a demographic outlier for at least 300 years. At the beginning of the 19th century, Ireland’s high population growth rate attracted much global attention, as did the collapse in growth rates following the Great Famine of the 1840s (Walsh, 2000). The population fell continuously between 1840 and 1960. In the 1930s, fewer than 3 million people lived in the Republic, while the population currently stands at 4,581,269 (CSO, 2011). Figure 1.1 below charts Ireland’s changing demographic history, showing the population distributions for males (blue bars) and females (red bars) from 1950. Each year’s distribution charts the population in a pyramid from younger to older, bottom to top. These distributions illustrate two key points. First, the population of older age groups are increasing. Second, due to declining fertility rates, there are decreases in the in the number of people in younger age groups. Clearly, a ‘demographic transition’ from a younger population to an increasingly older population is underway.

Figure 1.1 Ireland’s Demographic History, Source: Kinsella and Leddin, 2010
Approximately 11 percent of the Irish population is now aged 65 and over. Projections forecast that 20 to 25 percent of the population will be aged over 65 in 2041. The number of oldest persons (aged 80 and over) is projected to quadruple from 110,000 to 440,000 by 2041 (CSO, 2011). The age structure of the Irish population, however, is different to most other countries in the European Union. The median age of the population is 35, which is about 10 to 15 years younger than in the EU 27. Still, by 2050, Ireland’s population structure will be quite similar to the rest of Europe, and other developed countries (McCarthy, 2010). Increasing longevity is ultimately viewed as a positive phenomenon, but forecasts for the dependency ratios in Ireland show the transition from a younger to an older population more starkly.

Dependency ratios calculate the number of people of working age (16-64), and divide that into the number of people greater than 65 years of age. In 2005, the number of persons at work divided by the numbers of persons over 65 was 4.3. In 2026 this is forecast to drop to 2.7, and by 2056, the dependency ratio is forecast to be 1.4 (Government of Ireland, 2010). This means that, by 2056, Ireland will only have 1.4 persons of working age to every one person over the age of 65, down from 4.3 today. All demographic forecasts for developed nations like Ireland posit similar declines in people of working age (Kinsella and Leddin, 2010). These projected dramatic increases in dependency means that there will be a massive reduction in the number of people working, as well as intensified pressure on pension and social security systems. It is not surprising then, that global public policies are placing a greater emphasis on encouraging ‘older workers’ to remain in the labour market (cf. Burkhauser and Quinn, 1997; Lee, 2004; OECD, 2005; DELSA; 2006; Alley and Crimmins, 2007). ‘Older workers’ are clearly a valuable source of labour supply when demographic trends indicate an insufficient replacement rate of younger workers. In fact, the OECD’s Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (DELSA, 2006:1) has stated,

Rapid population ageing requires urgent policy action. Most OECD countries have responded to this challenge by reforming pensions. But this will not be enough. If ageing societies are to continue to prosper, there is no way around working longer.
As workers enter their fifties, however, their labour market participation declines sharply (Scales and Scase, 2000). This so-called ‘tide of early exit’ (Loretto et al., 2005; Loretto and White, 2006) has historically been attributed to, *inter alia*, the presence of social security systems which function to encourage early retirement (Wise, 2004; Alley and Crimmins, 2007). In light of workforce ageing, and concerns for the long-term financial viability of existing government-operated pension systems, this issue is currently being addressed by the introduction of pension reforms worldwide. The Irish state pension system, in common with most other state systems in Europe, is undergoing extensive change at present. Until twelve months ago, the State Pension (Contributory) was paid to people in Ireland from the age of 65, provided that they had the requisite social insurance contributions. This pension is not means tested, and people in receipt of this pension may also retain other income. Under the new National Pensions Framework 2010, the qualification age for the State Pension has risen from 65 to 66, and will rise to 67 in 2021 and to 68 in 2028 (Government of Ireland, 2010; CI, 2011). Workers who earn above a certain income threshold will automatically be enrolled in a supplementary pension scheme to provide additional retirement income, unless they already contribute to an employers’ scheme which provides higher contribution levels. The aim of such reform, in Ireland, and in many other countries, is to reduce the financial disincentives to carry on working at older ages.

More recently, the labour market participation of ‘older workers’ worldwide has been significantly affected as a result of the global economic crisis (Simonazzi, 2009; ILO, 2010; ILO, 2011). In Ireland, just 15 percent of the total labour force is comprised of workers aged 55 and over (CSO, 2011), with those in the 25-54 age group making up the majority of the 2,099,900 people currently in the labour force (CSO, 2011). This is shown in Table 1.1 below.
Table 1.1 Irish Labour Force Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>% Total Labour Force</th>
<th>% Males in Labour Force</th>
<th>% Females in Labour Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CSO, 2011

The total number of employed persons in the labour force, however, is currently 1,804,200 (CSO, 2011), with 962,100 males employed and 842,100 females employed. Table 1.2 below presents the numbers of people employed and unemployed in Ireland, categorised by age and gender.

Table 1.2 Irish Employment and Unemployment Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Males</th>
<th>% Employed</th>
<th>% Unemployed</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>% Employed</th>
<th>% Unemployed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>16.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>34.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>24.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CSO, 2011

In the aftermath of the global economic crisis, unemployment rates for both males and females aged 15-64 are rising year on year since 2008 in Ireland (CSO, 2011). In complete contrast to the ‘Celtic Tiger’ years of the 1990s, when economic growth (GDP) averaged over 5 percent each year (IMF, 2009), Ireland, like most Western economies, fell into recession in 2008. As a result, Irish employment is continuing to contract and, correspondingly, unemployment rates are continuing to rise sharply. This is a particularly pertinent issue for ‘older workers’, because, when economic prospects are weak, ‘older workers’ find themselves in a vulnerable position (Snape and Redman, 2003; DELSA, 2006; ILO, 2011). ‘Older workers’ who lose their jobs are found to be more likely to
stay unemployed for longer periods than their younger counterparts, and more likely to give up looking for another job (Scales and Scase, 2000; Kanfer et al, 2001; Weiss and Maurer, 2004; Loretto et al, 2005, Loretto and White, 2006), and often, early retirement is seen as a less painful way to downsize the workforce than large-scale redundancies (Snape and Redman, 2003; VanDalen, Henkens, and Schippers, 2009). Moreover, the International Labour Organization has highlighted that, during economic downturns, organisations give lower priority to anti-discrimination policies and workers’ rights (ILO, 2011). As a result, the incidence of discrimination in the workplace is likely to increase (Walker, 1999; ILO, 2011).

This brings us to an altogether more long-standing and persistent issue attributed to the ‘tide of early exit’ (Loretto et al, 2005; Loretto and White, 2006), and the declining labour force participation of ‘older workers’; age discrimination. The prevalence of age discrimination at work is widely recounted in anecdotal evidence, and is reflected in the increasing number of age discrimination cases with a high number of verdicts against employers in the US (Lieber, 2007; AARP, 2010), Britain (ILC, 2010), Europe (Eurolink, 2001; Eurolink, 2010) and in Ireland (Equality Authority, 2010; CARDI, 2011). Despite increasingly protective employment legislation across the globe (CARDI, 2011), in these cases, workers perceive that they have been discriminated against in organisations because they are ‘older’.

In Ireland, age discrimination is prohibited by the Irish Employment Equality Acts 1998-2004, which outlaw discrimination on nine distinct grounds: gender, family status, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, race, and membership of the traveller community (OAGI, 2004). Discrimination is defined by the Law Society of Ireland (OAGI, 2004:5) as when,

one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated on any of the nine grounds. Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision would put certain persons at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons, unless that provision is objectively justified by a legitimate aim.
The scope of this legislation covers discrimination in relation to access to employment, advertising, conditions of employment, equal pay for work of equal value, promotion, collective agreements, training, and work experience. The age ground, however, was the largest category of employment case files under the Employment Equality Acts during 2008, 2009 and 2010 (Equality Authority, 2010). Niall Crowley, former CEO of the Equality Authority (2009:1), highlighted that,

The age ground predominantly involves allegations of discrimination by older workers. The emergence of the age ground as the highest area of case files under the Employment Equality Acts underpins the urgency in tackling the ageism that is all too prevalent in society.

The Equality Authority was established as a statutory body by the Employment Equality Act 1998 with the aim of working towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination in Ireland and promoting equality of opportunity (OAGI, 2004). The work of the Equality Authority has highlighted widespread ageism in Irish society, such that,

Strong negative stereotypes of older people persist. Negative and ill-informed assumptions as to the relationship between a person’s age and a person’s capacity all too often shape decision-making. Systems and institutional behaviours end up posing barriers to the participation of older people on foot of such decisions. To date this has been a hidden phenomenon but it would appear to be deeply ingrained.

(Equality Authority, 2010:1)

Clearly, the incidence of workplace age discrimination is prevalent in Ireland, where ‘strong negative stereotypes of older people’ in the labour market persist. One of the most commonly cited stereotypes about ‘older workers’ across Western labour markets is that they have lower job performance when compared to younger workers (cf. Rosen and Jerdee, 1977; Gordon and Arvey, 2004; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Certainly, it cannot be ignored that the ageing experience is a natural process which results in a gradual decline of biological and cognitive functioning over time (Potvin et al, 1980; Lamberts et al, 1997;
Feng et al, 2007). These natural effects of the ageing process, however, can vary dramatically from one ‘older’ person to another, such that functional decline could not affect all ‘older workers’ in similar ways, if at all:

Different individuals ‘age’ at different rates. One man at 45 may look and act -and work- like the average man at 65, while another at 70 may be to all intents and purposes no different from the average man of 50. We do not know to what degree these differences in aging are attributable to physiological factors and to what degree they are psychological. But that they exist is indisputable.

(Crook and Heinstein, 1980:4)

Moreover, despite the prevalence of the performance-decline stereotype about so-called ‘older workers’, there is a distinct lack of empirical evidence to suggest that job performance declines with age (cf. Cleveland and Landy, 1983; Czaja, 1994; Salthouse and Maurer, 1996; Cuddy and Fiske, 2002; Cleveland and Lim, 2007; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Overall, the evidence suggests that, at least, ‘older workers’ can be just as productive as younger workers (Prenda and Stahl, 2001). These findings support the notion then, that stereotypical beliefs about ‘older workers’, may often be exaggerated, and even incorrect (Allport, 1954; Fishbhein and Adjzen, 1975; Hassell and Perrewe, 1995). Such assumptions, however, can lead to negative decisions about the employment of ‘older workers’ (Equality Authority, 2010). Stereotypes, and other ageist attitudes, are therefore viewed as a serious and significant employment barrier for ‘older workers’ in the labour market. Yet, ageism remains largely a ‘hidden phenomenon’ (Equality Authority, 2010). Set against a background of workforce ageing; increasing dependency ratios; considerable economic constraints; and the requirement for ‘older workers’ to remain in the labour force; ageism in Ireland (and, indeed, worldwide), therefore, represents a critical problem. As Imel (1996:3), notes,

A paradox exists: an increasing proportion of the...workforce is ageing, at the same time the workplace is changing in ways that have been detrimental for older workers.
This ‘hidden phenomenon’ thus requires exposure. Where ageist attitudes in organisations may ‘shape’ decision-making and have a negative impact on the employability of ‘older workers’, policy-makers and practitioners need to better understand the nature of the ageist attitudes in organisations in the context of impending workforce ageing. It is this search for a better understanding that leads to the rationale for this study.

1.3 Rationale for the Research

A common theme for decades, and still of major concern, is the seemingly persistent, negative attitudes that exist in many organisations toward ‘older workers’. Public bodies and policy makers are concerned with increasing the labour market participation of ‘older workers’ to ensure a sufficient labour supply and to support economic growth over the coming decades. Organisations are concerned about the growing number of age discrimination law suits, as well as the strategic retention of human capital in the face of economic difficulties. Academics are interested in understanding and explaining pervasive ageism in organisations, and the dominant stereotypes of ‘older workers’. This has resulted in a proliferation of material across various media sources and in academia that centres on understanding ageist attitudes toward ‘older workers’, and dismantling the employment barriers faced by many ‘older workers’ in the labour market. Despite this flourishing literature in ageing and work (Industrial Gerontology), the ways in which ‘older workers’ are viewed in organisations remains underexplored in many respects.

First, while an interest in ‘older workers’ has intensified over the last few years, specifying who is (and who is not) an ‘older worker’ remains unsolved. Categorising workers by chronological age in terms of ‘older’ represents an area of divergence across the literature, as agreement on what constitutes an ‘older worker’ varies considerably from those aged 40, to 55, to 65, years of age and beyond (cf. Lawrence, 1988; Sterns and Doverspike, 1989; Stein and Rocco, 2001; OECD, 2005; Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005; Cleveland and Lim, 2007; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007; Kooij et al, 2008; Peeters and van Emmerick,
It is argued, however, that chronological age is not the only age marker present in the workplace. In fact, it is suggested that perceptual age markers may provide better insights into the concept of an ‘older worker’ than chronological age markers (cf. Cleveland and Shore, 1992; Cleveland, Shore and Murphy, 1997; Kooij et al, 2008; Pitt-Catsouphes et al, 2010), because individuals will use their own unique conceptualisations of age to define ‘older’ (Sterns and Gray, 1999). As such, there appears to be no established definition of an ‘older worker’, and we do not know, then, who ‘older workers’ are considered to be. This is viewed as problematic, since it is established that the categorisation of workers as ‘older’ can have a negative impact on the employability of this group. Particularly, Finkelstein and Farrell (2007:100-101) note that,

It is difficult to really understand older worker bias if we do not know what we are talking about when we use the word ‘old’…the work specific age bias literature needs to start looking at this systematically.

Before a better understanding of attitudes toward ‘older workers’ can be realised, it is imperative that we understand who we are actually referring to when we use the term ‘older worker’. The evident lack of agreement in the literature toward a definition of an ‘older worker’ has methodological implications, as well as conceptual ones. Analysing and comparing national and international employment trends, policies, and research findings pertaining to ‘older workers’ becomes difficult when we have no clear indication of who is (and who is not) an ‘older worker’. The ambiguity surrounding the definition of an ‘older worker’ is therefore viewed as a continuing problem for researchers in industrial gerontology (Sterns and Miklos, 1995; Peeters and VanEmmerick, 2008), and calls have been made for the systematic refinement of age identity as a measurement in the work setting (Finkelstein an Burke, 1998; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007).

Second, while a sizeable and growing body of literature has investigated the dominant stereotypes of ‘older workers’ in organisations (c.f. Bird and Fischer, 1986; Lyon and Pollard, 1987; Hassell and Perrewe, 1995, Posthuma and
Campion, 2009), stereotypes are only one of three distinct components to an ageist attitude. Ageist attitudes comprise stereotypical (cognitive), prejudicial (affective) and discriminatory (behavioural) components (Triandis, 1971; Cuddy and Fiske, 2004; Kite and Wagner, 2004; Solem, 2007; Iversen, Larsen and Solem, 2009). With the exception of Chiu et al (2001) who investigated discriminatory as well as stereotypical attitudes toward ‘older workers’, few empirical studies have addressed the behavioural component, while the affective component has been almost completely neglected (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007). As a result, the multi-dimensional nature of ageist attitudes at work are not yet fully understood (Chiu et al, 2001; Kite and Wagner, 2004; Rupp et al, 2005; Iversen et al, 2009), and, as such, it is difficult to determine if the literature is truly addressing the extent of the attitudes that exist toward ‘older workers’ in organisations. This is ‘one place we could do better in attempting to really understand what’s happening’ (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007:76).

Third, theory-driven findings in the field of ageing and work are only recently beginning to emerge (McCann and Giles, 2004). Particularly, the factors that may influence the negative attitudes that are found to exist toward ‘older workers’ in organisations have received limited attention in the literature (Perry, 1994, 1997; Chiu et al, 2001; Kite et al, 2005; Perry and Parlamis, 2005; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Where attitudes can vary in terms of valence and strength (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), it becomes important to identify what accounts for individual differences in attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in organisations. Just as what type of negative attitudes exist is an important question, an understanding of when these types of negative attitudes are likely to occur is equally significant. Given that previous research indicates that age bias takes place within a decision-making context at work (cf. Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; Chiu et al, 2001; Shore, Cleveland and Goldberg, 2003; Equality Authority, 2010), a better understanding of the individual and organisational characteristics of this decision-making context, and how they may influence (positively or negatively) age bias, is arguably central in attempting to reduce negative attitudes toward ‘older workers’. It is argued that exploring the individual and organisational influences on ageist attitudes in organisations may be a fertile place for theoretical expansion in the field of ageing and work (Kite
and Wagner, 2004; Kite et al., 2004; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007), while Posthuma and Campion (2009:177) have suggested that ‘future research should identify the human resources decision-making contexts in which ageist attitudes are most likely to occur’.

Finally, there is a paucity of empirical research on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in the 21st century. As Schultz and Adams (2007:305) point out,

Most of the research done on perceptions of ageing and work has been bounded by the limits of the 20th century’s loose labour markets and a ‘youngish population’. Additional theoretical and empirical work is needed given the evolving landscape of ageing and work.

It is necessary then, to see whether attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in organisations have changed as we enter the beginning of the second decade in the 21st century. In the last three years alone, the workplace has been radically transformed as a result of worldwide economic shocks and rising unemployment. Moreover, no research to date has examined attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland, an issue highlighted with great urgency by the Irish Centre for Ageing Research and Development in 2010 (CARDI, 2010). Given the demographic and economic changes that are currently taking place, as well as the perceived existence of ‘widespread ageism’ (Equality Authority, 2009) in Ireland, there is a need to empirically address this issue. Even more significant, perhaps, is the fact that the age structure of the Irish population is, at present, younger than in most other countries in the Western world. This allows Ireland, to some extent, a ‘window of opportunity’ in which to tackle the problems associated with workforce ageing, and to embolden a greater participation of ‘older workers’ in the labour force; before the age structure becomes similar to other developed countries in 2050. Certainly, a prerequisite to this is an understanding of the attitudes that currently exist toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland.

Taken together, the discussion presented in this section provides the core impetus for the present research, and consequently shapes the research questions which guide this study. These questions are now outlined.
1.4 Research Questions

Posthuma and Campion (2009) have posited that research on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ needs to take into account the human resources decision-making context, especially because when decision-makers in organisations hold ageist attitudes, it can affect the decisions they take about the employment of workers (cf. Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; Brennan et al, 2007; Schultz and Adams, 2007). In Ireland, however, research on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in organisations is, at best, scarce, where ageism in the workplace remains a ‘hidden phenomenon’ (cf. Equality Authority, 2010; CARDI, 2010). In consideration of these pertinent issues, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland. In order to carry out this investigation, and in light of the empirical, conceptual, and theoretical deficiencies in the literature identified previously in section 1.3, four key research questions guide this investigation:

- Research Question One Who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider ‘older workers’ to be?

- Research Question Two What are the prevailing (multi-dimensional) attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward ‘older workers’?

- Research Question Three What specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider ‘older workers’ to be?

- Research Question Four What specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward ‘older workers’?
1.5 Methodological Approach

In order to address the four key research questions of this study, it was necessary to adopt a methodological approach which would; first, clarify who organisational decision-makers consider ‘older workers’ to be; second, examine organisational decision-makers attitudes toward these ‘older workers’; and, finally, explore what specific individual and organisational factors appear to influence both how organisational decision-makers define ‘older workers’, and their (positive or negative) attitudes toward them. As such, a cross-sectional, largely quantitative research design was employed; applying a self-report survey methodology to investigate organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland.

A cross-sectional, largely quantitative approach, was considered to be the most workable and effective design in line with ‘methodological fit’ (Edmonson and McManus, 2007). Survey data was collected from a sample of 1200 organisational decision-makers drawn from small, medium and large organisations across all industry sectors in Ireland, yielding a response rate of 20.3 percent (n=243). The research instrument relied on closed questions with a number of open-ended questions interspersed throughout. The open questions were designed to gain a greater understanding of the term ‘older worker’. The closed questions comprised eight dependent variables measuring the multi-dimensional nature of attitudes toward ‘older workers’, as well as two sets of independent variables measuring individual and organisational characteristics of the sample. The approach and the methods employed reflect a rational response to the specifics of each of the four research questions, and are discussed at length later in this thesis in Chapter Three.
1.6 Outline of the Thesis

*Chapter Two* builds upon this introductory chapter and provides a review of the extant literature. In doing so, it establishes the research agenda set out here in greater depth. It presents a critical appraisal of both seminal and more recent work specifically related to the research questions. It argues that, although research on ageing and work issues have been the focus of a considerable research effort in recent years, our understanding of the age variable in the workplace remains partial at best; such that we are not yet fully conversant with either who ‘older workers’ are considered to be, or the dominant attitudes that exist toward them. Consequently, an urgent investigation is required into the attitudes toward ‘older workers’ that exist within a decision-making context at work. In light of this, the research question is affirmed, and a synthesis of the extant literature allows for the construction of an investigative conceptual framework, and derived hypotheses, which are also presented and outlined in this chapter.

*Chapter Three* discusses the inter-related nature that the research process took. It revisits the goals of the research, and describes how the conceptual framework used to investigate organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’ was constructed. The methods employed by the study, which are largely quantitative in nature, are outlined and explained; including a discussion on the ways in which variables were assessed and measured, as well as the nature of data analyses carried out. Considerations regarding the validity and limitations of the study are also summarised. In particular, it is highlighted that the choice of methodology in this study places an emphasis on achieving ‘methodological fit’ defined as the ‘internal consistency among elements of a research project – research question, prior work, research design, and theoretical contribution’ (Edmonson and McManus, 2007: 1155). Arguably, this ‘methodological fit’ renders a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under analysis.
Chapter Four reports the main findings of the research conducted with 243 organisational decision-makers across industries in Ireland. The characteristics of this sample are firstly explored. The chapter then places a particular emphasis on the hypotheses proposed earlier in Chapter Two, and whether each hypothesis was supported or rejected as a result of the rigorous data analyses employed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

Chapter Five presents a critical discussion of the findings in this study. This discussion is framed around the research questions posed in Chapter One and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The chapter highlights how the present research confirms, challenges, and adds to previous knowledge in the field of ageing and work. Particularly, the focus for debate in this chapter centres on how organisational decision-makers define an ‘older worker’; their attitudes toward these ‘older workers’; and what specific individual and organisational factors influence both how decision-makers define ‘older workers’, and their attitudes toward these ‘older workers’.

Chapter Six offers a synthesis of the evidence and a discussion of the contribution of this study to the field of ageing and work (Industrial Gerontology). It argues that the outcome of this integration is the construction of new perspectives on organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’. First, the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in this study results in the re-conceptualisation of the term ‘older worker’ in the ‘Older Worker Spectrum’ model. Second, a model on the attitudes of decision-makers toward ‘older workers’ created from the findings in this study is presented; advancing an empirical and theoretical understanding of specific influences on the nature of ageist attitudes at work. The implications of these findings for policy and practice, along with possible fruitful future directions for research are suggested, bringing the thesis to its conclusion.
Chapter 2 Reviewing the Literature

We never think entirely alone: we think in company, in a vast collaboration; we work with the workers of the past and of the present. (In) the whole intellectual world…each one finds in those about him (or her) the initiation, help, verification, information, encouragement, that he (or she) needs.

(Sertillanges, 1978:145)

2.1 Introduction

The study of age and ageism in society more generally has been the focus of considerable research effort in recent years. This is, perhaps, as a consequence of increasing global attention on the issues surrounding an ageing population, as discussed in the preceding chapter. The intention of this chapter is to review relevant bodies of literature that are pertinent to our understanding of ageing and work. Having established the research questions of this study in the preceding chapter to investigate organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’; this chapter presents a critical appraisal of both seminal and more recent work specifically related to the themes outlined in Chapter One. This chapter recognises the role each of these works has played in the development of the field, while also addressing the acknowledged shortcomings extant within the literature. As such, this chapter places a particular emphasis on the central debates pertaining to both ‘older workers’, and ageist attitudes in the workplace. The chapter is organised around four sections. The first section discusses the definition of an ‘older worker’. The second section addresses the nature of attitudes, and more specifically, the nature of attitudes toward ‘older workers’. The third section explores theoretical perspectives on the determinants of attitudes, and attitudes towards ‘older workers’. Finally, the chapter concludes with a synthesis of this literature. This allows for the construction of a conceptual framework, which is used to investigate organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in this study, before outlining the methods used to investigate this framework in Chapter Three.
2.2 Defining the ‘Older Worker’

Interest in the issues surrounding an ageing workforce has intensified over the last few years, particularly with respect to ‘older workers’. Yet, specifying who is (and who is not) an ‘older worker remains elusive’ (Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005:2). This becomes evident where the categorisation of workers in terms of ‘older’ represents an area of divergence across the literature. Agreement on what constitutes an older worker varies considerably from those aged 40, to 55, to 65, and even 75 years of age (cf. Crook and Heinstein, 1980; Ashbaugh and Fay, 1987; Stein and Rocco, 2001; OECD, 2005; Pitt-Catosuphes and Smyer, 2005; Rupp et al, 2005; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007; AARP, 2010; Pitt-Catsouphes et al, 2010). For example, the quasi-global Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines ‘older workers’ as those aged between 55 and 64 years of age (DELSA, 2006). This age range is also used by the Central Statistics Office in Ireland (CSO, 2011). The Department for Work and Pensions in Britain defines ‘older workers’ as those over 50 years of age (DWP, 2011); while the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (1967) in the United States protects ‘older workers’ aged over 40. In a study of public perceptions on ageing in Northern America (MetLife, 2005), the majority of respondents stated that 70 years of age begins to define a person as ‘older’.

Public policies on workforce ageing across the globe, however, typically describe ‘older workers’ as being either 55 years of age, or 65 years of age. Discussions about the labour force participation of ‘older workers’ tend to focus on those aged over 55 (DELSA, 2005; AARP, 2010). Kooij et al (2008) reason that this age marker is chosen because declines in labour market participation have become particularly apparent among workers aged over 55 in many countries; the so-called ‘tide of early exit’ (Scales and Scase, 2000, Loretto et al, 2005; Loretto and White, 2006). Debates about pension reforms and retirement, on the other hand, tend to place an emphasis on those aged 65 years and over (Evans et al, 1995; OECD, 2005; CI, 2011). Arguably, this is because statutory pension provisions take affect at this age in several countries (Gruber and Wise, 1997).
Many researchers investigating ‘older workers’ in organisations also seem to use the threshold of 55 or 65 years of age as a definition (cf. Kite and Wagner, 2004, Rupp et al, 2005; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007). Others use 45 years of age to define ‘older’ at work (NESF, 2003; Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005). In contrast, some researchers in the field offer no explicit definition, implying, to some extent, that ‘older workers’ represent an homogenous grouping. This is problematic; as it appears that there is no established ‘cut-off’ age with which to define an ‘older worker’, as highlighted by Maurer, Wrenn and Weiss (2003), and Charness et al (2007). Indeed, Cleveland and Lim (2007: 110) argue that the term ‘older worker’ may be difficult to capture in a single calendar, or chronological age measure, because ‘ageing is viewed as a multidimensional process’. As such, ageing refers to changes that occur in biological, psychological and social activity over time; therefore each individual with the same chronological age may be affected by the ageing process in different ways, and at different stages (DeLange et al, 2006; Kooij et al, 2008). Crook and Heinstein (1980:4) underline this point with clarity,

Different individuals ‘age’ at different rates. One man at 45 may look and act -and work- like the average man at 65, while another at 70 may be to all intents and purposes no different from the average man of 50. We do not know to what degree these differences in aging are attributable to physiological factors and to what degree they are psychological. But that they exist is indisputable.

This individual, multidimensional nature of the ageing process has led some researchers to speculate that chronological age markers, then, may not be sufficient enough to address the issues of ageing, and ‘older workers’, in organisations (cf. Avolio et al, 1984; Sterns and Alexander, 1987; Sterns and Doverspike, 1989; Cleveland and Shore, 1992; Cleveland and Lim, 2007; Kooij et al, 2008; Pitt-Catsouphes et al, 2010). In particular, Sterns and Doverspike (1989), Cleveland and Shore (1992) and, more latterly, Pitt-Catsouphes et al (2010) have offered wider approaches to defining age in the work setting. While acknowledging the chronological perspective on age, their work encompasses a variety of different meanings that can be attached to age in organisations, and are discussed in turn.
First, Sterns and Doverspike’s (1989) ‘conceptualisations of age’ model, presented in Table 2.1, describes five different meanings that can be aligned with the age variable at work. Specifically, they propose that workers can be defined in terms of their calendar, or chronological age; their functional age; their psychosocial and subjective age; their organisational age; and their life span age. Functional age refers to the changes that occur in line with the ageing process, often suggesting a change in physical and mental abilities with increases in age (Sterns and Doverspike, 1989). Psychosocial age markers reflect the age at which a worker is considered to be, based on the perceptions of others, while subjective age markers reflect how old or young workers perceive themselves to be (Sterns and Doverspike, 1989). The organisational age perspective is linked to the ageing of workers in individual organisations, largely referring to perceptions of workers’ ages based on the age norms within the organisation (Sterns and Doverspike, 1989). Finally, the life span approach to defining workers in terms of age takes into account individuals’ changes in behaviour at different stages across the life cycle, such as changes in family or socio-economic status (Sterns and Doverspike, 1989).

**Table 2.1 Conceptualisations of Age Model, Sterns and Doverspike (1989)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach to Defining Age at Work</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronological Age</td>
<td>An individual’s calendar age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Age</td>
<td>Biological and Psychological changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial/Subjective Age</td>
<td>Self and social perception of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Age</td>
<td>Career stage, skill obsolesce or age norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Life Span</td>
<td>Behavioural change during the life cycle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cleveland and Shore (1992) extended this model to suggest that approaches to defining workers’ age can be categorised into two distinct types of perceptual age measures: person-based age measures, and context-based age measures, as presented in Table 2.2. Cleveland, Shore and Murphy (1997:240) explain that, ‘person-based age measures refer to the individual and do not involve a specific comparison, whereas context-based age measures (e.g. I am younger than most people in my
profession) involve a specific comparison with others or with a group.’

This particular model comprises the person-based age measures of chronological age; subjective age; and functional age; and the context-based age measures of social age and organisational age. These measures are broadly similar to the perceptual age measures outlined by Sterns and Doverspike (1989). Importantly, however, Cleveland and Shore (1992) showed that, aside from chronological age, the alternative approaches to defining age in their model can predict evaluations of the attitudes, performance and potential of workers within organisations. In further work, Cleveland, Shore and Murphy (1997) demonstrated that these perceptual age measures accounted for variance in workers’ self-ratings of their health and retirement intentions, as well as managers’ ratings of the promotability of workers. These findings illustrate, then, the value of considering various meanings, outside of chronological markers, that are attached to defining age at work.

Table 2.2 Person/Context Based Age Model, Cleveland and Shore (1992)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach to Defining Age at Work</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person-Based Age Measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronological Age</td>
<td>Age in legal years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective/Personal Age</td>
<td>How old or young and individual perceives themselves to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional/Biological Age</td>
<td>Change in individual biological and psychological functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context-Based Age Measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Age</td>
<td>Others’ perceptions of an individual’s age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Age</td>
<td>Age in the context of the organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More recently, Pitt-Catosuphes *et al* (2010) further extend Sterns and Doverspike’s (1989) and Cleveland and Shore’s (1992) models to include generational age; tenure age; and career stage age. This model, the ‘Prism of Age’, is outlined in Table 2.3. Generational age refers to individuals born within a certain time period. Johnson and Lopes (2008) claim that four generations now exist in the workplace (traditionalists, born before 1946, baby-boomers, born
1946-64, generation X born 1965-80, and generation Y, born after 1980 and sometimes referred to as ‘the millennials’). Generational age, may, therefore, play a role in defining workers’ age according to the generational time period within which they were born. Tenure age refers to the number of years an individual has worked for an employer, while career stage age describes an individual’s stage in their career. These may also be useful approaches to defining age at work, given both Lawrence (1987, 1988) and Cooke (1995) maintain that age in organisations is linked to beliefs about an individual’s career, or indeed, their career opportunities.

Table 2.3 ‘Prism of Age’ Model, Pitt-Catsouphes et al (2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach to Defining Age at Work</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronological age</td>
<td>The number of years that you have lived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational Age</td>
<td>A group of individuals born during a certain time period (e.g. Gen Y, Gen X, Baby Boomer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Age</td>
<td>Relative to one's health impact's one's life expectancy or ability to carry out daily tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Age</td>
<td>How old society perceives you to be; common references include ‘40 is the new 30’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Stage Age</td>
<td>How important events and/or transitional experiences shape major life roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Age</td>
<td>The number of years that you have worked for your employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Stage Age</td>
<td>A way to describe a person's stage in their career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Age</td>
<td>How old a person feels, comparatively, in a group context; at the workplace this could be a department or team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Age</td>
<td>Backs up the saying, ‘you are only as old as you feel’ This stage reminds us that employees' sense of their own age might be different from their chronological age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is also some evidence to suggest that the gender of a worker has a bearing on how they are defined as ‘older’. For example, research by Eurolink (2001) found that some employers define females as ‘older workers’ at younger ages than males. While confirmatory evidence is lacking in this respect, the few studies that have investigated ‘gendered ageing’ effects (Itzen and Phillipson, 1993, 1994; Barnum et al, 1995; Ainsworth, 2002; Goldberg et al, 2004) found that women can experience more unfavourable employment-related outcomes than men in the workplace as they age; the so-called ‘double jeopardy’. Where the prevalence of sexism at work is widely documented (cf. Colwill, 1982; Cleveland, Stockdale and Murphy, 2000; Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000; Kite, Deaux, and Haines, 2008), Kolb (2002:313) reasons that ‘discrimination throughout the lifespan results in an accumulation of disadvantage in older age’. As such, older women may therefore be more susceptible to ageist attitudes in the workplace than older men. Very little empirical research, however, has examined a gender effect in defining a worker as an ‘older worker’.

It is clear from the discussions above, as Lawrence (1984) notes, that age at work is both an individual and a social experience; such that there appears to be varying approaches to defining workers as 'older'. Bytheway (1995) suggests that chronological age can determine an individual’s social identity, yet, there appears to be little agreement on what specific chronological age determines the identity of an ‘older worker’. As Ilmarien (2001) has stated, chronological ageing starts at birth and ends at death, therefore any individual in the labour market could be considered an ageing worker. Although legal definitions and social norms are used as guidelines for defining what an ‘older worker’ is, individuals will use the particular age range that fits with their own unique conceptualisations of age (Sterns and Gray, 1999). As a consequence, what may be more relevant, according to both Cleveland and Lim (2007) and Kooij et al (2008), is social age (others’ perceptions of an individual’s age), because it can have important implications in organisations. The categorisation of workers as ‘older’ has been shown to have a negative impact on the employability of this group of workers (Schultz and Adams, 2007), not only in terms of their re-entering the labour market following a period of unemployment, but also
regarding their access to development and promotion opportunities within organisations (cf. Crook and Heinsein, 1980; Cleveland and Shore, 1992; Taylor and Walker, 1998; Scales and Scase, 2000; Taylor, 2001; Loretto et al, 2005; Loretto and White, 2006; Posthuma and Campion, 2009; Equality Authority, 2010). For these reasons, the lack of a priori consensus on the term ‘older worker’ is viewed as a continuing problem for ageing and work researchers (Sterns and Miklos, 1995).

Particularly, Finkelstein and Burke (1998) have called for the systematic refinement of age identity as a measurement, especially where ageing research uses pre-defined chronological measures of ‘older workers’. Bytheway (1995) and Pitt-Catsouphes et al (2010) have indicated that these pre-defined measures could obstruct research findings. They argue that this lack of consensus toward a definition of an ‘older worker’ makes it difficult to accurately compare and analyse policies and research findings on ‘older workers’, and that forecasting employment trends for ‘older workers’ at national and global levels are likely to become challenging. Most significantly, Finkelstein and Farrell (2007:100-101) argue that,

> It is difficult to really understand older worker bias if we do not know what we are talking about when we use the word ‘old’…the work specific age bias literature needs to start looking at this systematically.

In summary, there appears to be no established universal definition of an ‘older worker’. This is viewed as problematic, since it appears that the ways in which people in organisations categorise workers as ‘older’ can have an impact on the employability of this group. The following sections discuss various aspects relating to attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in more detail. First, the nature of attitudes is explored.
2.3 The Nature of Attitudes

An attitude is probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in... social psychology.

(Allport, 1935:198)

Like many constructs in social psychology, there are numerous definitions of the term ‘attitude’: from Allport’s (1935:810) classic conceptualisation of an attitude as ‘a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related’; to more recent classifications, such as Eagly and Chaiken’s (1993:1) ‘psychological tendencies that are expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour’. This particular definition is considered the most ‘conventional’ (Albarracin et al., 2005:1; Schneider, 2005) in the contemporary attitudinal literature. Despite subtle differences across the evolution of study on the concept, most researchers in the field have emphasised the evaluative aspects of an attitude (see Table 2.4 below) in that an attitude involves the expression of an evaluative judgement about an object.

Indeed most attitude theorists would argue that evaluation is the predominant aspect of the attitude concept.

(Maio and Haddock, 2010:4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Attitude Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bogardus (1931:62)</td>
<td>‘An attitude is a tendency to act toward or against something in the environment, which becomes thereby a positive or negative value’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurstone (1931: 261)</td>
<td>‘The affect for or against a psychological object’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith et al (1956: 41)</td>
<td>‘(attitudes) provide a ready aid in ‘sizing up’ objects and events in the environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Furthermore, Eagly and Chaiken (1993, 1998) suggest that when attitudes are conceptualised as evaluative judgements, they can vary in two central ways: firstly attitudes differ in terms of valence, in other words, they can be positive or negative; and secondly, attitudes differ in strength, consequently an individual can feel less or more strongly about an object than others.

People are sensitive to covariations that they observe between the presence of a given object and the presence of related positive and negative cues.

(Fazio, Eiser and Shook, 2004:294)

Certainly, an underlying assumption across the literature is that an attitude can be reduced to the net difference between the positive and negative stimulations associated with an object (Thurstone, 1931; Allport, 1935). Likewise, people’s feelings about an object can vary ‘anywhere between two endpoints: maximally positive (and minimally negative) to maximally negative (and minimally positive)’ (Cacioppo and Bernston, 1994: 401). Shook, Fazio and Eiser (2007) found that extreme attitudes are more influential and are thus given more weight than mild attitudes. As such, strong attitudes are considered consequential; these attitudes can be resistant to change, persistent over time, and predictive of behaviour (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Pomerantz, Chaiken and Tordesillas, 1995). However, there has been considerable debate about the attitude-behaviour relationship, such that associations between verbal and non-verbal indicators of an attitude appear complex (cf. LaPiere, 1934; Schuman and Johnson, 1976;
Breckler and Wiggins, 1992; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Connor and Sparks, 2002; Proctor, 2003). Nonetheless, it is commonly acknowledged that an attitude is a predisposition to behave in a particular way (Fazio, 1986, 1995; Procter, 2003), and, as Schuman et al (1997:6) point out:

If attitudes and behaviours existed in entirely different spheres, learning about attitudes would be of little practical value, whatever their interest from the standpoint of intellectual understanding. But careful reviews of a wide range of past studies, as well as specific experimental research, make it clear that this is not the case. Attitudes and relevant behaviour at the individual level are usually correlated to some extent.

Moreover, attitudes are generally considered to comprise cognitive, affective and behavioural components (cf. Katz and Stotland, 1959; Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960; Zanna and Rempel, 1988; Albarracin et al., 2005). The cognitive domain refers to the beliefs about the probability that an object is associated with a given attribute (Fisbhein and Adjzen, 1975). Affect encompasses an overall emotional feeling concerning an object (Berkowitz, 2000), and behaviours are generally defined as the intended actions of an individual (Fazio, 1986, 1995). For example, Triandis (1971:2) explains this ‘tripartite view’ that an ‘attitude is an idea (the cognitive component) charged with emotion (the affective component) which predisposes a class of actions (the behavioural component) to a particular class of social situations’. More recently, Eagly and Chaiken (1993, 1998) extend this view to propose this tripartition best represents the types of responses that allow researchers to identify attitudes, because individuals’ attitudes are shaped based on their cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to an object. Individuals express their attitudes by means of holding certain beliefs about an object (cognitive domain), feeling a certain way about an object (affective domain), and intending to behave in a certain way (behavioural domain). It is suggested, therefore, that an attitude is actually an ‘evaluative summary’ of the information derived from these bases (Fabrigar et al., 2005; Zanna and Rempel, 1988), rather than simply ‘consisting’ of cognitive, affective and behavioural elements. While these components are recognised as being empirically distinct, they are often ‘directionally consistent’, for example, positive beliefs about a
social group can be associated with positive feelings about the group, and in turn, linked with positive behavioural intentions toward this group (Breckler, 1984; Zanna & Rempel, 1988).

Having discussed the nature of the attitude concept, this chapter now turns to the nature of attitudes specifically with respect to age.

2.4 The Nature of Ageist Attitudes

We have seen that evaluation is the predominant aspect of an attitude in the earlier discussion (Maio and Haddock, 2010); Nelson (2005) proposes that people automatically evaluate other people along three particular dimensions: race, gender, and age. As people categorise others along these dimensions, often they develop attitudes (Nelson, 2005). Attitude research has suggested that age is one of the first characteristics we notice about other people (Kite, Deaux and Miele, 1991; Fiske, 1998; Cuddy and Fiske, 2002). Research has also demonstrated that attitudes are more negative toward older than younger adults (Palmore, 1999; Nelson, 2002; Kite et al, 2005). That is, that ageism exists. Ageism has been described as the third great ‘ism’, following racism and sexism (Butler, 1995; Rupp et al, 2005), but has received much less attention across the bias literature (Butler, 1969; Palmore, 1999; Nelson, 2005; Shore et al, 2009). Duncan (2001) notes that there has been less focus on preventing discrimination from ageist attitudes than on discrimination from racist and sexist attitudes. He believes that this is rather ‘ironic’ considering that ageist attitudes have the potential to affect everyone as they get older, not just members of one particular race or sex group (Duncan 2001:26). Nelson (2005) suggests that the lack of attention on ageism in comparison to racism and sexism is because ageism is often ignored or, indeed, even accepted in modern society. Yet, it is possibly more prevalent than racism or sexism (Palmore, 2001; Levy and Banaji, 2002).

Butler’s (1969) seminal work coined the term ageism to refer to evaluative judgements toward a person or persons simply due to their advanced age. Here, he states that ageism comprises three interrelated aspects: prejudicial attitudes
toward older persons, old age, and the ageing process; discriminatory practices against older people; and institutional practices and policies that perpetuate stereotypes about older adults (Butler, 1969; 1980). In their review of the concept of ageism, however, Iversen, Larsen, and Solem (2009:8) state that ‘it is problematic that many researchers are still using this definition as the basis of empirical studies’. First, Butler’s (1969; 1980) definition implies that only ‘older’ people experience ageism. ‘Younger’ people, too, can be subjected to evaluative judgements and negative attitudes based on their perceived youth (Glover and Branine, 1997). Second, Butler’s (1969; 1980) definition does not use the classic cognitive-affective-behavioural tripartition, because the cognitive component is not included. Instead, it focuses on prejudicial attitudes (affective domain), discriminatory practices and institutional practices (behavioural domain). Although ageism has been defined using the tripartite view by some theorists (Bytheway, 1995; Palmore, 1999; Wilkinson and Ferraro, 2002; Greenberg at al., 2002), Iversen, Larsen, and Solem (2009) point out that many of these definitions do not explicate the tripartite structure. The tripartite structure of ageism is perhaps more comprehensively depicted by Kite and Wagner (2004), who identify that ageist attitudes comprise an amalgam of stereotypes (cognitive domain), prejudice (affective domain), and discriminatory intentions (behavioural domain). In addition to the tripartite view, it has also been acknowledged that ageist attitudes comprise positive and negative components (Cuddy and Fiske, 2002; Levy and Banaji, 2002), and can be both explicit (conscious) and implicit (unconscious) (Nelson, 2005). Palmore (1999) and Solem (2007) further make a distinction between ageism on an institutional level (as referred to by Butler, 1980) and ageism on an individual level. Institutional ageism refers to an overall climate of ageism among members of organisations and institutions, including organisational policies and practices which serve to negatively affect individuals with respect to their age. Individual ageism, on the other hand, represents the ageist attitudes held by individuals in society. To illustrate the definitional erraticism, Table 2.5 provides a range of definitions of ageism that have been proposed by attitudinal theorists over the last 40 years or more.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Butler (1969:243)</td>
<td>‘Age discrimination or age-ism is prejudice by one age group toward other age groups’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler (1980)</td>
<td>(1) prejudicial attitudes toward older persons, old age, and the ageing process, which includes attitudes held by older adults themselves; (2) discriminatory practices against older people; and (3) institutional practices and policies that perpetuate stereotypes about older adults, reduce their opportunity for life satisfaction, and undermine their personal dignity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bytheway (1995:14)</td>
<td>‘Ageism is a set of beliefs originating in the biological variation between people and relating to the ageing process. It is in the actions of corporate bodies, what is said and done by their representatives and the resulting views that are held by ordinary ageing people, that ageism is made manifest. Ageism generates and reinforce a far and denigration of the ageing process, and stereotyping presumptions regarding competence and protection. In particular, ageism legitimises the use of chronological age to mark out classes of people who are systematically denied resources and opportunities that others enjoy, and who suffer the consequences of such denigration, ranging from well-meaning patronage to unambiguous vilification’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmore (1999:4)</td>
<td>‘I define ageism as any prejudice against or in favour of an age group. Prejudice against an age group is a negative stereotype about that group (such as the belief that most old people are senile), or a negative attitude based on a stereotype (such as a feeling that old age is usually the worst time in life). Discrimination against an age group (such as compulsory retirement) ...But there is also positive ageism: prejudice and discrimination in favour of the aged’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuddy &amp; Fiske (2002:4)</td>
<td>‘Category-based attitudes...are represented as prejudice (affective), discrimination (behavioural), and stereotyping (cognitive). Ageism contains the three same mechanisms’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenberg, Schimel, &amp; Martens (2002:27)</td>
<td>‘Ageism can most simply be defined as negative attitudes or behaviours toward an individual solely based on that person’s age’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levy &amp; Benaji (2002:50)</td>
<td>‘We define ageism as an alteration in feeling, belief, or behaviour in response to an individual’s or group’s perceived chronological age’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkinson and Ferraro (2002:340)</td>
<td>‘The definition of ageism that has become most widely accepted is prejudice and discrimination against older people based on the belief that aging makes people less attractive, less intelligent, sexual, and...’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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productivity. Prejudice refers to attitudes while discrimination focuses on behaviour. Institutional discrimination refers to a bias in actions inherent in the operation of any society’s institutions...While ageism is generally thought to be negative, it can also be positive.

Solem (2007:111) ‘When the beliefs and feelings are connected to discriminatory behaviour against elderly people, we talk about age discrimination. These three components of attitudes: the cognitive (beliefs about elderly people), the affective (feelings for the elderly) and the behavioural (acts toward the elderly), could be subsumed under the concept of ageism, even if the concept are used in different ways, also about discrimination against young people and both negative and positive discrimination. Ageism may be expressed in inter-individual interaction, but may also be inherent in social and material structures.

Seeking to offset the inconsistency among theorists on the complexity of ageist attitudes, and with the purpose of providing clarity and accuracy on the concept, Iversen, Larsen, and Solem (2009: 15) offer a new definition of the term:

Ageism is defined as negative or positive stereotypes, prejudice and/or discrimination against (or to the advantage of) people on the basis of their chronological age or on the basis of a perception of them as being ‘old’ or ‘elderly’. Ageism can be implicit or explicit and can be expressed on a micro-, meso-, or macro-level.

It is argued here in this thesis that this particular view of ageism is, perhaps, the most comprehensive and, indeed, the most practical definition in the literature to date for a number of reasons. First, the traditional social psychological tripartite view of attitudes is encompassed in the cognitive-affective-behavioural domain; second, it recognises that attitudes can be both negative and positive (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, 1998); thirdly, the conscious (explicit) and unconscious (implicit) elements of ageism are acknowledged; additionally, this definition makes specific reference to the perceptual nature of how individuals categorise people by age, as previously discussed by Nelson (2005). Most significantly, the operation of ageist attitudes at the individual (micro) level, the social-network (meso) level, and the institutional and cultural (macro) level are particularly useful in studying workplace ageist attitudes, given the structural and interactive characteristics of organisations. This is not to say that the ageist attitudes at an
individual level would not be influenced in any way by institutional and social aspects of ageism. This issue is discussed in greater depth later in the chapter. For now, having arrived at an appropriate working definition of ageism, this chapter turns to the ageist attitudes that have been found to exist toward ‘older workers’ more specifically.

2.5 Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

In the work environment, research shows that negative attitudes about older employees exist (cf. Tuckman and Lorge, 1952; Kirchner and Dunnette, 1954; Rosen and Jerdee, 1976a, 1976b, 1977; Bird and Fischer, 1986; Lyon and Pollard, 1987; Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; Chiu et al, 2001; Brooke and Taylor, 2005; Kite et al, 2005; Loretto and White, 2006; Posthuma and Campion, 2009), to the extent that we can say ageism exists in many organisations. Some recent research, though, suggests that attitudes toward ‘older workers’ may be becoming more positive (Kluge and Krings, 2008). Where ageist attitudes comprise stereotypical, prejudicial, and behavioural components (Kite and Wagner, 2002; Iversen, Larsen and Solem, 2009), it appears that stereotypes of ‘older workers’ have been the central focus of previous research on attitudes toward ‘older workers’.

2.5.1 Stereotypes of ‘Older Workers’

Workplace age stereotypes are beliefs and expectations about workers based on their age (Hamilton and Sherman, 1994; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). The term ‘stereotype’ is attributed to Parisian printer, Didot, who first used the word in 1798 to describe a printing process that created reproductions using moulds (Ashmore et al, 1981). This expression has evolved into a metaphor for mental reproductions of reality (Nelson, 2004). As such, generalised beliefs individuals have about members of particular groups in society are usually labelled as stereotypes.
For the most part we do not first see, and then define; we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.

(Lippman, 1922:81)

As we see here, Lippman (1922) likened stereotypes to ‘pictures in the head’ which come to mind quickly when we think about groups or members of groups in society, believing that these ‘pictures’ help us make sense of our world, and our reality. Zanna and Olsen (1994) emphasise the general agreement that stereotypes are beliefs, more specifically; a stereotype is a cognitive construct (Fisshbein and Adjzen, 1975). Stereotypes, however, are recognised as a ‘relatively simplex cognition, especially of a social group’ (Krech, Crutchfield and Ballachey, 1962:67), which is exaggerated (Allport, 1954:91). Age-based stereotypes generally regard old age as a period of poor health, loneliness, resistance to change, as well as physical and mental declining abilities (Erber, 1989; Pratt and Norris, 1994; Yoon et al, 2000). Bytheway (2005) found that when people are defined as old, they are often categorised as senile, rigid, old-fashioned, and inferior. Palmore (1999) identified nine major stereotyped characteristics associated with ‘older’ people as: illness; impotency; ugliness; mental decline; mental illness; uselessness; isolation; poverty; and depression. Although mostly negative, positive stereotypes about ‘older’ people also exist, where they are labelled as, for example: kind; wise; dependable; affluent; and powerful (Palmore, 1999). Further, Cuddy, Norton and Fiske (2005) proposed their ‘Stereotype Content Model’ to highlight that ‘older’ people are often stereotyped along two dimensions; competence and warmth. The warmth dimension is characterised by positive traits such as friendliness and honesty, and by negative traits such as coldness, and untrustworthiness. The competence dimension, then, is characterised by positive traits such as assertiveness and intelligence, and by negative traits such as inefficiency, indecisiveness, and laziness (Cuddy, Norton and Fiske, 2005; Abele et al, 2008). It is now understood, therefore, that stereotypical beliefs about groups are usually not entirely negative (or positive), but contain a mixture of positive and negative elements (Fiske et al, 2002).
Stereotypes of ‘older workers’, however, attribute mostly negative job-related characteristics to this group (Rosen and Jerdee, 1976b; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). For example, ‘older workers’ are seen as: being resistant to change and having a lower physical and performance capacity (Rosen and Jerdee, 1977; Gordon and Arvey, 2004); being less motivated (Craft et al., 1979); less able to handle criticism (Tuckman and Lorge, 1952); making fewer contributions to the organisation with a lower potential for development (Perry and Varney, 1978); unable to work in teams (Lyon and Pollard, 1987); and less economically beneficial (Finkelstein, Higgins and Clancy, 2000) than younger workers. Hayward et al. (1997) found beliefs that ‘older workers’ are harder to train than younger workers, as well as being too ‘cautious’ at work. Other beliefs attributed to older workers are that they do poorly in the classroom and that they are computer illiterate (Rosow and Zager, 1980; Simon, 1996). Some positive stereotypes about older workers have also been found in the literature (e.g. Kluge and Krings, 2008). For example, ‘older workers’ are perceived to be more reliable (Hayward et al., 2007); more conscientious (Warr and Pennington, 1993); with lower rates of absenteeism (Broadbridge, 2001; Hedge et al., 2006) and better people skills (AARP, 2000); than younger workers.

One of the most common stereotypes about ‘older workers’, is that they have lower job performance when compared to younger workers (cf. Rosen and Jerdee, 1977; Gordon and Arvey, 2004; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Yet, despite the prevalence of this stereotype, there is a distinct lack of empirical evidence to suggest that job performance declines with age (cf. Cleveland and Landy, 1983; Czaja, 1994; Salthouse and Maurer, 1996; Cuddy and Fiske, 2002; Cleveland and Lim, 2007; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). For example, Rosen and Jerdee (1988) and McEvoy and Cascio (1989) found that job performance often improves with age, and when declines are found, they tend not to be significant. Waldman and Avolio (1990) showed that small decreases in cognitive functioning may be associated with increases age, but later found that, across occupations, both age and job tenure are positively associated with job performance (Avolio, Waldman and McDaniel, 1990). Overall, the evidence suggests that, at least, ‘older workers’ can be just as productive as younger workers (Prenda and Stahl, 2001). Another common stereotype of ‘older
workers’ is that they are non-adaptive to change (Britton and Thomas, 1973; Rosen and Jerdee, 1977; AARP, 2000; Weiss and Maurer, 2004). While Yeatts et al (2010) acknowledge that little attention has been paid to the factors that influence an ‘older’ worker’s ability to adapt to change, DeVries (2006) demonstrated that all employees can show adaptability to change regardless of age in certain contexts, such as periods of re-structure in organisations.

These findings support the notion then, that stereotypical beliefs about groups, such as ‘older workers’, are often exaggerated, and even incorrect (Allport, 1954; Fishbein and Adjzen, 1975; Hassell and Perrewe, 1995). One potentially serious consequence of the stereotyping of older workers, however, is that they may serve to offer limited opportunities to older people at work (Rosen and Jerdee, 1974). Particularly, ‘negative stereotypes may affect the judgements and actions of organisational decision makers’ (Hedge et al, 2006: 46). Understanding the stereotypes that decision-makers in organisations hold about ‘older workers’ is therefore hugely important at a time when the workforce is rapidly ageing, as highlighted by Walker (1999), Posthuma and Campion (2009), and CARDI (2010).

While stereotypes have been the most widely researched component of attitudes toward ‘older workers’, it is now accepted that attitudes about groups may not be derived solely from stereotypical beliefs (Haddock and Zanna, 1998). Indeed, ageist attitudes comprise not only stereotypical beliefs, but also prejudicial feelings and behavioural predispositions (cf. Katz and Stotland, 1959; Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960; Zanna and Rempel, 1988; Albarracin et al., 2005; Kite and Wagner, 2004; Iversen Larsen and Solem, 2009). Accordingly, the following section places an emphasis on affective (prejudice) and behavioural (discriminatory predispositions) attitudes toward ‘older workers’.
2.5.2 Affective and Behavioural Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

Affective attitudes encompass individuals’ overall emotional feelings concerning an object (Berkowitz, 2000; Fiske, 2004), while behavioural attitudes are generally defined as the intended actions of an individual toward an object (Fazio, 1986, 1995). With respect to ageist attitudes, affect represents prejudicial feelings, while behaviour represents discriminatory predispositions, toward an individual based on their age, or a perception of their age (Kite and Wagner, 2004; Iversen, Larsen and Solem, 2009). Much of the research on ageism, however, has been criticised for assessing only the cognitive components of ageist attitudes, namely, stereotypes (Fraboni et al., 1990; Rupp et al., 2005; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007), where the affective and behavioural components of ageist attitudes are often neglected.

Finkelstein and Farrell (2007: 76) note that the affective component of attitudes toward ‘older workers’ appears to be the ‘least consistently conceptualised and measured in the bias literature’, where efforts to piece apart affect from cognition and behaviour are only now beginning to be discussed (Rupp et al., 2005; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007). Discrimination itself, in terms of actual behaviour toward ‘older workers’, has provided some focus in the literature because it is acknowledged that it exists (cf. Taylor and Walker, 1998; Gordon and Arvey, 2004; Loretto and White, 2006). First, some workers perceive that they are discriminated against because they are ‘older’, leading to an increase in age lawsuits across the globe (cf. Itzen and Phillipson, 1993; Taylor and Walker, 1998; Lieber, 2007; Posthuma and Campion, 2009; Equality Authority, 2010). It is also now recognised that the categorisation of workers as ‘older’ has a negative impact on the employability of this group of workers (Schultz and Adams, 2007). Discrimination against ‘older workers’ has been established in employment related outcomes such as selection, participation in training, and opportunities for promotion (McCann & Giles, 2004). Raza and Carpenter (1987) found that age was negatively related to hire-ability, while Kanfer et al. (2001) demonstrated that ‘younger’ people reported a greater likelihood of becoming re-employed than ‘older’ people. There is also evidence to suggest that ‘older workers’ are less likely to gain access to training and development opportunities
at work (Rosen and Jerdee, 1976a; Cleveland and Shore, 1992; Taylor and Walker, 1998), and may also be more likely to be passed over for promotion in favour of younger employees (Palmore, 1990). Further, ‘older workers’ are considered more likely to be selected for redundancy than younger age groups (Snape and Redman, 2003), where supervisors are not in favour of employees working up until retirement age (Henkens, 2000).

However, there appears to be a lack of systematic empirical evidence on assessing people’s actual discriminatory predispositions, in other words, their intentions to (or not to) discriminate (Chiu et al, 2001). Many studies concerning age discrimination are limited to discussing age stereotypes (Rosen and Jerdee, 1976b, 1977; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Yet, these attitude constructs are conceptually and empirically distinct (cf. Triandis, 1971, Iversen, Larsen and Solem, 2009). Stereotypes, of course, are often seen as a precursor to discriminatory behaviours (Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; Dovidio et al, 1996), but research suggests that attitudes based on emotion can be stronger, or at least more stable, than attitudes based on beliefs (cf. Edwards, 1990; Edwards and von Hippel, 1995; Giner-Sorolla, 2001). Moreover, behaviour is thought to be affectively driven (Esses and Dovidio, 2002). This reinforces the need to address the affective and behavioural dimension of ageist attitudes, where these components are seen as ‘important to measurement in future research on age bias – especially workplace bias’ (Rupp et al, 2005: 356).

Having established that negative and, in some cases, positive attitudes toward ‘older workers’ are found to exist, it is now necessary to examine the factors that have been found to influence (negative or positive) these attitudes in the work setting, which is the focus of the following section.

**2.5.3 Influential Factors**

Age bias and negative attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in organisations have been found to exist, particularly set within a decision-making context (cf. Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; Shore, Cleveland and Goldberg, 2003; Posthuma and
Campion, 2009). Several characteristics of this decision-making context appear to have some influence on the positive or negative nature of ageist attitudes at work, including: the individual characteristics of raters (the decision-makers) themselves; as well as the characteristics of the organisation within which this decision-making occurs.

2.5.3.1 Individual Factors

As noted earlier in this chapter, attitudes can vary in terms of valence and strength, such that an individual can feel more or less favourable toward an object than others (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, 1998). A number of studies have examined whether the age of the rater (the individual evaluating a group), influences their attitudes toward ‘older people’, or toward ‘older workers’. Rothbaum (1983) and Chasteen et al (2002) for example, found that older raters held more positive attitudes toward older people, while Bird and Fischer (1986), Hassell and Perrewe (1995), and Chiu et al (2001) found that older employers held more positive stereotypes toward ‘older workers’ than did younger employers. These findings are often attributed to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Ashforth and Mael, 1989) where individuals can derive a sense of belongingness and worth from their membership in social groups, and so, they are more likely to hold more favourable attitudes toward members of their own social group. Older employers in the findings noted above, may therefore derive as sense of identity with ‘older workers’, and hence be inclined to evaluate them in a more favourable light. Findings from research, however, do not always indicate that older raters will favour ‘older workers’. For example, Finkelstein (1995), in her review, found that older raters demonstrated no preference for ‘older workers’ over younger workers. Kite et al (2005), on the other hand, found that older individuals stereotype ‘younger workers’ as more competent than ‘older workers’. The evidence in this area of research is certainly mixed, but it nonetheless demonstrates, that in some cases, attitudes toward ‘older workers’ can be influenced by the age of the person evaluating these ‘older workers’.
There is also some evidence to suggest that gender considerations are an important factor, where female employers have been found to hold more positive beliefs about ‘older workers’ than male employers (Kogan and Shelton, 1962; Rosen and Jerdee, 1976; Connor et al, 1978; Kalavar, 2001; Rupp et al, 2005). The only explanation for this finding offered in the literature thus far is that it may be partly due to higher levels of expressiveness in personality on the part of women (Deaux, 1985; Rupp et al, 2005). As such, women are believed to be less critical and more caring than men. The possible gender effect on ageist attitudes therefore warrants further attention (Rupp et al, 2005) as it appears, in some cases, to be significant, but less understood.

Additionally, two of the most widely cited studies on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ by Kirchner and Dunnette (1954) and Bird and Fischer (1986) found that supervisors held more negative stereotypes of ‘older workers’ than did rank-and-file employees. This evidence was later supported by both Hassell and Perrewe (1995) and Chiu et al (2001) in their investigations. The position or status of a rater within an organisation is therefore purported to influence the nature of attitudes toward ‘older workers’ from these findings. Both Hassell and Perrewe (1995) and Chiu et al (2001) implied aspects of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) when they offered an explanation for the influence of rater position. Hassell and Perrewe (1995:466) for example, offered that,

Although speculative, because supervisors may be 'older' themselves, they psychologically may deny membership in that category to protect their work identity and status. Older supervisors may perceive themselves to be contributing and valued members of the organisation, thus, they may not want to be viewed as an 'older' employee. In order to separate themselves from the older workers, however, they may negatively stereotype them.

2.5.3.2 Organisational Factors

Perry and Parlamis (2005) argue that the influence of organisational factors on age bias in the workplace have been relatively ignored across the literature, being far less understood than individual influences. Of the available evidence, Lucas (1995) found that negative stereotypes of ‘older workers’ were more prevalent
among employers in smaller organisations than in larger organisations within the hospitality industry. She attributed this finding to less sophisticated employment policies, and more specifically, less sophisticated equality policies, in smaller firms (Lucas, 1995). Her study illustrates three important points. First, although Chiu et al (2001) found no significant relationship between firm size and attitudes toward ‘older workers’, Lucas’ (1995) research indicates that the size of an organisation may be influential in explaining attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Second, there is a possibility of an industry effect on attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Both Chiu et al (2001) and DeMicco (2005) argue that employers in service-type industries may have more negative attitudes toward ‘older workers’ than other industries. They reason that industries dominated by frequent role contact with customers, particularly a younger demographic of customers, often favour younger over older employees. Adler and Hilber (2009) recently asserted that ‘older workers’ are underrepresented in service sectors, adding some support to Chiu et al’s (2001) and DeMicco’s (2005) views. Finally, Lucas (1995) proposes that the presence of an equality policy in an organisation may influence attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Chiu et al (2001: 636) argue that such policies are likely to ‘cultivate a more tolerant atmosphere toward older workers in the organisation by raising awareness and countering stereotypical beliefs’. They found that the presence of an equality policy in an organisations resulted in more favourable attitudes toward ‘older workers’ (Chiu et al, 2001).

There is also some evidence to suggest that the age demographics of an organisation have an influence on attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Relational Demography (Tsui et al, 1995) posits that the demographic composition of an organisation or workgroup influences individuals’ attitudes at work. Here, it is suggested that similarity to referent others in an organisation results in favourable outcomes, much like Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Ashforth and Mael, 1989), because it is based around the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971; Riordan and Shore, 1997). Individuals who are similar to one another are more likely to treat each other in a favourable manner, while dissimilarity can lead to negative treatment (Rosenbaum, 1986). This could be linked with McCain, O’Reilly and Pfeffer’s (1983) earlier research to indicate
that being ‘older’ in a work group dominated by younger people results in a
greater tendency for the ‘older workers’ to leave the organisation.

Relational Demography also suggests that frequency of interactions with groups
in the organisation can influence attitudes toward these groups (Tsui et al, 1995).
For example, both Hassell and Perrewe (1995) and Chiu et al (2001) found some
evidence to suggest that frequency of interaction with ‘older workers’ has the
potential to reduce negative stereotypes. This appears to be related to Butler’s
(1969) and Falkenberg’s (1990) argument that greater interaction with social
groups reduces the likelihood in the formation of bias. Remery et al (2003),
however, found that organisations with more ‘older workers’ actually had more
negative beliefs about them, which as Finkelstein and Farrell (2007) state,
remains without explanation.

2.5.3.3 Summary

Overall, it appears that our understanding of the influences (positive or negative)
on ageist attitudes at work is rather limited. The influence of the individual
characteristics of raters on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ has played a larger
role in investigations than the influence of organisational characteristics to date
(cf. Perry, 1994, 1995; Chiu et al, 2001; Perry and Parlamis, 2005; Finkelstein
and Farrell, 2007). Some of these findings, however, while limited, are often
contradictory. As a result of this, explanations for differences in attitudes toward
‘older workers’ set within a decision-making context at work are lacking. It is
clear, as Brooke and Taylor (2005) maintain, that organisational decision-
makers’ assumptions of ‘older workers’ appear complex and variable. Indeed, the
influence of individual and organisational characteristics on attitudes toward
‘older workers’, as Finkelstein and Farrell (2007:92) point out, ‘may be a fertile
place for an expansion of the theoretical perspective’ in accounting for the ways
in which ‘older workers’ are viewed in organisations. The remainder of this
chapter therefore represents a discussion toward this theoretical expansion.
2.6 Theoretical Perspectives – Toward an Expansion

Theory-driven findings in the field of industrial gerontology have only recently begun to develop (McCann and Giles, 2004). Indeed, Kite et al (2005:241) state that, for over fifty years, gerontologists have ‘puzzled’ over peoples’ negative attitudes toward ageing, and, particularly, negative attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and Relational Demography (Tsui et al, 1995), as highlighted in the last section, have gone some way toward explaining individual differences in attitudes toward ‘older workers’, but empirical support for these perspectives is often inconsistent. Stereotypes have most often been used to explain negative attitudes toward ‘older workers’ (cf. Posthuma and Campion, 2009), or to explain why there is age bias in the workplace (cf. Rosen and Jerdee, 1977). Yet, we know that stereotypes encompass only one component of ageist attitudes (cf. Palmore, 1999; Iversen, Larsen and Solem, 2009), and therefore cannot address the full complexity of the concept. Neither, then, can stereotypes explain the development of ageist attitudes if they are an ageist attitude.

Within the broader attitudinal literature, research on the formation of attitudes has received relatively little attention. Eagly and Chaiken (1993:681) state that this ‘lack of attention to the development issue of how attitudes are formed and become strong… (is a) serious omission and limitation’ of the literature. More recently, however, Kite and Wagner (2004) have suggested that Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987, 1997) might be potentially useful in explaining the development of attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Social Role Theory proposes that viewing people in various social roles provides an important basis for attitudes and beliefs about social groups (Eagly, 1987, 1997; Eagly, Wood and Diekman, 2000). In earlier research, Social Role Theory has been valuable in explaining individual differences in attitudes toward men and women, in that these differences are found to stem from the social roles men and women are perceived to occupy, particularly in the work setting (Eagly and Steffen, 1984). Kite and Wagner (2004) propose that a parallel argument could be applied to ‘older workers’, in that individual differences in attitudes toward ‘older workers’ may stem from the perceived social roles ‘older workers’ are perceived to occupy.
in the work setting. The following sections discuss this proposition in more detail.

### 2.6.1 Role Theory

An individual’s life span is characterised by multiple ‘role’ sequences and their transitions, for example; child, adult, parent, grandparent, student, unemployed, worker, and so on. Roles are associated with a given social status, and an individual may occupy several roles at any one time. Role theory concerns itself with the fact that ‘human beings behave in ways that are different and predictable depending on their respective social identities and the situation’ (Biddle, 1986:68). Conway (1988:63) defines role theory as ‘a collection of concepts and a variety of hypothetical formulations that predict how actors will perform in a given role, or under what circumstances certain types of behaviours can be expected’. The concept of role in relation to role theory includes the characteristics, behaviours, norms and values of a person or a position (Brookes et al., 2007; Major 2003). Role theory explains roles ‘by presuming that persons are members of social positions and hold expectations for their own behaviours and those of other persons’ (Biddle, 1986:67).

Linton (1936) first introduced the elements of role theory, defining status as a position in social structure, and role as the expected behaviours of status occupants. Derived from Mead’s (1934) symbolic interactionism, Blau’s (1960) theory of social integration, the dyadic elements of social exchange theory (Homans, 1961), and resulting epistemologies, role theory has, overtime, created a broad literature. Six separate perspectives of role theory have been defined (Biddle, 1986; Hardy and Conway, 1988; Eagly, Wood and Diekman, 2000): the functionalist; symbolic interactionist; organisational; cognitive; structural; and social perspectives. Guirguis and Chewning (2005:489) explain that role theory does not have a model linking all of its constructs, rather ‘researchers can select the relevant constructs for the context of their research’. The role theory perspectives of particular relevance to the study of attitudes toward ‘older
workers’ are social role theory and organisational role theory; these are now discussed in turn.

2.6.2. Social and Organisational Role Theory

Social Role Theory has its origins in efforts to understand the perceptions of gender behaviour. Empirical findings have suggested that there is a wide variation in perceptions of gender differences and similarities across circumstances (Eagly, 1987; 1997), and that perceivers have a complex set of associations concerning men and women (Eagly, 1997). Theories that developed to explain these differences and similarities emphasised the processes by which perceivers derive these associations and apply them in everyday interaction (Eagly, Wood and Diekmann, 2000). For example, Eagly and Steffen’s (1984) seminal work established that gender stereotypes can be explained by a consideration of women’s and men’s occupational roles. Men are often viewed in the role of ‘breadwinner’ (or the employee of higher status), while women are often viewed in the role of homemaker (or employee of lower status). Women are therefore disproportionately represented in roles requiring communal traits, for example ‘concerned for the welfare of others’ (Deaux and Kite, 1993:113). Men are disproportionately represented in roles requiring agentic traits, for example, assertiveness (Eagly, 1997). Observing women and men in these occupational roles leads people to associate the characteristics of these roles with the individuals who occupy them; therefore people conclude that women are typically communal and men are typically agentic (Eagly and Steffen, 1984).

An interesting study by Fingerhut and Peplau (2006) investigated the influence of social roles on perceptions of gay men. It was found that gay men in traditionally masculine work roles (for example, truck driver; single man) were believed to be less feminine than gay men in traditionally feminine work roles (for example, hairdresser; parent). In addition, gay men in feminine roles were perceived as more similar to the typical gay man than were those in masculine roles. This is one particularly striking example that, through the observation of behaviours that stem from the social roles that group members occupy, people
come to relate the attributes of the role to the individuals who occupy that role (whether it reflects the actual attributes of the person or not). Social Role Theory has evolved, then, to suggest that our attitudes about social groups can be derived from viewing people in various social roles (Eagly and Steffen, 1984; Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood and Diekmann, 2000).

Social Role Theory studies have indicated that a person’s occupational role has a significant part to play in the perceptions about certain social groups (cf. Eagly and Steffen, 1984; Fingerhut and Peplau, 2006). Like Social Role Theory, Organisational Role Theory (Katz and Kahn, 1966) draws on a behavioural perspective, by focusing on explanations of social interaction as behaviours associated with specific social positions (Biddle, 1986). Organisational Role Theory examines roles in task orientated and hierarchical systems (Biddle, 1986; Madsen, 2002). Katz and Kahn (1966) argued that the division of labour principle necessarily requires employees to enact specific work roles in order to perform their required tasks effectively. Roles in organisations are associated with social positions and norms that may be influenced by the individual, informal groups, and the organisation (Guirguis and Chewning, 2005). From this perspective, organisations are essentially a network of employees enacting specific roles which prescribe behaviours that are expected by others in the institution (Wickham and Parker, 2006), and from this attitudes toward workers in specific roles are derived.

2.6.3 Summary

Social Role Theory (Eagly 1987, 1997) proposes that our attitudes about social groups can be derived from observing, and interacting with, people in various social roles. From these interactions with group members, and observations about their behaviour, we develop expectations about how all members of these groups behave. As Kite et al (2005:243) explain,

"Because we observe the role-driven behaviour, which may or may not reflect the real attributes of the person being observed, perceivers come to associate..."
characteristics of these roles with the individuals who occupy them.

Arguably, one important social role in an organisation is the role an ‘older worker’. As we have already seen from the discussions earlier in this chapter, the ways in which others ‘categorise’ workers as ‘older workers’ is considered especially important in determining their attitudes and behaviours toward ‘older workers’ (Sterns and Doverspike, 1989; Lawrence, 1987, 1988; Cleveland and Shore, 1992; Pitt-Catsouphes et al, 2010). This fits with the role theory perspective. In the search for explanations that account for individual differences in attitudes toward ‘older workers’, role theory may offer greater explanatory power than previous stereotype accounts (cf. Rosen and Jerdee, 1977; Posthuma and Campion, 2009), because role theory outlines how we come to derive these stereotypes in the first place; stereotypes about groups are formed from our observations and expectations of group behaviour. Role theory, essentially, takes a step back, offering a wider lens from which to view individual differences in attitudes toward ‘older workers’ than Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1987) and Relational Demography (Tsui et al, 1995) outlined in section 2.4.3. Role Theory posits that individual differences in attitudes are less about similarity-attraction to a group, and more about how different individuals’ view the role of an ‘older worker’ that lead to their individual attitudes toward ‘older workers’. And, as such, Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987, 1997) provides the primary theoretical guide in investigating attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in this thesis.
2.7 Synthesis: A Framework for Investigating Organisational Decision-Maker Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

The theory and research reviewed above highlight a number of themes apparent in the literature: (1) the term ‘older worker’ is not clearly defined, such that there is little consensus on what specific age a worker is considered to be an ‘older worker’. Here, it has been suggested that individuals will use varying perceptual age measures in the work setting; (2) Previous investigations on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ have placed a considerable emphasis on the cognitive component of these attitudes (stereotypes). Yet, attitudes comprise cognitive, affective and behavioural components. The affective (prejudice) and behavioural components (discriminatory predispositions) have been largely neglected in previous studies; (3) Individual and organisational characteristics have been found to influence attitudes toward ‘older’ people and, in some cases, attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in a decision-making context at work, but they are less understood; (4) Theory-driven findings in the field of industrial gerontology are only just beginning to emerge. Recent advances in Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987; 1997), however, have begun to provide more specific analyses of the ways in which observations and expectations of group behaviour effect differences in individuals’ attitudes toward these groups. Kite and Wagner (2004) suggest that this perspective may be useful for examining differences in individuals’ attitudes toward ‘older workers’.

This section now turns to the construction of the conceptual framework proposed for this study. The elements of the framework are explained, and a number of hypotheses are suggested to elucidate the important research questions of the thesis, as discussed previously in Chapter One. Figure 2.1 presents this framework.
Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Definition of 'older worker'

- Female
- Male

Decision Maker Characteristic

- Age
- Gender
- Position
- Position Tenure
- Organisational Tenure

Attitude toward 'older worker'

- Stereotypes (~)
- Prejudice (~)
- Discriminatory Prejudice (~)

Workforce Age Demographics

- Organisation Size
- Industry Type
- Equality Policy
The conceptual framework depicted in Figure 2.1 is assembled from the literature reviewed in this chapter. This framework contains three separate but interlinked features; the definition of an ‘older worker’; attitudes toward ‘older workers’; and individual and organisational characteristics of decision-makers. These features are directly linked to the research questions posed in Chapter One, and are now discussed in relation to each research question, where a number of hypotheses are proposed. The theory and research reviewed earlier in this chapter inform each of these hypotheses.

2.7.1 The Definition of an ‘Older Worker’

The first research question posed by this study is who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be?, depicted to the left of the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2.1.

Categorising workers by chronological age in terms of ‘older’ represents an area of divergence across the literature, as agreement on what constitutes an ‘older worker’ varies considerably from those aged 40, to 55, to 65, years of age and beyond (cf. Lawrence, 1988; Sterns and Doverspike, 1989; Stein and Rocco, 2001; OECD, 2005; Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005; Cleveland and Lim, 2007; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007; Peeters and van Emmerick, 2008; AARP, 2010). For this reason, it becomes important to identify at what specific age a worker is considered an ‘older worker’ by decision-makers in the organisation. Varying definitions of this age is expected, because, as Sterns and Gray (1999) state, although legal definitions (e.g. 65 years) and social norms (e.g. 55 years) are used as guidelines for defining what an ‘older worker’ is, individuals will use the age range that fits with their own unique conceptualisations of age.

Hypothesis 1: Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ at varying chronological ages
In view of the uncertainty in defining the ‘older worker’, whether the gender of a worker has any bearing on when he or she is considered ‘older’ by decision-makers is also of concern, particularly given the ‘double-jeopardy’ older women can often experience in the workplace (Itzen and Phillipson, 1993, 1994; Barnum et al, 1995; Ainsworth, 2002; Goldberg et al, 2004). Research by Eurolink (2001) suggests that some employers believe females are ‘older workers’ at younger ages than males in organisations.

**Hypothesis 2:** Decision-makers will define a female worker to be an ‘older worker’ at a younger chronological age than a male worker

Sterns and Doverspike (1989), Cleveland and Shore (1992), and Pitt-Catsouphes et al (2010) argue, however, that chronological age is not the only age marker present in the workplace. In fact, it is suggested that perceptual age markers may provide better insights into the definition of an ‘older worker’ than chronological age markers (cf. Cleveland and Shore, 1992; Cleveland, Shore and Murphy, 1997; Kooij et al, 2008; Pitt-Catsouphes et al, 2010). The ‘definition of an ‘older worker’ element depicted in the conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) is patterned to suggest that decision-makers will view a worker in the role of an ‘older worker’ from varying individual perspectives, and derive their definition of an ‘older worker’ from these perspectives, as proposed by Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987, 1997).

**Hypothesis 3:** Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ from varying perspectives
2.7.2 Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

The second research question posed by this study is *what are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers?*, which is depicted to the right of the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2.1.

In the work environment, research has consistently demonstrated that negative attitudes about ‘older’ employees exist (cf. Kirchner and Dunnette, 1954; Rosen and Jerdee, 1976, 1977; Bird and Fischer, 1986; Lyon and Pollard, 1987; Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; Taylor and Walker, 1998; Chiu *et al*, 2001; Lorretto and White, 2006; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). The majority of this work has investigated stereotypes of ‘older workers’. Ageist attitudes, however, comprise stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory predispositions (cf. Kite and Wagner, 2004; Iversen *et al*, 2009). With the exception of Chiu *et al* (2001), who examined discriminatory predispositions toward ‘older workers’, few empirical studies have addressed the behavioural component, while the affective component has been almost completely neglected (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007). Given that attitudes have been found to more negative toward older than younger adults (Palmore, 1999; Nelson, 2002; Kite *et al*, 2005), it is expected that stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory predispositions toward ‘older workers’ will be largely negative in nature. It is proposed these attitudes are derived from observations and expectations of ‘older worker’ behaviour, as suggested by Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987, 1997).

*Hypothesis 4a*: Organisational decision-makers will hold negative stereotypical beliefs about ‘older workers’

*Hypothesis 4b*: Organisational decision-makers will hold negative prejudicial feelings about ‘older workers’

*Hypothesis 4c*: Organisational decision-makers will hold negative discriminatory predispositions toward ‘older workers’
2.7.3 Influences on Attitudes toward 'Older Workers'

The third and fourth research questions posed by this study are what specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be? and, what specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers? These are depicted in the centre of the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2.1.

Eagly and Chaiken (1993, 1998) suggest that attitudes can vary in terms of valence and strength, such that an individual can feel more or less favourable toward one object than others. The literature, while scant in this regard, posits a number of individual and organisational factors that may influence the valence and strength of ageist attitudes in a decision-making context: at the individual level, rater age, gender, and job position have all been found to influence differences in the favourability of ageist attitudes; while at the organisational level, similar effects have been suggested for organisation size, industry types, policy presence, and workforce demographics (e.g. Bird and Fischer, 1986; Bytheway, 1995; Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; Lucas, 1995, Chiu et al, 2001; Remery et al, 2003; DeMicco, 2005).

2.7.3.1 Decision-Maker Age

The influence of the age of the decision-maker is of interest because it has been found to be a significant predictor of attitudes toward ‘older’ people. Rothbaum (1983), and Chasteen et al (2002), found that older raters held more positive attitudes than younger raters toward older people, while Bird and Fisher (1986), Hassell and Perrewe (1995) and Chiu et al (2001) found that older employers held more positive stereotypes toward older workers than younger employers.

_Hypothesis 5a: Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’_
Hypothesis 5b: Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of ‘older workers’

Hypothesis 5c: Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward ‘older workers’

Hypothesis 5d: Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward ‘older workers’

2.7.3.2 Decision-Maker Gender

The influence of the gender of a decision-maker is also of interest where there is some evidence to suggest that gender is an important determinant of attitudes toward ‘older workers’ (cf. Kogan and Shelton, 1962; Rupp et al, 2005). Some studies show that female employers hold more positive beliefs about older workers than male employers (Rosen and Jerdee, 1976; Connor et al, 1978; Chiu et al, 2001; Kalavar, 2001).

Hypothesis 6a: Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

Hypothesis 6b: Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of ‘older workers’

Hypothesis 6c: Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward ‘older workers’

Hypothesis 6d: Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward ‘older workers’

2.7.3.3 Decision-Maker Position and Tenure

One area of investigation which remains under-explored concerns whether the position that decision-makers hold in organisations influence their attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Early work by Kirchner and Dunnette (1954), Bird and
Fisher (1986), and more latterly, research by Hassell and Perrewe (1995), found that supervisors held more negative attitudes toward ‘older workers’ than did rank and file employees, leading to speculation here that job positions may influence attitudes toward ‘older workers’ as follows:

**Hypothesis 7a:** Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

**Hypothesis 7b:** Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of ‘older workers’

**Hypothesis 7c:** Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward ‘older workers’

**Hypothesis 7d:** Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward ‘older workers’

**Hypothesis 8a:** Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

**Hypothesis 8b:** Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of ‘older workers’

**Hypothesis 8c:** Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward ‘older workers’

**Hypothesis 8d:** Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward ‘older workers’

**Hypothesis 9a:** Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

**Hypothesis 9b:** Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of ‘older workers’

**Hypothesis 9c:** Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward ‘older workers’
**Hypothesis 9d:** Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward ‘older workers’

Iversen *et al* (2009) suggest that ageist attitudes operate not only at the individual (micro) level, but also at the meso and macro levels, implying that organisational characteristics may influence individual differences in ageist attitudes. Perry and Parlamis (2005) argue that our understanding of organisational factors and their impact on workplace age bias have been relatively ignored across the literature. Lucas’ (1995) study, however, illustrates that three key organisational characteristics may account for differences in attitudes toward ‘older workers’; organisation size, industry type, and the presence of an equality or diversity policy.

### 2.7.3.4 Organisation Size

There is some, limited, evidence to suggest that the size of the organisation (referring to the number of workers employed in the organisation) has an influence on individuals’ attitudes toward ‘older workers’, and so, is worth exploring further. Lucas (1995) found that employers in smaller organisations held more negative attitudes toward ‘older workers’ than employers in larger organisations.

**Hypothesis 10a:** The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

**Hypothesis 10b:** The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

**Hypothesis 10c:** The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers
**Hypothesis 10d:** The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers.

### 2.7.3.5 Industry Type

It has also been suggested that attitudes toward ‘older workers’ are more negative in service-orientated industries when compared with other industries (Lucas, 1995; Chiu et al., 2001; DeMicco, 2005), therefore the influence of industry type on decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’ is of interest.

**Hypothesis 11a:** The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

**Hypothesis 11b:** The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

**Hypothesis 11c:** The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

**Hypothesis 11d:** The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

### 2.7.3.6 Equality Policy

Chiu et al. (2001) identified that the presence of an equality policy in an organisation had a positive influence on individuals’ attitudes toward ‘older workers’ within the organisation. Arguably, the introduction of such policies in organisations is with the intention of reducing bias among members of the organisation, and as Chiu et al. (2001) and Hurtsfield and Ackroyd (2005) point out, these policies should cultivate a more tolerant atmosphere toward ‘older
workers’; the influence of equality or diversity policies on individual attitudes toward ‘older workers’ therefore requires further examination.

*Hypothesis 12a:* The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers’ organisations’ age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

*Hypothesis 12b:* The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers’ organisations’ age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

*Hypothesis 12c:* The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers’ organisations’ age will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

*Hypothesis 12d:* The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers’ organisations’ age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

2.7.3.7 *Workforce Age Demographics*

Finally, the demographic composition of an organisation’s workforce is suggested as having an influence on individuals’ attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Particularly, both Hassell and Perrewe (1995) and Chiu *et al.* (2001) found that attitudes toward ‘older workers’ were more positive among individuals who had a greater frequency of interaction with ‘older workers’. The notion of interaction is important in the Social Role Theory framework, because it proposes that our attitudes are derived from interactions with social groups. The potential influence of workforce age demographics is therefore of concern, such that interactions with ‘older workers’ may influence individual attitudes toward ‘older workers’.

*Hypothesis 13a:* The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’
Hypothesis 13b: The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

Hypothesis 13c: The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

Hypothesis 13d: The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the literature relevant to an investigation of organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’. This review set out to explore what is known about the definition of an ‘older worker’; the attitudes that have been found to exist toward ‘older workers’; and the factors that play a role in individual differences in these attitudes. The review uncovered a wealth of literature about the nature of the attitude concept and the stereotypes of ‘older workers’ that prevail in organisations. What is absent from all this work, however, is an established understanding of who ‘older workers’ are actually considered to be, and we are not yet fully conversant with the multiple dimensions of attitudes that exist toward them. In light of this, the research questions of this thesis are affirmed. The literature review presented here consequently helped to refine the aims of the research, and a framework for the investigation of organisational decision-maker attitudes was constructed. The methods used to investigate this framework are outlined in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter 3 Methodology

The key to good research lies not in choosing the right method, but rather in asking the right question, and picking the most powerful method for answering that particular question

(Bouchard, 1976:402)

3.1 Introduction

As the opening quotation to this chapter suggests, it is the research questions, and, indeed, their importance, that lie at the heart of any research study and are the critical components to its design. Research questions enable the information, the activities, the materials and the data sources required for the study to be anticipated, as highlighted by Domegan and Fleming (2003), and so, are integral to each stage of the research process. Having identified these questions, and their significance, in Chapter One, and in reviewing the extant knowledge base relevant to these questions in Chapter Two, this chapter thus outlines how the present research was designed and carried out in order to answer these research questions.

First, the nature of the research process is delineated. Second, the goals of the present research are re-visited and discussed. Third, the construction of the conceptual framework is described. Thereafter, the methods employed by the study, which are largely quantitative in nature, are outlined and explained; including a discussion on the ways in which the variables were assessed and measured, as well as the nature of data analyses carried out. Finally, considerations regarding the validity and limitations of the study are summarised.

This chapter therefore details the issues that were considered at each stage of the research process. It also tells the story of the inter-related nature that this process took over the course of the study, because, as O’Leary (2004:15) notes, ‘research is more of a journey than a task; and like any journey it needs to be managed, navigated and negotiated, from early conception to final destination’.
3.2 The Research Process

The present research borrows from Maxwell’s (2005) model of interactive research (see Figure 3.1 below) which outlines a framework for designing and conducting research, as well as delineating the research process itself, and, as such, charts the necessary components pertaining to research studies, and the inter-relationships between these components.

Figure 3.1 Interactive Model of Research Design (Source: Maxwell, 2005)

This model of research has five core components. The principal component is the research question where, as is discussed earlier in this chapter, research questions are the fundamental element of any research. In the present research, the research questions explicitly guided the study toward the specific information it seeks to unearth and understand. Linked with these research questions then, are: a) the purpose and goals of the study; b) the conceptual framework of the study; c) the methodological tools employed by the study; and d) the validity of the research findings. As the premise of Maxwell’s (2005) model is to conceptualise research as an integrated whole, the research questions should be directly related to the purpose of the study, and both should be informed by prior theory and research. Similarly, the methods utilised in the study should be sufficiently able to answer the research questions, while at the same time, being able to cope with any possible validity threats to these answers. Additionally, the purpose and goals of the study may have implications for the methods used, and the theoretical foundations of the study may have implications for the validity of the findings.
This particular model of research design is not all that different from other proposed frameworks (cf. Domegan and Fleming, 2003; Kumar, 2005; Creswell, 2009), but its emphasis on the interactive nature of the research process is refreshing. It also aligns closely with Edmonson and McManus’s (2007) recent call for improved ‘methodological fit’ in work-related studies, defined as the ‘internal consistency among elements of a research project – research question, prior work, research design, and theoretical contribution’ (Edmonson and McManus, 2007: 1155). Not only this, but Maxwell’s (2008) extended research model (see Figure 3.2 below) considers the wider ‘research environment’ within which the five components are situated. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to discuss each of these components as they relate to the present research, and describe how they developed throughout the course of the study with regard to the wider research environment.

Figure 3.2 Contextual Factors Influencing Research Design (Source: Maxwell, 2008)
3.3 Research Goals

The overall aim of the present research is to unearth and understand both who ‘older workers’ are considered to be; and what attitudes exist toward them among organisational decision-makers in Ireland. In order to achieve this aim, the study is guided by four distinct research questions:

Research Question One: *Who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider ‘older workers’ to be?*

Research Question Two: *What are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward ‘older workers’?*

Research Question Three: *What specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider ‘older workers’ to be?*

Research Question Four: *What specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward ‘older workers’?*

Research goals refer to the motivations for, and the purposes of, the study; the reasons why the study is worth conducting; the issues that need to be clarified by the study; and the policies and practices that the study intends to influence as a result of the findings (Maxwell, 2008). The overall purpose of the present research is to unearth and understand organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older’ workers in Ireland. The importance of engaging in such a study was explicitly addressed in Chapter One, but to reconsider it momentarily here: changing demographics have led to an overall ageing of the workforce such that ‘older workers’ will be required to remain in the labour force for longer in order to stabilise economic pressures and social well-being in the coming years. However, ageist attitudes in the workplace are considered a serious barrier to the continued employment of ‘older workers’. Thus, an understanding of decision-makers’ ageist attitudes at work becomes enormously important, because these are the individuals charged with making decisions about the employment of all workers, including older workers. Chapters One and Two also highlighted some
of the issues requiring clarification within existing knowledge, specifically: who ‘older workers’ are considered to be; what attitudes exist toward them in an Irish context; and what variables influence both definitions of, and attitudes toward, the ‘older worker’. Likewise, the preceding chapters identified the potential for the research findings to inform both national and organisational level policies and practices with respect to the employment of older workers, as recommended by Maxwell (2005).

Additionally, in terms of personal goals related to this study, some initial research ideas sprung from my own long-standing curiosity about the ageing process in general, but they also stemmed from a genuine concern regarding the impact of a rapidly ageing workforce on social and organisational life that is shared among my faculty colleagues. In relation to practical goals, the relative under-exploration of attitudes toward ‘older workers’ across Ireland is surprising given the phenomenon of workforce ageing, along with the perceived prevalence of workplace ageism in Ireland, and so, there is a need to address this empirical deficit. Concerning scholarly goals, the aim of this study is to advance a conceptual understanding of the term ‘older worker’ and to contribute to existing knowledge on the factors influencing attitudes toward ‘older workers’.

3.4 Conceptual Framework

As identified and presented in Chapter Two, the conceptual framework ‘explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied- the key factors, concepts, or variables- and the presumed relationships among them’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994:18), which are derived from prior research. Maxwell (2008), however, takes a broader view of the conceptual framework to include other resources: communication with other researchers; unpublished work; the researcher’s personal experiences; and exploratory studies. As such, the conceptual framework is very much ‘constructed’, and this section details this construction of the conceptual framework in the present research.
3.4.1 Reviewing the Literature

Without doubt, previous theory and research in the literature on ‘ageing’, ‘attitudes’, ‘ageism’, and ‘older workers’ were the most important sources of ideas in shaping the conceptual framework for this study. The purpose of this literature review was firstly to investigate the current phenomenon of population ageing and with that, workforce ageing and its potential impacts; secondly, to explore the terms ‘old’ and ‘older worker’; thirdly, to understand the psychological nature and dimensionality of attitudes and their measurement; and finally, to establish what is currently known about attitudes toward ‘older workers’. This literature search involved identifying books, government reports, journal articles, conference proceedings, databases and industry reports, from libraries (both in Ireland and the United States), online search engines and databases, and both governmental and institutional websites. Some key issues became apparent in the midst of this literature review: firstly, the ageing process is multidimensional in nature, where real and valid differences exist biologically, psychologically and socially among individuals of different ages. However, these differences can vary largely among older and younger individuals, and variance in bio-psycho-social functioning cannot be attributed to specific chronological age groups or generations; secondly, there seems to be little consensus on, or even consideration toward, a definition of an ‘older worker’; thirdly, the behavioural and affective components of ageist attitudes are largely neglected in previous studies, and their measurement is scarcely addressed; finally, there are multiple concepts, theories and frameworks that explain views on ageing. Arguably, this is because gerontology, and more specifically, industrial gerontology, has been approached from a multitude of disciplinary perspectives, including: medicine; sociology; psychology; economics; anthropology; and even theology. Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) was found to be a potentially useful lens in attempting to synthesise some of existing theoretical approaches in explaining attitudes toward different social groups, such as ‘older workers’. Finally, while attitudes toward ‘older workers’ have previously been investigated in North American, Australian, and British contexts, these studies are grounded mostly in the manufacturing or hospitality sectors, and often based on singular
case-study data. These studies are also frequently centred on the attitudes of graduate and MBA students rather than employers in industry, with the most widely cited studies seldom having a balanced number of female participants, or a variety of decision-maker participants. As such, these outcomes provide the rationale for the present research, but they also allowed for an investigative framework to be shaped and hypotheses to be proposed, as outlined in Chapter Two.

3.4.2 Communication with Other Researchers

At the outset of this research in late 2008, I visited an Irish Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), comprised of eight member organisations, whose remit is to address the rights of older people and to combat ageism in Irish society. The purpose of this visit was to gain an insight into current research being undertaken on older people in general in Ireland, and to hear the experiences of practitioners who work with older people in many capacities. We discussed the nature of the ageing process, and the fact that biological and cognitive functioning can, and does, decline with increases in age; however, this discussion was directed largely toward declines in functioning among individuals over the age of seventy-five. The practitioners felt very strongly that declines in work performance for workers aged under seventy-five vary drastically across all age-groups, and that stereotypical beliefs that ‘older workers’ are poorer performers than younger workers represents a problem for the labour market. This visit confirmed the necessity of undertaking the present research, where individuals in this organisation felt that, while anecdotal evidence exists about ageist attitudes in the workplace in Ireland, no affirmative data exists to this effect. They specifically suggested that both quantitative and qualitative research was needed in this regard.

In August 2009, I visited the Center for Ageing and Work at Boston College in the United States. Here, I met with many researchers to discuss the issues around global workforce ageing, and the possible implications for organisations, economies and societies. This meeting highlighted the inherent complexities in defining an ‘older worker’, and the ageing process itself. Discussions also
emphasised the need to continue to measure attitudes toward older workers, particularly in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. One particular researcher stated, ‘I have seen nothing from Ireland on this’, and thus, provided further encouragement to engage in the present research. What is more, in early 2010, I attended the Trinity College, Dublin ‘TILDA (The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing) Preliminary Findings’ Conference, and the CARDI (Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland) ‘Living Longer, Working Longer’ Conference. Debates held at both of these conferences further confirmed the dearth of empirical evidence on organisational attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland. Additionally, in late 2010, I travelled to meet Alice Eagly, who initially developed Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), when she visited Dublin City University. We discussed taking a role theory perspective on attitudes toward ‘older workers’, as is the lens in this study. She suggested that this was an interesting and novel approach, and that the findings of the study would be of interest to her.

3.4.3 Exploratory Study

As the ideas for the present research unfolded in early 2009, I conducted an exploratory study with a group of seven supervisors (who make decisions about the employment of others) in the Irish healthcare sector, where a focus group methodology was utilised. The aim of this exploratory study was to gain preliminary insight into the attitudes that exist toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland, as exploratory research provides direction on further research (Burns and Bush, 2002). Furthermore, Torn and McNichol (1998) identified that focus group interviews are used in social science research as a process for generating hypotheses and informing questionnaire development. This focus group was a ‘mixed-occupational group’ comprising representatives from a number of sections within the healthcare sector, excepting medical staff. Demographic details of this focus group are presented in Table 3.1 below.
Table 3.1 Demographic Details of Exploratory Focus Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>20-29 years</th>
<th>30-39 years</th>
<th>40-49 years</th>
<th>Over 50 years</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational Tenure</th>
<th>1-5 Years</th>
<th>6-10 years</th>
<th>11-14 years</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Staff Groups</th>
<th>Clerk/Secretary</th>
<th>Catering Services</th>
<th>Technician</th>
<th>Carers</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
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Four main questions acted as the framework for discussion in the focus group:

1. Do you think that ageist attitudes, or bias toward workers of a certain age, exist in the workplace? What experiences have you encountered?

2. Why do you think these attitudes exist?

3. Under what circumstances are these attitudes more or less likely to occur?

4. When does one become an ‘older worker’? What is an ‘older worker’ to you?

When conducting the focus group, my aim was to make the participants feel comfortable with expressing their honest opinions. Anonymity was therefore assured. The discussion was conducted away from all the participants’ work areas at a convenient site so that interruptions were avoided. Prior information about the general topic areas that the focus group would be addressing was given. That is, an information sheet about the research, and the reasons for research, were distributed to the participants in advance of conducting the focus group. Generally, the group were forthcoming in their answers, but probing questions were also utilised in order to elicit clear responses to the questions. The focus groups’ interaction was found to be relaxed and insightful. The data collected
was qualitative in nature. The focus group interview was tape recorded and transcribed shortly afterward. These transcripts were then subjected to content analysis using the guidelines of Burnard (1991). The transcripts were read a number of times and organised into general themes. This was in keeping with the framework of the exploratory study, which was not aimed at generating theory, but producing illuminative, descriptive and informative data.

The findings revealed a perception that ageism is, ‘most definitely’, a feature of the Irish workplace, as captured by the following quotation:

‘I can give you an example of when I first started in my present job – we take on students – and one student was sitting there on an unofficial break, she had just been up at the wards, and she said that she felt she should be paid more than older people cause she was better able to do the work – even though some of them had been there 30 years – she didn’t look at them as a person she looked at them as a group by age. She was very domineering that she felt that way, she didn’t care who knew she felt that way.’

Another participant agreed:

‘I see it at work all the time that the younger ones feel the older ones should be gone.’

Reflecting Fiske’s (1998) assertion that age is one of the first characteristics that we notice in encounters, one participant had an interesting anecdote:

‘My sister-in-law went grey very young and got made redundant last year – she is convinced she is getting nowhere (with jobs) because of her hair. She has experience, qualifications; she’s done her service and isn’t looking for more money. She’s not that old, she’s 40/41 and she has contemplated dying her hair but had reaction to the dyes.’
Several of the participants perceived society, the media, and the culture of the nation were the reasons ageism exists in Ireland, as represented in the following quotations:

‘Everyone is into how they look now, they’re self-conscious about age, there’s a stigma. The media, the culture causes it.’

‘My 5 year old son is obsessed with age. I don’t know where he gets it at 5 but he is always going on about people’s ages, maybe it’s natural? Maybe it’s our culture.’

Most participants felt that ageism, or ageist attitudes in the workplace were most likely to occur at selection stages, in hiring decisions:

‘Whoever is doing the hiring and firing they tend to sway toward someone their own age.’

‘I was told to hire younger people by my manager because they’re not settled, they’re open minded and they’ve more to talk about than the usual drib drab – and I did.’

The majority of participants felt that the definition of the term ‘older worker’ was dependent on the age of the respondent. For example, one participant said:

‘It depends on what age you are – who you ask – it’s all relative. I’m going to class somebody 10 years older as an older worker, but if you ask someone age 30 they’d probably say I’m an older worker and I’m 49. So, that’s where the definition comes in, it depends on who you ask.’

Interestingly, some participants felt that the term ‘older worker’ referred to those with a longer tenure in an organisation, rather than those of a certain calendar, or chronological, age, but that ageist attitudes were still directed against this type of worker:
'Depends on how long you’ve been in a job as well, some people get very set in their ways and are not willing to move on. In my place of work, people are there 20/30 years and they get stale, they know what they’re doing and aren’t going to change their ways now, and they might only be 40 years of age.’

‘The longer you’re in my organisation, the less likely you’ll be offered training opportunities.’

Intriguingly, some participants felt that their perceived age in an organisation might have something to do with their perceived social role both inside and outside of work, as highlighted by the following quotations:

‘I think that because I am a grandfather that I am seen as older in work – I’m a young grandfather at 49, but the lads in work call me granddad and I suppose see me as an older person because of it.’

‘I see at work that there are people age 50+ but they’ve been there a long time so age doesn’t come into it, they’ve got respect, but if someone starts new in the organisation, but might be the same age as them, they treat them as though they’ve come in ‘old’ into the organisation – some people seem to have different expectations of their roles in the organisation and age.’

The results of this exploratory study illuminated a number of issues that previously became apparent from the literature review. First, there was a general perception that ageism, in this case, negative attitudes toward people of ‘older’ ages, is extant the Irish workplace. The anecdotal evidence that emerged regarding these ageist attitudes further confirms the need to unearth affirmative data in this respect. Second, the participants felt that ageism was most likely to occur in a decision-making context at work, highlighting the necessity in addressing the ageist attitudes of organisational decision-makers. Third, the participants had differing definitions of an ‘older worker’. Some felt the term refers to those who have been working longest in an organisation, using the organisational approach (Sterns and Doverspike, 1989) as discussed in Chapter
Two. This emphasises the importance of investigating varying definitions of an ‘older worker’ from many perspectives, as purported in this study. Other participants felt the term ‘older worker’ is associated with the types of roles workers occupy, alluding to the potential usefulness of a social role theory perspective (Eagly, 1997) on attitudes toward ‘older workers’, as is proposed in this study. Obvious limitations of this exploratory research relate to it being a small scale, information gathering study. For example, it is not possible to make generalisations from the findings. The transferability and applicability of the findings to other settings are therefore low. However, the exploratory work served to encourage the present research, as striking examples of perceived ageism in the Irish workplace emerged, as well as differing perceptions on defining the term ‘older worker’.

### 3.4.4 Connecting with a Research Paradigm

Another critical consideration in the present research, and, indeed, central to the construction of the conceptual framework and the subsequent methods used to investigate this framework, is the philosophical paradigm within which the study is situated. All research, of course, is grounded on assumptions about the social world, how it is perceived, and how best to understand it. Examining this social world, then, requires reflection upon my own assumptions about reality in the search for knowledge, and those of the research questions. Ontology involves the philosophy on reality, intimately related to epistemology, the philosophy on knowledge, which addresses how we come to know this reality (Trochim, 2000). Methodology, then, identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of this reality.

Consistent with Creswell’s (1994) argument that reality is ‘out there’ independent of the researcher, and given that the purpose of this study is to measure attitudes toward those who are perceived as ‘older workers’, a firm premise of the study is
that the social world is measurable, or testable. Therefore, the present research adopts a realist ontology on reality. Realism holds that science should pursue objectivity, in that statements on reality should be capable of public tests, whose results do not vary significantly with the tester (Hempel, 1970). Realism also offers, to some extent, a marriage between two major epistemic paradigms that dominate the social sciences, positivism (Comte) and constructivism (Piaget).

Under the positivist paradigm, the object under study is independent of the researcher; knowledge is discovered and verified through direct observations or measurements of phenomena; and facts are established by taking apart a phenomenon to examine its component parts (Kraus, 2005). As such, this philosophy on knowledge fits with the research questions of the study, because the aim of these questions is to measure attitudes toward ‘older workers’, and the factors influencing these attitudes. On the other hand, the alternate view, the constructivist paradigm, argues that knowledge is established through the meanings attached to the phenomena under study, influenced by interaction and observation (Kraus, 2005). This second philosophy on knowledge also fits with the research questions of the study, because the questions aim to understand the meanings attached to the definition of an ‘older worker’, and how attitudes toward ‘older workers’ might be influenced by observations of ‘older worker’ behaviour. Dervin (1977:27) describes how both philosophies can co-exist:

A distinction between objective information (information1) and subjective information (information2). Information [1] is defined as information that describes reality, the innate structure or pattern of reality, data. Information [2] is defined as ideas, the structures or pictures imputed to reality by people. In the most general sense, information [1] refers to external reality; information [2] refers to internal reality.

Realism, then, assumes a largely positivist epistemic view of the social world such that the observable can be measured, and that objectivity should be pursued its measure (Hempel, 1970; Easterby-Smith et al, 2002). It also, however, outlines how our best theories yield knowledge on different aspects of the social world, including non-observable aspects (Smart, 1963), and that these theories
can be re-dressed or expanded. This ontological view implies, as Gill and Johnson (2002) suggest, that both the positivist and constructivist epistemic paradigms have something to offer, depending on the aims of the research questions. Since advancing knowledge and understanding of attitudes toward those who are considered ‘older workers’ by decision-makers in organisations is the important goal of this study, the realist approach seems appropriate, from which, as Holden and Lynch (2004:398) point out, ‘the choice of methodology logically follows’. The next section, therefore, addresses the methodological tools employed by this study, explaining why the methods align most closely with the positivist paradigm, but also how some methods were adapted from a constructivist viewpoint.

3.5 Research Design and Methods

An appropriate research design is developed subsequent to establishing the research paradigm (Maxwell, 2005). In terms of methodology, which refers to the practicalities of how we come to know and understand the social world (Trochim, 2000), an appropriate research design is essential, as it determines the type of data collected, aligning the methodology of the study to the research questions (cf. Saunders et al, 2007; Maxwell, 2005, 2008). Allied to the realist ontology outlined in the last section, and firstly considering the positivist paradigm, this study adopts a largely quantitative research design. According to Anderson (2004), positivist researchers are interested in the collection of facts and exploring relationships between sets of factors, which they analyse using quantitative techniques. As the focus of quantitative research is on measurement and hypothesis testing (Saunders, et al 2007), this type of design was chosen because both the research questions and the conceptual framework of this study were formulated to measure the specific age at which a worker is considered an ‘older worker’; the attitudes that exist toward these ‘older workers’; and to test hypotheses about specific individual and organisational influences on both. Furthermore, where concepts, such as attitudes, have been studied over time (as discussed in Chapter Two), Edmonson and McManus (2007) recommend that quantitative methods are most appropriate in order to achieve ‘methodological
fit’. In order to measure both how organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider ‘older workers’ to be, and their attitudes toward these ‘older workers’, the self-report survey method was chosen as the most appropriate quantitative tool because: (1) the survey method provides an opportunity to collect large amounts of data across a geographically dispersed sample in a timely and economical fashion (Baruch and Holtom, 2008), and so, is well suited to the goals of the present research; (2) self-report surveys do not restrict research paradigms (Griffiths, 1999), and so can be aligned with the realist ontology adopted in this study, as well as both positivist and constructivist epistemic paradigms.

Edmonson and McManus (2007) suggest, however, where only provisional explanations of phenomena exist, such as definitions of the ‘older worker’, that both quantitative and qualitative approaches may be more appropriate (Edmonson and McManus, 2007). Therefore this notion is aligned to both positivist and constructivist viewpoints. As such, where one aim of this research is to pattern and understand, rather than just measure, varying nuances associated with defining a worker as ‘older’ from the perspective of organisational decision-makers, a mixed-methods approach was required. While quantitative measurement of the specific age a worker is defined an ‘older worker’ was needed, qualitative data was also required to pattern variations (Dey, 1993) in the reasons behind definitions of the ‘older worker’. Therefore, the survey instrument included a combination of qualitative open questions, along with quantitative closed questions and attitude scales. Figure 3.4, below, explicates how the choice of methods discussed in this section are aligned with the conceptual framework of the study.

The following section thus describe how the survey instrument used in the present research was developed, the ways in which the variables are assessed and measured, provides details on the sample and the survey administration procedure, and, finally, addresses the statistical analyses carried out on the data collected.
Figure 3.4 Methods used to Investigate the Conceptual Framework
3.5.1 Measuring Attitudes

One critical element of the quantitative survey design in this study was to enable the measurement of organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Much of the literature on attitudes is specifically concerned with the development of instruments designed to measure attitudes, and while there has much been debate on the measurement of the attitude construct, Thurstone (1928:530) wrote:

It will be conceded at the outset that an attitude is a complex affair which cannot be wholly described by any single numerical index. Nevertheless, we do not hesitate to say that we measure a table...Just in the same sense we shall say here that we are measuring attitudes. We shall state or imply by the context the aspect of people’s attitudes that we are measuring. The point is that it is just as legitimate to say that we are measuring attitudes as it is to say that we are measuring tables or men.

Anderson (1981) notes that information about individuals’ attitudes can be measured in two fundamental ways: either through observational methods (the indirect approach); or through self-report methods (the direct approach). Research involving indirect measures of attitudes typically takes place within a laboratory setting, using techniques such as word association tasks (Fazio et al, 2005) the implicit association test (Greenwald et al, 1998), and recall of stimuli (Schneider, 2005), however, participants are usually unaware of what is being measured (DeHouwer, 2005). While indirect methods have been successful in predicting unconscious bias (Dovidio et al, 1997), these types of methods obviously have huge implications for feasibility in terms of resources and practicality, as well as ethical considerations for the participants. As Clark-Carter (1997) points out, there are certain principles which should guide how you treat the participants who take part in your research study. As such, one premise of the present research was to advise participants on the purposes of this study so that they could give fully informed consent to partake. In consideration of this, the indirect approach to measuring attitudes toward ‘older workers’ was deemed
inappropriate for this study, but neither was it feasible given time and resource limitations.

The direct approach, on the other hand, assesses attitudes using self-report methods, where participants are normally aware of the types of attitudes that are being measured, and have control over the measurement outcome (De Houwer, 2005). These self-report methods usually comprise a series of questions or statements about an attitudinal object, where participants are asked to give an evaluation of this object, which is then recorded (Anderson, 1981; De Houwer, 2005). Problems inherent in the direct approach relate to the potential misinformation provided by participant because of a desire to respond in a socially acceptable manner (as discussed further in section 3.6 below). However, Karpinski and Hilton (2001) and Dovidio et al (2002) demonstrated that direct methods for measuring individual attitudes were better in predicting individual choices than indirect methods, while Griffiths (1999) stated that direct approaches do not restrict research paradigms, nor do they require the types of resources associated with laboratory research, and are therefore suitable in organisational research. For these reasons, a direct approach was employed, utilising a self-report survey instrument.

### 3.5.2 Developing the Research Instrument

Developing and designing the survey was one of the major tasks of this research. The attitude measurement process involved the development of appropriate measurement scales, the selection of question wording and content, the sequencing of questions, and the response format. In this study, the development of a multiple-item attitude scale was required in response to the need for standardised measurement of the cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions of attitudes toward older workers. As already highlighted in Chapter Two, the affective dimension of ageist attitudes is largely neglected in previous studies (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007), and, with the exception of Chiu et al (2001), the behavioural dimension has scarcely been measured. Although researchers over
the past few decades have developed various, and mostly uni-dimensional, scales measuring attitudes toward older people in general (cf. Golde and Kogan, 1959; Kogan, 1961; Palmore, 1977; Rosencranz and McNevin, 1969; Fraboni et al., 1990), few of them have constructed scales specifically measuring attitudes toward older workers directed at organisational decision-makers. Those that have (cf. Bird and Fischer, 1986; Hassell and Perrewe, 1995) place an emphasis on stereotypical attitudes of older workers. These instruments also pre-define an ‘older worker’, yet this pre-definition could potentially obfuscate research findings (Bytheway et al., 1995). The survey instrument developed in the present research sought to address these issues, as described below.

In consideration of Research Question One, who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be?, the following open questions were included in the survey instrument to allow for the respondents’ own definition of an ‘older worker’, given the potential, as suggested by Bytheway et al. (1995), for pre-definitions to obfuscate research findings:

1. At what specific age (in years) do you think a worker is an ‘older worker’?
2. Why do you think this?
3. Do you think the age when a worker is an ‘older worker’ is different for men and women?
4. If yes, please state a specific age (in years) for when a male is an ‘older worker’, and a female is an ‘older worker’.
5. Why do you think there is a difference in this age for men and women?

These open questions were also designed to gain a greater understanding of the term ‘older worker’, given the lack of consensus in defining this term (cf. Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005; Pitt-Catsouphes et al., 2010). It was thought that some of the open qualitative questions may also illuminate the various social roles ‘older workers’ may be perceived to occupy under the Social Role Theory.
framework (Eagly, 1987), especially as these types of role perceptions became apparent in the exploratory study. The questions regarding the definition of an ‘older worker’ are therefore both quantitative in nature, in terms of measurement, and qualitative in nature, in terms of perceptions, as recommended by Edmonson and McManus (2007).

The preparation of multiple attitude scales was required in consideration of Research Question Two, what are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers?, where existing literature is almost always appropriate in selecting scale items (Jaeger, 1984). Various resources were examined to determine the multi-dimensional concepts that comprise measurement of tripartite attitudes toward ‘older workers’, as opposed to attitudes toward the ageing process, and some of the real and valid differences among ‘older workers’ and ‘younger workers’ that naturally become more salient as people, and workers, age. A number of published measures on stereotypes of older workers were utilised based on the work of Tuckman and Lorge (1952), Kirchner and Dunnette (1954), Bird and Fischer (1986), Hassell and Perrewe (1995), and Chiu et al (2001). Measures concerning the affective dimension of attitudes toward older workers were developed by adapting prejudicial measures of attitudes toward older people (Fraboni et al, 1990; Rupp et al, 2005) to measure prejudicial attitudes toward older workers more specifically, as Rupp et al (2005:357) surmised that one area of future research would be to develop an organisationally focused version of these measures (as described previously in Chapters One and Two). Finally, measures concerning the behavioural dimensions of attitudes toward older workers were adapted from Chiu et al (2001). The operationalisation of these measured variables is detailed later in this chapter, in section 3.5.5.

Edwards (1983), in summarising the work of Thurstone and Chave (1929), Wang (1932), Likert (1932), Bird (1940) and Edwards and Kilpatrick (1948), outlined thirteen criteria for editing statements to be used in the construction of attitude
scales, which guided the adaptation of the measures described above in the present research:

1. Avoid statements that refer to the past rather than the present
2. Avoid statements that are factual or capable of being interpreted as factual
3. Avoid statements that may be interpreted in more than one way
4. Avoid statements that are irrelevant to the psychological object under consideration
5. Avoid statements that are likely to be endorsed by almost everyone or almost no one
6. Select statements that are believed to cover the entire range of the affective scale of interest
7. Keep the language of the statements simple, clear and direct
8. Statement should be short, rarely exceeding 20 words
9. Each statement should contain only one complete thought
10. Avoid ambiguity
11. Use simple sentences over complex whenever possible
12. Avoid words that may not be understood by those who will be completing the scale
13. Avoid the use of double negatives

Likert-type scaling (Likert, 1932) was used to measure the strength and valence of the attitudes (cf. Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; 1998) on each of these stereotypical, prejudicial and discriminatory dimensions of attitudes toward older workers items. While other types of attitude scales are used to measure attitudes, such as Thurstone scaling (1928), Guttman scaling (1944), and Expectancy-Value scaling (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), the measures of attitudes toward older workers which were adapted in this research instrument use the Likert-type scaling technique. This particular technique is considered the most efficient and effective method of developing highly reliable scales (Anderson, 1981). Therefore, under the response category guidelines suggested by Anderson
(1981), it was decided participants would be asked to rate all attitudes statements according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

With respect to Research Questions Three and Four, what specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be? and, what specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers?, two sets of independent variables needed to be measured, to include both individual and organisational variables. Five individual-level variables would be measured: age, gender, job position; position tenure; and organisation tenure. Four organisational-level variables would also need to be measured: company size (referring to the number of employees working in the organisation); industry type (based on the EU Classification of Economic Activities - NACE industry codes); whether or not the decision-makers organisation had an explicit equality or diversity policy in place; and the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations. The finalised survey items are detailed in section 3.5.5 below.

3.5.3 Pilot Testing

Several important steps in developing survey instruments are item generation and refinement (Nassar-McMillan and Borders, 2002), and while using existing literature is almost always appropriate in selecting items (Jaeger, 1984), a supplementary method can include soliciting feedback from individuals in the field (Gilbert, 1993). Therefore, once the research instrument was initially developed, pilot testing was undertaken to discover any potential problems related to the design of the survey in terms of its clarity and its validity. This pilot study involved two stages: firstly, three members of the Statistical Consulting Unit at the University of Limerick, two W/O (work and organisational) psychology researchers at the Department of Personnel and Employment Relations at the University of Limerick, two executive members of
the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), which is the national umbrella organisation for business and employers in Ireland, as well as other colleagues at the Graduate School of Business, University of Limerick, completed the survey. They also critiqued the survey design in terms of question content, wording, sequencing, and format. Inter-rater reliability was also checked against the multiple dimensions of attitude scale items. Aside from some minor formatting issues, the results of the first stage of piloting yielded a suggestion to change the term ‘older worker’ to the term ‘older employee’, in order to reflect industry norms, and subsequently, this change was applied.

Moser and Kalton (1971) recognised the importance of considering the ability and willingness of the target respondents to answer questions, and, with this in mind, the second stage of pilot testing involved drawing on a convenient sample of 20 decision-makers based in both manufacturing and service organisations in Ireland. These decision-makers were sent both the cover letter that was intended to invite respondents to participate in the study, and the survey instrument itself to complete, as well as a document for suggesting improvements to the survey. This stage of the pilot testing raised no major questions about the research, and the respondents perceived no difficulty in understanding and answering the questions. In fact, some decision-makers in the pilot sample commented on the importance of carrying out this study in the current context of workforce ageing, and that it was, as one respondent articulated, an ‘interesting and thought-provoking survey’. Having conducted the pilot study, the next stage of the research was to finalise the research instrument, select the sample, and begin data collection, as detailed in the following sections.

### 3.5.4 Sample and Procedure

The purpose of sampling is to study a representative subsection of a precisely defined population (Gilbert, 1993). This research investigates both who ‘older workers’ are considered to be, and the attitudes that exist toward these ‘older workers’ among organisational decision-makers in Ireland, defined in this study
as those involved in the process of recruiting, selecting, training, and developing workers in organisations. The focus on decision-makers here in terms of their involvement in decisions relating to employment in organisations is an important one, since these individuals are directly responsible for the provision of employment and development opportunities for all workers, including ‘older’ workers. Their attitudes are thus central to a better understanding of the issues surrounding an ageing workforce in Ireland: older workers’ employment depends on organisational decision-maker willingness to hire, develop and retain them; they may be reluctant to do so if they have negative attitudes about ‘older workers’. But, while decisions about the employment of workers can involve managers at all levels of the organisation, it is important to consider those in three critical roles: senior management, line management, and the specialist human resource (HR) function (Gunnigle et al, 2011), and as such, only decision-makers in these roles were considered.

Consequently, a random sample of 1200 organisational decision-makers was drawn from small, medium and large organisations across all industry sectors in Ireland, utilising the Companies Registrations Office Ireland (CRO) database as a sampling frame. The CRO is the central repository of public statutory information on Irish companies and business names. The sector classifications of the CRO coincide with the EU classifications of economic activities (NACE). Where decision-makers in line management or HR roles were not included in the selected company records on the CRO database, these individuals were accessed using the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) mailing list, which is Ireland’s largest HR and development professional body. It should be noted, however, that companies in the agricultural sector were not included in the sample, in view of the large percentage of self-employed individuals in small companies in this sector in Ireland (CSO, 2010).

In June 2010, participants were invited via e-mail to participate in the study by filling out the survey, which was hosted through an online link at Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), an online survey tool that allows researcher
to create and publish surveys. As an ever-increasing amount of communicative activity takes place through the medium of the internet, particularly in organisations (Wright, 2005), I felt the choice of an online survey would be the most efficient means of data collection, particularly as the internet has been found to be an especially rich domain in conducting survey research (Wright, 2005). Online surveys also tend to be aesthetically pleasing for respondents, as effective as postal surveys in terms of response rates and quality, and relatively low in costs (cf. Ahuja and Carley, 1998; Kraut et al, 2002). This method yielded a response rate of 15.6 per cent (n=187). In order to maximise response rate, a hard-copy of the invitation to participate, the survey, and a stamped addressed envelope were sent to the sample of decision-makers in October, 2010. The invitations included in this procedure, however, explicitly asked that participants would not complete the survey if they had already done so online. This method yielded a response rate of 9.6 percent (n=116), and therefore an overall initial response rate of 25.2 percent, with a total of 303 surveys returned. Baruch (1999) notes, however, that response rate refers to the number of usable surveys, not the number of returned surveys. Of the 303 surveys returned, 33 surveys were incomplete with large proportions of missing data, while a further 27 surveys were returned by respondents who stated that they did not make key decisions about employment in their respective organisations, and were thus excluded from further analysis. Therefore, the study yielded a response rate of 20.3 percent (n=243), which is considered acceptable in the social sciences (Baruch, 1999), and much higher than the typical response rate of 10 percent in organisational research suggested by DeVellis (1991).

Of the survey respondents, 57 percent were male (n=138), and 43 percent were female (n=104), with the majority aged between 36 and 45 years of age (n=94), but there was a good spread across age categories in the sample. Almost one third (30.5 percent) of respondents held strategic level managerial decision making roles (n= 74), where 9.5 percent (n=23) of these respondents were ‘owner-managers’ in small organisations. The majority, however, at 43.6 percent (n=106), made employment decisions at the operational level of their respective organisations as functional managers or line managers, while 16.1 percent (n=39)
worked in the human resources (HR) function as decision-makers. Average position tenure among the sample was 5.93 years; with a median of 4 years, a minimum of one year and a maximum of forty years. The average organisational tenure among the sample was 11.35 years, with a median organisational of 7.5 years, a minimum of one year and a maximum of forty years. The decision-makers’ organisations employed an average of 288 employees, but there was a good balance across micro, small, medium and large organisations. There was also a spread across EU NACE industry sectors, and also across the manufacturing (secondary) and services (tertiary) industries: over one-third of respondents were employed in the manufacturing sectors \((n=76)\), just over a quarter in the finance and IT services sector \((n=61)\), and almost 10 percent in the retail and hospitality sectors \((n=23)\). Almost three quarters of respondents, at over 74 percent \((n=179)\), stated that their organisation had an explicit equality or diversity policy in place, while the remainder did not, or could not, say if such a policy existed. The average percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations was 18.8 percent.

### 3.5.5 Description of the Variables

The finalised research instrument relied on a number of open and closed questions, and an attitudinal scale, in the form of a self-report survey. Two sets of independent variables were measured, including both individual and organisational variables. Five individual-level variables were measured: age, gender, job position; position tenure; and organisation tenure. Four organisational-level variables were measured: company size (referring to the number of employees working in the organisation); industry type (based on the EU NACE industry codes); whether or not the decision-makers organisation had an explicit equality or diversity policy in place; and the perceived percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations. Eight sets of dependent attitudinal variables were assessed adapting existing measures based on the work of Tuckman and Lorge (1952), Kirchner and Dunnette (1954), Bird and Fischer (1986), Hassell and Perrewe (1995), Chiu et al (2001) and Rupp et al
(2005). Five attitude scales were used to measure stereotypes (cognitive attitude component) of ‘older workers’: (1) ‘work effectiveness’; (2) ‘work adaptability’; (3) ‘reaction to criticism’; (4) ‘interpersonal skills’; (5) ‘employment of older workers’. One attitude scale was used to measure prejudicial feelings (affective attitude component): ‘feelings about older workers’. Two attitude scales were used to measure discriminatory predispositions (behavioural attitude component) toward older workers: (1) ‘behavioural intention-recruitment’; (2) ‘behavioural intention-retention’. These variables are detailed in the sections below, including an evaluation of the reliability of each scale using Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951), and an examination of the factor structure of each scale using the guidelines suggested by Pallant (2007). A more in-depth discussion of reliability and factor analytic techniques used in the present research are discussed further in section 3.5.6. Decision-makers were asked to rate all items according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude. Furthermore, unlike other similar published surveys on attitudes toward older workers, this instrument included open-ended questions on defining the ‘older worker’, allowing for decision-makers’ own interpretation of the age at which a worker is an ‘older worker’, for the purposes of illuminating the under-developed concept of the term ‘older worker’ (cf. Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005; Pitt-Catsouphes et al, 2010).

Note: Cover Letter and Self-Report Instrument are presented in Appendix A

3.5.5.1 Cognitive Attitude Scales (Stereotypes)

Work Effectiveness. Stereotypes about the ‘work effectiveness’ of older workers were measured using a 4-item scale based on the work of Warr and Pennington (1993) and Chiu et al (2001). Work effectiveness refers to beliefs about certain traits of older workers on the job, specifically, their dependability, their loyalty, and the quality of their work, presented in Table 4.1 below. Each item was scored and measured according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The overall Work Effectiveness scale
was composed of the mean total scores from all four items. Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude. Each item is positively-worded; therefore, reversing negatively worded items in the scale composition procedure was unnecessary. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that all the item coefficients were above .3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .784, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974), and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (p<.01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) revealed the presence of one component; explaining 61.42 percent of variance. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the first component. In this study, the ‘work effectiveness’ scale yielded a reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of \( \alpha = .791 \)

Table 3.2 Work Effectiveness Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Effectiveness of Older Workers Scale</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>( \alpha )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WE 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Component 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are more dependable than younger employees</td>
<td>.798</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees usually turn out work of higher quality</td>
<td>.798</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are most loyal to the company</td>
<td>.727</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are better employees</td>
<td>.809</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work Adaptability. Stereotypes about the ‘work adaptability’ of older workers were measured using an 8-item scale, again, based on the work of Warr and Pennington (1993) and Chiu *et al* (2001). Work adaptability refers to beliefs about older workers’ adaptability to new technology and industry change, as well as their willingness to learn new skills, as shown in Table 4.2 below. Each item was scored and measured according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The overall Work Adaptability scale was composed of the mean total scores from all eight items. Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude. Negatively-worded items were reverse scored before calculation of the overall
scale. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that many of the item coefficients were above .3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .779, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974), and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (p<.01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA revealed the presence of two components with an eigenvalue of 1 or more, explaining 36.34 percent and 15.32 percent of variance respectively. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the second component. In the search for ‘simple structure’ (Thurstone, 1947), the second component (WA 2) was removed from further analysis. In this study, the retained ‘work adaptability’ scale yielded a reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of $\alpha = .755$

### Table 3.3 Work Adaptability Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Adaptability of Older Workers Scale</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WA 1</td>
<td>Older employees do not want jobs with increased responsibility</td>
<td>.554</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees are not interested in learning new skills</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees cannot keep up to speed in this industry</td>
<td>.589</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees are resistant to change</td>
<td>.698</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees experience difficulties with technology</td>
<td>.748</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees are less flexible than younger employees</td>
<td>.657</td>
<td>.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(WA 2)</td>
<td>(Older employees have as much ability to learn new methods as younger employees)</td>
<td>.712</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees work just as hard as anyone else</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td>.583</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** WA 2: ‘Older employees have as much ability to learn new methods as younger employees’ and ‘Older employees work just as hard as anyone else’ were removed from further analysis.
Reaction to Criticism. Stereotypes about how older workers react to criticism at work were measured using a 3-item scale based on the work of Tuckman and Lorge (1952), Kirchner and Dunnette (1954), and Bird and Fischer (1986). Reaction to criticism refers to beliefs about how older workers respond to criticism, particularly when they are under-performing, as shown in Table 4.3. Each item was scored and measured according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The overall Reaction to Criticism scale was composed of the mean total scores from all three items. Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude. Negatively-worded items were reverse scored before calculation of the overall scale. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that all the item coefficients were .298 or above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .620, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974), and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (p<.01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA revealed the presence of one component, explaining 60.59 percent of variance. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the first component. In this study, the ‘reaction to criticism’ scale yielded reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of $\alpha = .669$. However, the inter-item correlation mean = .401, which is within the optimal range recommended by Briggs and Cheek (1986) for scales with fewer than ten items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.4 Reaction to Criticism Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Reaction to Criticism’ of Older Workers Scale</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
<th>Mean Inter-item Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RTC 1</td>
<td>Older employees dislike to work under younger supervisors</td>
<td>.682</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees do not respond well to criticism</td>
<td>.842</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees are more difficult to manage when they are underperforming compared to</td>
<td>.801</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpersonal Skills. Stereotypes about the interpersonal skills of older workers were measured using a 3-item scale based on the work of Tuckman and Lorge (1952), Kirchner and Dunnette (1954), and Bird and Fischer (1986). Interpersonal skills refer to beliefs about the supervisory skills and people skills of older workers, shown in Table 4.4 below. Each item was scored and measured according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The overall Interpersonal Skills scale was composed of the mean total scores from all three items. Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude. Each item is positively-worded; therefore, reversing negatively worded items in the scale composition procedure was unnecessary. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that all of the item coefficients were above .3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .686, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (p<.01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA revealed the presence of one component, explaining 65.87 percent of variance. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the first component. In this study, the ‘interpersonal skills’ scale yielded a reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of $\alpha = .748$.

Table 3.5 Interpersonal Skills Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal Skills of Older Workers Scale</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IPS 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are better supervisors than younger employees</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are better mentors than younger workers</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment of Older Workers. Stereotypes about the employment of older workers were measured using a 12-item scale based on the work of Tuckman and Lorge (1952), Kirchner and Dunnette (1954), Bird and Fischer (1986), and Hassell and Perrewe (1995). Employment of older workers refer to beliefs about employing ‘older workers’, with respect to ambition, training, performance, and the costs associated with ‘older workers’, as shown in Table 4.5. Each item was scored and measured according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The overall Employment of Older Workers Scale was composed of the mean total scores from all twelve items. Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude. Negatively-worded items were reverse scored before calculation of the overall scale. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed all that many of the item coefficients were above .3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .782, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (p<.01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. Principal components analysis revealed the presence of four components with an eigenvalue of 1 or more, explaining 29.83 percent, 11.599 percent, 9.964 percent and 9.113 percent of variance respectively. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the second component. Using Catell’s (1966) scree test, a two-component solution emerged, explaining a total of 41.43 percent of the variance, with component 1 (EOW1) contributing 29.84 percent, and component 2 (EOW2) contributing 11.59 percent. To aid in the interpretation of these two components, oblimin rotation was performed. The rotated solution revealed the presence of a simple structure (Thurstone, 1947), with both components showing a number of strong loadings and all variables loading on only one component. Both components were therefore retained in the final scale. In this study, the combined ‘employment of older workers’ scale yielded reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of $\alpha = .732$. 
### Table 3.6 Employment of Older Workers Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment of Older Workers Scale</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Mean Inter-item Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item</strong></td>
<td>Component 1</td>
<td>Component 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOW 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees take longer in getting over an illness</td>
<td>.456</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An older employee would quit their job if they could afford to</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees have more accidents on the job than younger employees</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work performance declines with age</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees have limited skills</td>
<td>.653</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees cost more</td>
<td>.487</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees have little ambition</td>
<td>.750</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are harder to train for jobs than younger employees</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are paid too much for the amount of work they do</td>
<td>.739</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOW 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are more creative than younger employees</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are just as interested in career advancement as younger employees</td>
<td>.716</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are an invaluable source of knowledge in the company</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td>.351</td>
<td>.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5.5.2 Affective Component (Prejudicial Feelings)

Prejudicial Feelings about Older Workers. Affect toward older workers were measured using a 4-item scale based on the work of Fraboni et al (1990) and Rupp et al (2005). Prejudicial feelings refer to the emotions associated with working alongside ‘older workers’, as shown in Table 4.6. Each item was scored and measured according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The overall Prejudicial Feelings Scale was composed of the mean total scores from all four items. Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude. Each item is positively-worded; therefore, reversing negatively worded items in the scale composition procedure was unnecessary. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that all the item coefficients were .298 or above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .748, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (p<.01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA revealed the presence of one component, explaining 65.45 percent of variance. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the first component. In this study, the combined ‘employment of older workers’ scale yielded reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of α = .821.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings toward Older Workers Scale</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item</strong></td>
<td><strong>Component 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREJ 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are easier to work with than younger employees</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees co-operate more on the job than younger employees</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are better leaders</td>
<td>.844</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Older employees tend to make better decisions at work.

3.5.5.3 Behavioural Component (Discriminatory/Behavioural Intentions)

Recruitment of Older Workers. Behavioural intentions about recruiting older workers were measured using a 3-item scale based on the work of Chiu et al (2001). Recruitment of older workers refers to discriminatory or behavioural intentions toward hiring older workers, as shown in Table 4.7. Each item was scored and measured according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The overall Discriminatory Intentions in the Recruitment of Older Workers Scale was composed of the mean total scores from all three items. Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude. Each item is positively-worded; therefore, reversing negatively worded items in the scale composition procedure was unnecessary. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that all the item coefficients were .3 or above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .632, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (p<.01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA revealed the presence of one component, explaining 57.36 percent of variance. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the first component. In this study the ‘recruitment of older workers’ scale yielded reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of $\alpha = .621$. However, the inter-item correlation mean = .359, which is within the optimal range recommended by Briggs and Cheek (1986) for scales with fewer than ten items.

Table 3.8 Recruitment of Older Workers Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment of Older Workers Scale</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
<th>Mean Inter-item Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Component 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

104
**Retention of Older Workers.** Behavioural intentions about retaining older workers were measured using a 4-item scale based on the work of Chiu *et al* (2001). Retention of older workers refers to discriminatory or behavioural intentions toward developing and retaining older workers in employment, as shown in Table 4.8. Each item was scored and measured according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The overall Discriminatory Intentions in the Retention of Older Workers Scale was composed of the mean total scores from all four items. Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude. Negatively-worded items were reverse scored before calculation of the overall scale. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that all the item coefficients were .3 or above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .738, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance (p<.01), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. Principal components analysis revealed the presence of one component, explaining 54.59 percent of variance. An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the first component. In this study the ‘retention of older workers’ scale yielded reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of $\alpha = .714$. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If two employees had similar skills, I’d pick the older employee to work with me</td>
<td>.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to recruit more older staff</td>
<td>.802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older employees are more experienced and should therefore occupy more senior positions</td>
<td>.718</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correlation matrix revealed that all the item coefficients were .3 or above.
Table 3.9 Retention of Older Workers Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention of Older Workers Scale</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RET 1</td>
<td>Older employees should be made redundant before younger workers if the company reduces headcount</td>
<td>.736</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would encourage early retirement</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees are a poor investment when it comes to providing training</td>
<td>.706</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older employees should step aside to give younger employees career advancement opportunities</td>
<td>.805</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.6 Statistical Analyses

The purpose of each of the variables included in the survey instrument (as discussed above) was to allow the research questions and derived hypotheses of the study to be assessed. Thus, once the survey data was collected, the key consideration in conducting statistical analyses on this data was to ensure that the type of analysis chosen was suited to answering the research questions. Table 3.10 below outlines the analysis requirements for each of the research questions and derived hypotheses pertaining to this study.

Table 3.10 Analytic Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question and Hypotheses</th>
<th>Analytic Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1. Who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ H1 Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ at varying chronological ages</td>
<td>Examine descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ H2 Decision-makers will define a female worker to be an ‘older worker’ at a younger age than a male worker</td>
<td>Examine descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ H3 Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ from varying perspectives</td>
<td>Code and thematically examine open-ended questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2. What are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- **H4a** Organisational decision-makers will hold negative stereotypical beliefs about older workers
  Examine descriptive statistics, examine relationships among the dependent variables

- **H4b** Organisational decision-makers will hold negative prejudicial feelings about older workers
  Examine descriptive statistics, examine relationships among the dependent variables

- **H4c** Organisational decision-makers will hold negative discriminatory attitudes toward older workers
  Examine descriptive statistics, examine correlation among the dependent variables

RQ3. What specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be?

- **H5a** Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'
  Independent samples t-test, correlation analysis, regression model

- **H6a** Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'
  ANOVA, correlation analysis, regression model

- **H7a** Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'
  ANOVA, correlation analysis, regression model

- **H8a** Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'
  Correlation analysis, regression model

- **H9a** Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'
  Correlation analysis, regression model

- **H10a** The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'
  Correlation analysis, regression model

- **H11a** The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'
  ANOVA, correlation analysis, regression model

- **H12a** The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'
  ANOVA, correlation analysis, regression model

- **H13a** The percentage of 'older workers' employed in the decision-makers' organisations will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'
  Correlation analysis, regression model
RQ4. What specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H5b</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H5c</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H5d</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H6b</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H6c</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H6d</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H7b</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H7c</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H7d</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H8b</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H8c</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H8d</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H9b</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H9c</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H9d</strong></td>
<td>Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H10b</strong></td>
<td>The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H10c</strong></td>
<td>The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H10d</strong></td>
<td>The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H11b</strong></td>
<td>The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H11c</strong></td>
<td>The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H11d</strong></td>
<td>The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H12b</strong></td>
<td>The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H12c</strong></td>
<td>The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H12d</strong></td>
<td>The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H13b</strong></td>
<td>The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations</td>
<td>Correlation analysis, regression model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

- \(H13c\) The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers
- \(H13d\) The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

In order to analyse the data pertaining to Research Question One, who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be?, descriptive statistics of the variables relating to the specific age a worker is considered to be an ‘older worker’ were analysed. Open-ended questions were also coded and subjected to content analysis using the guidelines of Burnard (1991). The content of these open questions were read a number of times and organised into general themes.

To analyse data pertaining to Research Question Two, what are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers?, descriptive statistics of the eight dependent attitude scales were analysed, along with the relationships between these dependent variables.

Concerning Research Questions Three and Four, what specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be? and what specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers?, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, independent samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were firstly explored using the guidelines of Pallant (2007). This was to initially explore differences in attitudes toward older workers among the independent variables. Given the majority of hypotheses derived from the conceptual framework specify significant explanatory relationships between the independent and dependent variables, the multiple regression/correlation model was then applied, as:
Several independent variables may be expected to influence the dependent variable, the independent variables themselves may be related, the independent variables may take different forms, and the form of the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables may also be complex. Each of these complexities is nicely addressed by the multiple regression/correlation model.

Cohen (2003:3)

The statistical software used in the analysis of the survey data was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. This software was chosen because of the comprehensive nature of its statistical procedures, as well as its user-friendliness, as highlighted by Mills (2003) and Pallant (2007). It is also the statistical software with which I am most familiar, and the most commonly used software for survey analysis (Proctor, 2003). This section therefore details each of the statistical procedures carried out on the data collected in the study.

3.5.6.1 Data Screening

Before commencing statistical analyses, the raw survey data was transcribed manually into a password protected SPSS v16.0 data file. The data was firstly screened for accuracy. This involved proofreading the original data against the computerised data file. The data was then examined using univariate descriptive frequencies and statistics. Each discrete variable in the data file was checked for out-of-range numbers, continuous variables were checked for implausible values, and means and standard deviations were also checked for plausibility. Incorrectly transcribed data items identified through these analyses were checked against the original data items on the survey. The items in the SPSS v16.0 data file were then corrected. SPSS Missing Value Analysis (MVA) was conducted in accordance with the guidelines recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). The MVA indicated that some survey measures had very low proportions of missing data. Therefore, as recommended by Pallant (2007), pairwise data
deletion was preferred where possible and appropriate. Negatively worded items on the attitude scales were then reversed before total scores were calculated.

3.5.6.2 Preliminary Analyses

Having screened the data file, each of the variables were explored in order to firstly, describe the characteristics of the sample, and secondly, to check variables for any violation of the assumptions underlying correlation and regression techniques. Correlation and multiple regression techniques are parametric in nature, used to draw inferences about a population, and have a basic assumption that the population exhibits a frequency distribution that approximates to a normal curve (Sheskin, 2000; Osborne and Waters, 2002; Pallant, 2007). Examinations of the curves (presented in Appendix B) indicate that each of the variables measured in the study fit the criterion of normally distributed data. Correlation and multiple regression techniques also require continuous and independent data, the existence of linear relationships between variables, and dependent variables to exhibit similar amounts of variance across the range of values for an independent variable (homoscedasticity) (Sheskin, 2000; Osborne and Waters, 2002; Pallant, 2007). Preliminary analyses were thus performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity existed, while categorical variables were recoded into continuous or dichotomous variables under the guidelines of Pallant (2007).

It was then necessary to assess the reliability of the eight scales used to measure attitudes toward older workers in this study, where the reliability of a scale indicates how free it is from random error (Pallant, 2007), and whether it works in a consistent way (Proctor, 2003). Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) is almost universally used to test reliability, which is approximately the average of all the possible split-half correlations, and thus measures the consistency of all the items, globally and individually. Ideally, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of a scale should be above .7 (DeVellis, 2003; Pallant, 2007). However, in scales with fewer than ten items, it may be more appropriate to report the mean inter-item correlation of the scale items. Briggs and Cheek
(1986) recommend an optimal range for inter-item correlation of .2 to .4. As discussed earlier in section 3.5.5, the reliability of the eight scales measuring attitudes toward older workers in this study is acceptable. The items of each of these attitudinal scales were also subjected to principal components analysis (PCA) in order to evaluate the validity of the scales, where the validity of a scale indicates whether it measures the correct concept (Proctor, 2003). Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed, the results and analysis of which are also presented earlier in section 3.5.5.

3.5.6.3 Correlation and Regression

Correlation analysis is used to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationships between two variables (Pallant, 2007). The correlation coefficient is a number between 0 and 1 that indexes this relationship (Proctor, 2003). If the correlation is zero, the two variables are completely unrelated, whereas a correlation of one means there is a perfect positive relationship between the two variables. Correlations can also be negative, e.g. a coefficient of -1 indicates a perfect, but negative, relationship between the two variables. In this study, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) (Pearson, 1938; Pallant, 2007) was used to explore: (1) the relationships among the independent variables, i.e. the specific individual and organisational characteristics of the decision makers; (2) relationships among the dependent variables, i.e. the specific age given for an ‘older worker’, and the eight measured scales of attitudes toward ‘older workers’; and (3) relationships between the independent and dependent variables measured, the results of which are presented in the next chapter. Regression analysis examines the nature of statistical dependence between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables (Baker, 2003). In other words, it can tell you how well a set of variables is able to predict a particular outcome. While this type of analysis is based on correlation, it allows for a more sophisticated exploration of the inter-relationships among a set of variables. Multiple regression is considered ‘ideal for the investigation of complex real-life, rather than laboratory based, research questions’ (Pallant, 2007: 148). As such, regression models were used in this study to examine the
influence of the specific individual and organisational variables measured in predicting both the measured definitions of the ‘older worker’, and the measured attitudes that exist toward these ‘older workers’. The results of these regression models are also presented in the next chapter.

3.6 Validity and Limitations

Two critical methodological concepts have been touched on elsewhere in this chapter, validity and reliability. In other words, how credible are the research findings?, and, if the study were to be conducted again, using the same procedures, would it yield the same results? (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Creswell, 2004). Firstly, there are two main tests to ensure validity, internal validity and external validity (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Internal validity refers to the ability of the research design to eliminate bias. In the present research, all decisions with respect to the design of the study were made with the intention of achieving ‘methodological fit’, which is defined as ‘internal consistency among elements of a research project – research question, prior work, research design, and theoretical contribution’ (Edmonson and McManus, 2007: 1155). As such, every effort was made to align the methodology of the study to the research questions (cf. Saunders et al, 2007; Maxwell, 2005, 2008). While limitations of the self-report survey method include the possible effect of social desirability, every effort was made to remedy such a problem. Here, the research took the ‘sensible’ approach (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986; Podsakoff et al., 2003): as much information as possible was provided to the participants on the purpose and use of this research (contained in the cover letter, see Appendix A); furthermore, much care was taken in the scale ordering of the attitudinal items included in the survey, which were also multi-dimensional in nature. This included lengthy pilot testing. In addition, preliminary analyses were performed on the data collected to ensure no violation of the assumptions of the analytic techniques carried out existed. External validity, then, refers to generalisability of the research findings. The findings of this study cannot claim to be representative of all organisational decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’, however, every effort was made to develop a comprehensive and representative sample in Ireland. Secondly, in
terms of reliability, the use of a survey instrument is regarded as one of the most reliable methods due to their highly structured nature (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Attitude items included in the self-report instrument yielded reliability consistent with Cronbach’s alpha (Cronbach, 1951); where self-report measures have been found to be better predictors of attitudes and choices than indirect methods (Karpinski and Hilton, 2001; Dovidio et al, 2002); and Likert-scaling measurement used for the items in the survey is considered the most efficient and effective method of developing highly reliable scales (Anderson, 1981).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how the present research was designed and carried out in order to answer the research questions posed previously in Chapter One, and to investigate the conceptual framework that was presented in Chapter Two. This chapter re-visited the goals of the research, and detailed the many conceptual resources that were used to construct the conceptual framework. It described the research as employing a realist ontological approach, adopting a largely positivist epistemic view, chosen because it is the most appropriate paradigm with which to address the research questions of the study. The chapter provided particular detail on the quantitative methods employed by the study, the ways in which the variables were assessed and measured, and the nature of the analyses carried out on the data collected. Finally, considerations toward the validity and reliability of the methodology employed in the present research were summarised, while also acknowledging the limitations. The empirical findings unearthed as a result of the research carried out are now presented in Chapter Four.
Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Results

You look at the phenomena with authenticity, respect, curiosity, speculation… you get something

(Bartlett and Ghoshal, 2002:13)

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters set out both the framework for investigation and the methodological tools utilised in this study, and, accordingly, the thesis now turns its attention toward the empirical observations of the research carried out. As such, this chapter is divided into three key sections which examine the data pertaining to the research questions: Who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be? What are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers? What specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be? What specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers?

The first section explores the important individual and organisational characteristics of the research sample; the second considers how the decision-makers in this sample define an ‘older worker’; and the third examines the multi-dimensional attitudes of these decision-makers toward ‘older workers’. The chapter places a particular emphasis on the hypotheses proposed previously for this study in Chapter Two, and whether each hypothesis was supported or rejected as a result of the rigorous data analyses employed, which were detailed earlier in Chapter Three. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results, setting the stage for discussion of these findings in Chapter Five.
4.2 Section One: Exploring the Sample

4.2.1 Response Rate

In this study, a total of 303 surveys were returned, however: 33 of these were unusable as they were incomplete with large proportions of missing data; while a further 27 surveys were returned by respondents who did not make decisions about employment in their respective organisations, and were thus excluded from further analysis. As Baruch (1999) notes, response rate refers to the number of usable surveys, not the number of returned surveys. Therefore, the study yielded a response rate of 20.3 percent (n=243), which is considered acceptable in the social sciences (Baruch, 1999), and much higher than the typical response rate of 10 percent in organisational research suggested by DeVellis (1991).

4.2.2 Individual Characteristics

As outlined previously in Chapter Three, data was gathered on a number of important individual characteristics relating to the organisational decision-makers in the sample, which are presented in the following sections.

4.2.2.1 Respondent Gender

In total, 243 organisational decision-makers responded to the survey. Table 4.1 shows that 57 percent of these decision-makers are male (n= 138) and 43 percent are female (n=104).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1 individual did not indicate gender)
**4.2.2.2 Respondent Age**

Table 4.2 displays that the majority of decision-makers are aged between 36 and 45 years of age (n=94), but also that there is a good spread across age categories in the sample. This spread might be associated with the ‘bulge’ in the distribution of the population age in Ireland of those approximately aged between 35 and 45 years (CIA, 2010), especially where labour force participation in Ireland is highest for the 25 to 45 age group (CSO, 2011). Additionally, the age spread is broadly similar for males and females, with the exception of those aged between 61 and 70 years, where just one female decision-maker responded from this age group. This may be reflective of the general under-representation of women in decision-making positions in Ireland, as well as the fact that women over the age of 60 in Ireland have a much lower labour force participation rate than men (CSO, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-60</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-65</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(1 individual did not indicate their age)*
4.2.2.3 Respondent Job Position in the Organisation

Almost one third (30.5 percent) of survey respondents hold strategic, or senior level, managerial decision-making positions (n= 74), where 9.5 percent (n=23) of these decision-makers are ‘owner-managers’ of their organisations. The majority of respondents, at 43.6 percent (n=106), make employment decisions at the operational level of their respective organisations as functional managers, or as line managers and supervisors, while 16.1 percent (n=39) of respondents work in the human resources (HR) function as decision-makers. Table 4.3 presents this data, and also highlights that 9.9 percent (n=24) of those who responded to the survey hold ‘other’ positions in which they are responsible for decision-making about the employment of others. There was a noticeable trend in the sample whereby female decision-makers are more likely to occupy supervisory and HR level decision-making roles, rather than strategic-level positions, possibly because men hold much more senior-level management positions in Ireland than women (Coughlan, 2002).

Table 4.3 Respondent Job Position in Organisation (Categorised by Gender)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Position/Role</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO/President/VP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director/Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-Manager</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Manager</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Manager</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/Supervisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Director</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Manager</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>243</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.2.4 Respondent Position Tenure in Organisation

Position tenure for the sample is, on average, 5.93 years (SD=5.162); median position tenure is 4 years, with a minimum of one year and a maximum of forty years. Figure 4.1 below shows that 62.1 percent (n=151) of the sample are working in their current positions for 5 years or less, 23.4 percent (n=57) for between 6 and 10 years, 11.9 percent (n=29) for between 11 and 20 years, and just over 1 percent (n=4) are working in their current positions for more than 20 years.

Figure 4.1 Position Tenure (Categorised by Gender)

4.2.2.5 Respondent Organisational Tenure

Organisational tenure for the sample is, on average, 11.35 years (SD=10.461), while the median of organisational tenure is 7.5 years, with a minimum of one year and a maximum of forty years. Figure 4.2 below shows that almost 42 percent (n=101) of decision-makers in the sample are employed in their current organisation for 5 years or less, 21.4 percent (n=52) for between 6 and 10 years, over 18 percent (n=44) for between 11 and 20 years, and another 18 percent (n=44) are employed in their organisation for more than 20 years.
4.2.2.6 Individual Characteristics Summary

Of the survey respondents, 57 percent are male (n=138), and 43 percent are female (n=104), with the majority aged between 36 and 45 years of age (n=94), but there is a good spread across age categories in the sample. Almost one third (30.5 percent) of respondents hold strategic level managerial decision making roles (n= 74), where 9.5 percent (n=23) of these respondents are ‘owner-managers’ in small organisations. The majority, however, at 43.6 percent (n=106), make employment decisions at the operational level of their respective organisations as functional managers or line managers, while 16.1 percent (n=39) work in the human resources (HR) function as decision-makers. The average position tenure among the sample is 5.93 years; with a median of 4 years, a minimum of one year and a maximum of forty years. The average organisational tenure among the sample is 11.35 years, with a median organisational of 7.5 years, a minimum of one year and a maximum of forty years.
4.2.3 Organisational Characteristics

As outlined previously in Chapter Three, data was gathered on a number of important organisational characteristics relating to the organisational decision-makers in the sample, which are presented in the following sections.

4.2.3.1 Organisation Size

Respondent organisation size was measured by the number of individuals working within each of the decision-maker’s organisations. The analysis shows a mean of 288 people (SD=632), a median of 98, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 7000 people employed in the organisations. Figure 4.3 presents a further breakdown of the organization size variable where 53.6 percent of the decision-makers are employed in organisations of 98 employees or less, 69 percent are employed in organisations of 250 employees or less, 86.6 percent in organisations of 500 employees or less, with the remaining 13.4 percent employed in organisations of over 500 employees, showing a good spread across organisations size in the sample.

Figure 4.3 Organisation Size
4.2.3.2 Organisational Industry Sector

Table 4.4 displays the analysis of the industry sectors in which the decision-makers are employed, indicating that over one third of respondents are employed in the manufacturing sectors (n=76), just over a quarter in the finance and IT services sector (n=61), and almost 10 percent in the retail and hospitality sectors (n=23). The respondent organisation industry analysis shows a spread across the EU NACE industry sectors in the sample, and also across the manufacturing (secondary) and services (tertiary) industries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing - FBNMNPPPTCF</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing - MECEME</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing - CP</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RetailWholesale</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HotelsRestPubs</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services - IT</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services - FinBus</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TransportUtilities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HealthSocialWk</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.3.3 Organisation Equality/Diversity Policy

Just 17 percent (n=41) of respondents indicate that their organisation does not have an explicit equality or diversity policy that they were aware of, and, interestingly, a further 8.7 percent (n=21) indicate that they do not know whether their organisations’ have such a policy. However, about three quarters, or 74 percent (n=179), state that their organisation do have an explicit equality or diversity policy in place.
Table 4.5 Respondent Firm Equality/Diversity Policy Presence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equality/Diversity Policy</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>74.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>99.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2 individuals did not indicate whether their organisation had an equality/diversity policy)

4.2.3.4 Organisation Workforce Age Demographics

An average of 18.55 percent (SD=20.02), of ‘older workers’ are perceived to be employed by the decision-makers in their respective organisations, with a median of 14.5 percent, a maximum of 100 percent, and a minimum of 0 percent reported, as displayed in Figure 4.4

Figure 4.4 Percentage of Older Workers Employed in the Organisation

4.2.3.5 Organisational Characteristics Summary

The decision-makers’ organisations employ an average of 288 people, but there was a good balance across micro, small, medium and large organisations. There was also a spread across EU NACE industry sectors, and also across the manufacturing (secondary) and services (tertiary) industries: over one-third of
respondents are employed in the manufacturing sectors (n=76), just over a quarter in the finance and IT services sector (n=61), and almost 10 percent in the retail and hospitality sectors (n=23). Almost three quarters of respondents, at over 74 percent (n=179), stated that their organisation has an explicit equality or diversity policy in place, while the remainder did not, or could not, say if such a policy existed. The average percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in organisations, as perceived by the decision-makers’ organisations was 18.8 percent.

4.3 Section Two: Defining the ‘Older Worker’

This section discusses the results concerning the research questions Who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be? and What specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be? As such, it explicitly addresses the following hypotheses pertaining to these research questions, derived from the conceptual framework, as discussed previously in Chapters Two and Three:

RQ1. Who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be?

- **H1** Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ at varying chronological ages

- **H2** Decision-makers will define a female worker to be an ‘older worker’ at a younger chronological age than a male worker

- **H3** Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ from varying perspectives

RQ3. What specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be?

- **H5a** Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

- **H6a** Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

- **H7a** Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining the age at
which they define a worker as an 'older worker'

- **H8a** Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'

- **H9a** Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'

- **H10a** The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'

- **H11a** The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'

- **H12a** The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'

- **H13a** The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’

**4.3.1 Who do organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be?**

The present research seeks to investigate at what specific age a worker is considered to be an ‘older worker’ according to the perceptions of the decision-makers in the sample, the results of which are presented in Table 4.6. The findings indicate that a mean of 52.69 years (SD=7.9) is the age at when a worker is defined as ‘older’. The median age is 55 years, where a minimum of 30 years, and a maximum of 90 years of age, is reported. Figure 4.5 presents the variation of ages given to define an ‘older worker’ among the sample. This variation supports **H1 (Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ at varying chronological ages).**
The majority of decision-makers in the sample, at 73.6 percent (n=173), believe that there is no difference in the age at when male and female workers are considered ‘older’, while 14.9 percent (n=35) stated that they do not know whether there is a difference. Only 11.5 percent (n=27) felt that there is a difference for men and women. This group of decision-makers define a male worker as ‘older’ at a mean age of 55.37 years (SD=5.98), with a minimum of 40 years and a maximum of 65 years. Interestingly, this group report a younger age for when a female worker is defined ‘older’, with mean of 50.43 years (SD=7.7), a minimum of 30 years, and a maximum of 65 years, as shown in Table 4.6. Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7 display the ranges of ages given to define a male ‘older worker’ and a female ‘older worker’ respectively. While only 11.5 percent of the decision-makers believe there was a difference for males and females as to when they are considered ‘older workers’, this 11.5 percent define women as ‘older workers’ at younger ages, on average, than men. This finding thus only provides very limited support for H2 (Decision-makers will define a female worker to be an ‘older worker’ at a younger chronological age than a male worker).
Table 4.6 The ‘older worker’ defined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived age at when a worker is an ‘older worker’</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>52.69</td>
<td>7.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived age at when a male worker is an ‘older worker’</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55.67</td>
<td>5.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived age at when a female worker is an ‘older worker’</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50.43</td>
<td>7.722</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.6 Variation of the ‘Male Older Worker’ Age Defined

Figure 4.7 Variation of the ‘Female Older Worker’ Age Defined
4.3.2 Why is a worker considered an ‘older worker’ at this specific age?

The aim of this section is to provide an insight into the reasons behind why the decision-makers in the sample define a worker as ‘older’ at the specific ages that they do. In addition to being asked ‘at what specific age do you think a worker is an older worker?’, the decision-makers were also asked ‘why do you think this?’, which provides the focus of analysis in this section. Almost 84 percent (n=204) of the decision-makers responded to this question, where six dominant themes emerge, discussed below, providing support for H3 (Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ from varying perspectives). This section also addresses the reasons why 11.5 percent of the decision-makers in the sample define a female worker as an ‘older worker’ at a younger age than a male worker.

4.3.2.1 A Focus on Retirement

Of the decision-makers in the sample who responded to the question ‘why do you think this?’, as outlined above, 26.5 percent (n=54) believe the age at which they define a worker as ‘older’ is the age that represents a shift in focus from employment to retirement for workers, as evidenced in the following quotations:

‘As the current age of retirement is 65 the focus for them changes at this stage as they then start to prepare for retirement and financial security for retirement occupies the mind a bit more’ (Plant Manager, male, 36-40 age group, defines an ‘older worker as 65 years of age)

‘Retirement is around this time and often people have made plans to retire’ (HR Manager, female, 31-35 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 65 years of age)

‘This is the typical age for earliest retirement’ (Manager, male, 41-45 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 60 years of age)
These decision-makers, who believe a worker is an ‘older worker’ for reasons relating to the onset of their retirement, define a worker as an ‘older worker’ at an average of 64.5 years of age.

4.3.2.2 Career Stage

Of the decision-makers who responded to the question, ‘why do you think this?’ 12.5 percent (n=25), perceive that workers are considered ‘older’ because they have either reached the last phase of their careers, or are nearing the end of their careers:

Most of their working life is behind them at this point
(General Manager, female, 26-30 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 50 years of age)

Up to that age an employee is thinking of the future, career prospects after 50 the focus is more on exit strategy
(Functional Manager, female, 51-55 age group, defines an older worker as 50 years of age)

In a working life starting at 18, the employee is now is their twilight years. 32 yrs gone and only 15 left
(Functional Manager, female, 51-55 age group, defines an older worker as 50 years of age)

Their career has peaked and is tapering off at this age
(Line Manager, male, 31-35 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 50 years of age)

You should have peaked in your career at this stage
(Functional Manager, male, 51-55 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 40 years of age)

A lack of emphasis on career development both at an individual level on the part of the ‘older worker’, and at an organisational level in relation to development
opportunities, after the specific ages they give to define an ‘older worker’, also emerge under this theme:

‘They are no longer interested in career advancement and are looking forward to retirement’ (Line Manager, female, 36-40 age group, defined an ‘older worker’ 55 years of age)

‘By 50 a career path has been well formed, if not exhausted, and so opportunities become more limited’ (Functional Manager, female, 36-40 age group, defined an ‘older worker’ as 50 years of age)

‘This seems to be the age when career progress stalls for most employees (except those staying the course for ‘the few' promotion opportunities still available)’ (Managing Director, male, 51-55 age group, defined an ‘older worker’ as 40 years of age)

These decision-makers who consider workers to be ‘older’ because their careers are ‘tapering off’ define a worker as an ‘older worker’ at an average of 49.54 years of age.

4.3.2.3 ‘Older’ Relative to Others

Of the decision-makers who responded to the question ‘why do you think this?’ 10.7 percent(n=22) feel that ‘older workers’ are defined as such relative to the age of their co-workers in the organisation. The following comments are indicative here:

People of this age probably had a long tenure within the organisation and would be considered the older generation (HR Manager, female, 36-40 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 50 years of age)

Ahem, good question. Very difficult to answer. I originally put down 60+, but I changed it when I considered the organisation in which I work (HR
Director, female, 51-55 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 48 years of age)

*I'm guessing it's older than the average age of the local group* (Line Manager, male, 46-50 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 45 years of age)

*Average age in this plant is 42* (Functional Manager, male, 51-55 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 45 years of age)

*Because the average age for the other 80 percent of our workforce is probably 26, that is a sizeable difference in a relatively small organisation* (Functional Manager, female, 56-60 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 40 years of age)

These decision-makers who define a worker as an ‘older worker’ relative to other workers in the organisation do so at a mean age of 41.81.

4.3.2.4 Changing Life Priorities

Of the decision-makers who responded to the question, ‘why do you think this?’ 7.3 percent (n=15) feel that workers are ‘older workers’ because their priorities outside of work are changing, or, indeed, should be changing at this specific age, where the ‘older worker’ age represents a shift from work concerns to ‘outside of work’ concerns:

*Priorities are changing* (General Manager, male, 51-55 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 55 years of age)

*Job/company remains the same but they have different priorities (personal) in what they want to achieve from working e.g. looking/planning retirement/work life balance etc* (Line Manager, female, 36-40 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 50 years of age)
I feel that at that age, most of our employees are in 'pre-retirement' and looking forward to the next phase of their lives (Functional Manager, female, 41-45 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 50 years of age)

It’s all downhill from 50 - time to start relaxing and enjoying their experiences (Owner-Manager, male 36-40 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 50 years of age)

These decision-makers, who define a worker as an ‘older worker’ because of changing priorities, do so at a mean age of 50.86.

4.3.2.5 Too ‘Old’ for the Industry

Of the decision-makers who responded to the question ‘why do you think this?’ 6.8 percent (n=14) believe that, within their particular industry, workers of a certain age could be defined as ‘older’ because the nature of work in their industry is more ‘suited’ to those below this age. This feeling was mostly apparent in the service industries, such as in retail and hospitality:

The hotel industry is ideally geared towards a younger employee (General Manager, male, 31-35 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 55 years of age)

This is based on my opinion that in the catering industry I would say that it is more predominantly young people that are working in the sector (Owner-Manager, male, 26-30 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 40 years of age)

Nature of retail - normally very young (Owner-Manager, male, 46-50 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 40 years of age)
This is a reflection of the business I am in - pub work, I feel is suited to a younger age group and is often just a stepping stone to further employment - those who are seeking these positions at an older age, I view as having little ambition (Managing Director, male, 31-35 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 35 years of age)

Fashion retail is trend led and changes from season to season. It is more directed at younger people and is therefore more suited to younger employees (20-30) (Line Manager, female, 26-30 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 30 years of age)

These decision-makers, who define a worker as an ‘older worker’ because of the nature of working age in their industries, do so at a mean age of 41.78 years.

4.3.2.6 The Physical Ageing Process

Of the decision-makers who responded to the question ‘why do you think this?’ 6.4 percent (n=13) believe that workers are defined as ‘older’ because of the physical process of ageing, including the appearance of being ‘older’, as evidenced below:

Because they look older (Line Manager, male, 41-45 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 60 years of age)

In our business physical fitness is a big role in a driving job (Managing Director, male, 41-45 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 55 years of age)

They are physically get slower (Owner-Manager, male, 41-45 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 50 years of age)

It’s the ageing process (HR Manager, male, 56-60 age group, defines an ‘older worker’ as 50 years of age)
Appearance mainly - at this age they 'look' older (HR Manager, female, 36-40 age group, defines an ‘older worker as 50 years of age)

These decision-makers, who define a worker as an ‘older worker’ because of the physical ageing process, do so at an average of 51.15 years of age.

4.3.2.7 Women’s Roles and Appearance

As discussed in section 4.3.1, 11.5 percent of decision makers feel that there is a difference in the age at which a female worker is an ‘older worker’ and a male worker is an ‘older worker’, where females are perceived to ‘age faster’ than men at work. These decision-makers were explicitly asked ‘why do you think there is a difference?’ What emerges from these findings is, firstly, the perception that women have more of a ‘household’ role or ‘child-rearing’ role than men, and that this can impact on the age at which they are considered an ‘older worker’ as indicated from the quotations below:

Child rearing and traditionally females stayed away from the workplace to have children (Line Manager, female, 46-50 age group, defines a male as ‘older’ at 60 years, and a female as ‘older’ at 40 years of age)

Different responsibilities in the home (Functional Manager, male, 31-35 age group, defines a male as ‘older’ at 50 years, and a female as ‘older’ at 45 years of age)

Women have more household responsibility and that can also take its toll (Functional Manager, male, 51-55 age group, defines a male as ‘older’ at 60 years, and a female as ‘older’ at 55 years of age)

Family commitments (Managing Director, male, 36-40 age group, defines a male as ‘older’ at 55 years, and a female as ‘older’ at 50 years of age)
Secondly, some decision-makers suggest that men physically age better than women, giving rise to the perception that females are ‘older workers’ at younger ages than men:

*Men typically age better than women in looks* (Functional Manager, female, 31-35 age group, defines a male as ‘older’ at 65 years, and a female as ‘older’ at 60 years of age)

*Men seem to hold age better* (Line Manager, female, 31-35 age group, defines a male as ‘older’ at 60 years, and a female as ‘older’ at 50 years of age)

Importantly, one decision-maker noted the prevalence of both sexism and ageism in response to this question:

*Sexism and ageism where it may not be stated still exists* (Line Manager, female, 46-50 age group, defines a male as ‘older’ at 60 years, and a female as ‘older’ at 50 years of age)

### 4.3.2.8 Summary

Decision-makers are found to define an ‘older worker’ from varying perspectives, including those that are focusing on retirement; those at a particular career stage; those who are ‘older’ relative to others; those who have changing life priorities; those who are seen as ‘older’ within a particular industry; those who are physically ‘older’; and, finally, some decision-makers define workers as ‘older’ in relation to their gender.

### 4.3.3 What factors influence the specific age a worker is defined an ‘older worker’?

To further explore these organisational decision-maker definitions of an ‘older worker’, the influence of both individual level variables (the decision-makers’
gender, age, position, position tenure, and organisational tenure), and organisational level variables (the decision-makers’ industry, organisation size, equality policy presence, and the percentage of ‘older workers' present in their respective organisations) on differences among the specific age at which they defined a worker as ‘older’ are investigated. Table 4.7 presents the means, standard deviations and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity existed.

4.3.3.1 Relationships between the Influencing Variables

First, it is important to analyse the relationships that exist between the independent individual and organisational variables. Decision-maker gender has a small and negative relationship with decision-maker age (r=-0.179, p<.01), where female decision-makers are more likely to be younger in age than males in the sample. Females are also less likely to occupy roles in strategic decision-making positions (r=-0.250, p<.05) as suggested by the negative, and small to moderate relationship observed here between gender and strategic decision-making positions. Likewise, a small and negative relationship is observed between gender and organisational tenure (r=-0.179, p<.01) existed, suggesting that female decision-makers have spent less time working in their current organisations than male decision-makers in the sample. Conversely, a small and positive relationship between gender and equality policy (r=0.127, p<.05) indicates that females are more likely to state that their organisation had an equality policy in place when compared with males.

As might be expected, strong and positive relationships between decision-maker age and both position tenure (r=0.509, p<.01), and organisation tenure (r=0.665, p<.01) exist, suggesting that the older the decision-maker, the longer time they have spent working in both their current role or position, and their current organisation respectively. Likewise, position tenure has a strong association with organisation tenure (r=0.513, p<.01), proposing that the longer a decision-maker has worked in their current role, they longer they have been employed by their
current organisation. Decision-maker age is also positively related to the perceived percentage of older workers employed in the decision-makers’ organisations (r=0.188, p<.01), where the small relationship posits that the older the decision-maker, the larger the proportion of older workers perceived to be employed in their organisation.

Decision-maker strategic position has a strong negative association with operational position and HR position (r=-0.582, p<.01), naturally where those in strategic decision-making roles are not associated with operational level or HR level decision-making roles. A moderate negative relationship is observed between strategic decision-making position and organisation size (r=-0.376, p<.01), indicating that decision makers working at the strategic-level of the organisation, are more likely to be employed by organisations with a smaller number of employees in this sample than those in operational and HR decision-making roles. Also, those who hold strategic decision-making positions are more likely to be employed in the services sectors than the manufacturing sectors, as suggested by the negative relationship between strategic decision-making position and industry (r=-0.213, p<.01), when compared to the decision-makers at both the strategic and HR-levels of the organisation. Furthermore, those in strategic level decision-making roles are less likely to report an awareness or presence of an equality policy in their organisations than those in operational or HR decision-making roles, given the moderately negative relationship existing (r=-0.327, p<.01).

Those who hold operational-level decision-making positions are more likely to have longer organisational tenure than those in strategic and HR-level decision-making positions as suggested by the small but positive relationship here (r=0.212, p<.01). Furthermore, those in decision-making positions at the operation level of the organisation are also more likely to work for larger organisations (r=0.145, p<.05), be more aware of an equality policy presence in their organisations (r=0.247, p<.01), and more likely to perceive a larger proportion of ‘older workers’ were employed by their organisations (r=0.179,
p<.01) than those in strategic or HR decision-making positions, as indicated by the small positive relationships here.

A small and positive association between decision-makers’ organisation tenure and the perceived percentage of older workers employed in their organisations is observed (r=0.223, p<.01), indicating that the longer a decision-maker is employed in their current organisation, the greater the perceived percentage of older workers employed by their organisation. Larger organisations are associated more with the manufacturing industries than the services industries in this sample (r=0.452, p<.01), given the moderate to strong positive relationship observed here. Additionally, the larger the organisation, the greater the decision-makers indicating that it had an equality or diversity policy in place (r=.224, p<.01). A small but positive relationship between organisation size and the percentage of ‘older workers’ perceived to be employed in the organisation is also observed (r=0.156, p<.01) suggesting that larger organisations are perceived to have a greater number of ‘older workers’ employed.
### Table 4.7 Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlations

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<td>-0.179***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.StgicPos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.250***</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.OperatPos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>-0.582***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.PosTen</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>5.162</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>0.509***</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>-106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.OrgTen</td>
<td>11.35</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>-0.179***</td>
<td>0.665***</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
<td>0.212***</td>
<td>0.513***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.OrgSize</td>
<td>288.02</td>
<td>632.23</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>-0.376***</td>
<td>0.145*</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.Industry</td>
<td>18.85</td>
<td>20.02</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td>-0.066</td>
<td>-0.213***</td>
<td>0.119</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>0.452***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manufact)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.EqPolicy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.127*</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
<td>-0.327***</td>
<td>0.247***</td>
<td>-0.106</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.224*</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.%OlderW</td>
<td>18.85</td>
<td>20.02</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>0.188**</td>
<td>-0.096</td>
<td>0.179***</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.223***</td>
<td>0.156*</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.OldAge</td>
<td>52.69</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>-1.03</td>
<td>-0.099</td>
<td>-0.415***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- *Significant at the 0.05 level, ***significant at the 0.001 level
- 1. Gender: Dichotomous Variable, Female (1) Male (0)
- 2. Age: Continuous Variable
- 3. StgicPos: Dummy 1 - Strategic Position
- 4. OperatPos: Dummy 2 - Operational Position
- 5. Position Tenure: Continuous Variable
- 6. Organisational Tenure: Continuous Variable
- 7. Organisation Size: Continuous Variable
- 8. Industry: Dichotomous Variable, Manufacturing (1) Services (0)
- 9. Equality Policy: Dichotomous Variable, Yes (1) No (0)
- 10. Percentage of ‘older workers’ employed: Continuous Variable
- 11. Perceived age of an ‘older worker’: Continuous Variable
4.3.3.2 The Influence of Decision-Maker Age

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of decision-maker age levels on perceptions of the ‘older worker’ age. Participants were divided into ten groups according to their age (Group 1: 20 to 25yrs; Group 2: 26-30yrs; Group 3: 31-35yrs; Group 4: 36-40yrs; Group 5: 41-45yrs; Group 6: 46-50yrs; Group 7: 51-55yrs; Group 8: 56-60yrs; Group 9: 61-65yrs; Group 10: 66-70yrs). There is a statistically significant difference at the \( p < .05 \) level in ‘older worker’ age perceptions for the age groups \( (p = .021) \). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean ‘older worker’ age for Group 2 (\( M=47.26, \ SD=7.754 \)), was significantly different from Group 4 (\( M=54.84, \ SD=6.436 \)) and Group 5 (\( M=53.82, \ SD=9.384 \)), where, as displayed in Table 4.8, younger decision-makers, aged 26 to 30 years, perceive the age at when a worker is an ‘older worker’ at a significantly younger age (here, in their forties) than those aged 36 to 40, and 41 to 45 years of age. This offers some initial support for H5a (Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’). Figure 4.8 displays the minimum, maximum, mean, and range of ‘older worker’ ages as defined by the decision-makers according to their age group.

Table 4.8 Influence of Decision-Maker Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26-30yrs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>47.26</td>
<td>7.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40yrs</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54.84</td>
<td>6.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45yrs</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53.82</td>
<td>9.384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, the correlation analysis showed no significant relationship between decision-maker age and the age at which they defining worker as ‘older’, \( (r=0.111, p>.05) \), thus rejecting H5a (Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’). The relationship between decision-maker age and the definition of an ‘older workers’ appears complex, and so, is further analysed in a regression model, detailed in section 4.3.3.11 below.

4.3.3.3 The Influence of Decision-Maker Gender

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the definition of the age at when a worker is an ‘older worker’ for male and female decision-makers. There is no significant difference in the perceived ages between male decision-makers (M=52.78, SD=8.691) and female decision-makers (M=52.50, SD=6.767), where \( p>.05 \) (\( p=.790 \)). The correlation analysis further shows no significant relationship between decision-maker gender and perceived ‘older worker’ age, \( (r=-0.018, p>.05) \). Therefore H6a (Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker) is rejected.
4.3.3.4 The Influence of Decision-Maker Position

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of the decision-makers’ job position or role within their organisation on definitions of the ‘older worker’ age. Decision-makers were divided into ten groups according to their job title or position (Group 1: CEO/President/VP; Group 2: Managing Director/Director; Group 3: Owner-Manager, Group 4: General Manager; Group 5: Plant Manager; Group 6: Functional Manager; Group 7: Line Manager/Supervisor; Group 8: HR Director; Group 9: HR Manager; Group 10: Other). There is no statistically significant difference in definitions of the ‘older worker’ age for the groups, where $p>.05$ ($p=.681$), as displayed in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 The Influence of Decision-Maker Job Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title/Position</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO/P/VP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47.50</td>
<td>10.607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD/Director</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51.90</td>
<td>9.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-Manager</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.48</td>
<td>11.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>53.23</td>
<td>11.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Manager</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>51.67</td>
<td>7.638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Manager</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52.85</td>
<td>6.242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line Manager/Supervisor</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50.89</td>
<td>7.609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Director</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54.33</td>
<td>8.430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Manager</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54.50</td>
<td>4.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54.09</td>
<td>4.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>52.69</td>
<td>7.900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondent job position was then recoded to divide the participants into three collapsed groupings according to their decision-making role (Group1: Strategic Level Decision-Making (CEO/President/VP, Managing Director/Director, General Manager, Plant Manager); Group 2: Operational Level Decision-Making (Functional Manager, Line Manager/Supervisor); Group 3: HR Decision-Making (HR Director, HR Manager). The correlation analysis further shows no significant relationship between decision-maker job position and the age at which they defined a worker as ‘older’. H7a (Decision-maker position will be
significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’ is rejected.

4.3.3.5 The Influence of Decision-Maker Position Tenure

Correlation shows no significant relationship between decision-maker position tenure and the age at which they defined a worker as ‘older’, \( r=0.072 \) \( p>.05 \). **H8a** (Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’ is rejected.

4.3.3.6 The Influence of Decision-Maker Organisational Tenure

Correlation shows no significant relationship between decision-maker organisation tenure and the age at which they defined a worker as ‘older’, \( r=0.040 \) \( p>.05 \). **H9a** (Decision-maker organisation tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’ is rejected.

4.3.3.7 The Influence of Organisational Size

Correlation shows no significant relationship between the size of decision-makers’ organisations and the age at which they defined a worker as ‘older’, \( r=0.020 \) \( p>.05 \). **H10a** (Decision-maker organisation size will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’ is rejected.

4.3.3.8 The Influence of Industry Type

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of industry type on decision-makers’ definition of the ‘older worker’ age. Decision-makers were divided into twelve groups according to the EU NACE industry in which their respective organisations were located (Group 1:
Manufacturing – FBNMNPPPTCF; Group 2: Manufacturing – MECEME; Group 3: Manufacturing – CP; Group 4: Construction; Group 5: Retail and Wholesale Trade; Group 6: Hotels, Restaurants and Public Houses; Group 7: Services – ITC; Group 8: Services – Business and Finance; Group 9: Transport and Utilities; Group 10: Health and Social Work; Group 11: Education; Group 12: Other). There is a statistically significant difference at the \( p < .05 \) level in ‘older worker’ age perceptions for industry groups, \( (p=.007) \), as shown in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10 The Influence of Industry Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing FBNMNPPPTCF</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52.08</td>
<td>5.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing MECEME</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51.18</td>
<td>6.326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing CP</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52.67</td>
<td>5.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>51.00</td>
<td>4.865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail and Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.50</td>
<td>8.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels, Restaurants, and Public Houses</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47.22</td>
<td>10.929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services ITC</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54.41</td>
<td>4.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Business and Finance</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52.49</td>
<td>10.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and Utilities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56.40</td>
<td>10.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Social Work</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55.91</td>
<td>5.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>56.92</td>
<td>9.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54.27</td>
<td>5.471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>52.69</td>
<td>5.523</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean ‘older worker’ age defined by decision-makers working in the retail and hospitality sectors (M=46.50, SD=7.178) is statistically significantly different from those in transport and utilities sector (M=56.40, SD=10.077) and those in the education (M=56.92, SD=9.473). This finding offers initial support for H11a (Decision-maker industry type will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’). Figure 4.10 displays the minimum, maximum, mean, and range of ‘older worker’ ages as defined by the decision-makers according to their industry type.
However, when industry type is re-grouped into manufacturing and services, the correlation analysis shows no significant differences (r=-0.103, p>.05), **rejecting H11a (Decision-maker industry type will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’).** Like decision-maker age, the relationship between decision-maker industry type and the definition of an ‘older worker’ appears complex, and is thus analysed further in the regression model presented in section 4.3.3.11 below.

### 4.3.3.9 The Influence of Organisational Equality Policy

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance explores whether the presence of an equality or diversity policy within the respondents respective organisations has an impact on respondent perceptions of the ‘older worker’ age, however, there is no statistically significant difference among Group 1: ‘Has Policy’ (M=52.67, SD=7.397), Group 2: ‘No Policy’ (M=53.78, SD=10.07), or Group 3: ‘Not sure if Policy’ (M=50.35, SD=7.666), where p=.295. Correlation analysis
further shows no relationship, and so H12a (Decision-maker equality policy presence will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker) is rejected.

4.3.3.10 The Influence of the Workforce Age Demographics

The correlation analysis shows that a significantly moderate to strong, but negative, relationship exists between the decision-makers’ definitions of the age of an ‘older worker’ and the perceived percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in their organisations ($r=-0.415$, $p<.01$), where, interestingly, a greater percentage of ‘older workers’ employed is associated with a lower reported age of an ‘older worker’. Thus, H13a (The percentage of ‘older workers employed in decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker) is initially supported.

4.3.3.11 Regression Analysis

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of the individual and organisational level variables in predicting the age at when a worker is defined as an ‘older worker’ according to decision-makers. The results are presented in Table 4.11. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity existed. Initial hypothesis testing indicated that decision-maker gender, job position, position tenure, organisational tenure, organisation size, and the presence of an equality policy have no significant influence on how decision-makers define a worker as an ‘older worker’. In order to control for any possible influence these variables may have on predicting the age at when a worker is considered an ‘older worker’, decision-maker gender, job position, position tenure, organisational tenure, organisation size, and equality policy presence were entered at Step 1, explaining 3.9 percent of variance in defining an ‘older worker’. Decision-maker age and decision-maker industry type were entered at Step 2, as there was an indication that they had some influence on defining a worker as an ‘older worker’ in the initial stages of hypothesis testing, explaining 6.2 percent of variance, $R$ squared change $= .023$, $F$ change $= 2.502$, $p>.05$. The
percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers organisations was then entered at Step 3, as this was the only independent variable that emerged as the having a significant relationship with the age at which the decision-makers defined a worker as an ‘older worker’ in prior hypothesis testing. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 24.1 percent, $F = 6.514$, $p<.001$. The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations explained an additional 17.9 percent of variance when controlling for all other independent variables, $R$ squared change = .179, $F$ change = 48.468, $p<.001$. In the final model, two independent variables were statistically significant in predicting the age at which decision-makers define a worker as an ‘older worker’, with the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations recording a higher beta value ($beta=-.451, p<.001$) than decision-maker age ($beta=.167, p<.05$). Industry type approached significance ($beta=-.128, p<.1$). Therefore, **H13a** (The percentage of ‘older workers employed in decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’), and **H5a** (Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’) are supported.

**Table 4.11 Defining the ‘Older Worker’ Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 β</th>
<th>Model 2 β</th>
<th>Model 3 β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.055</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>-.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StgicPos</td>
<td>-.150</td>
<td>-.157</td>
<td>-.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OperatPos</td>
<td>-.149</td>
<td>-.133</td>
<td>-.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PosTen</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>-.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OrgTen</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>-.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OrgSize</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EqPolicy</td>
<td>-.132</td>
<td>-.133</td>
<td>-.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.874</td>
<td>.167*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>-.154</td>
<td>-.1971</td>
<td>-.128T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%’older workers’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.451***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>1.204</td>
<td>1.506</td>
<td>6.514***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.3.4 Defining the ‘Older Worker’ Summary

The results indicate that decision-makers define workers as ‘older workers’ at varying ages, ranging from 30 to 90, but at an average of 52.69 years of age. Decision-makers are also found to define workers as ‘older workers’ from differing perspectives, which include reasons relating to retirement, careers, co-workers, life stages, industry types and the ageing process itself. These results support the hypotheses proposing that decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ at varying ages, but also from varying perspectives. There was some partial evidence to suggest that the gender of a worker has a bearing on the age at which he or she is considered an ‘older worker’, such that 11.5 percent of decision-makers in this study consider a female to be an ‘older worker’ at a younger age than a male. Furthermore, some evidence exists to suggest that the type of industry within which a decision-maker is employed accounts for variance in the age at which they consider workers to be ‘older’. The age of the decision-maker, however, is significant in explaining the age at which they consider workers to be ‘older’, where the older the decision-maker, the older the age they define a worker as ‘older’. Workforce age demographics are the most significant predictor of the age which a decision-maker defines a worker as an ‘older worker’, such that the greater the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in decision-makers organisations, the younger the age decision-makers define a worker as an ‘older worker’. These results are explicated in Figure 4.11 below.
Figure 4.11 Defining the ‘Older Worker’ Results
4.4 Section Three: Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

Having examined how organisational decision-makers in Ireland firstly define an ‘older worker’, this section therefore addresses the results concerning the research questions *What are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers?* and *What specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers?* As such, it explicitly addresses the following hypotheses pertaining to these research questions, derived from the conceptual framework, as discussed previously in Chapters Two and Three:

RQ2. What are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers?

- \( H4a \) Organisational decision-makers will hold negative stereotypical beliefs about older workers
- \( H4b \) Organisational decision-makers will hold negative prejudicial feelings about older workers
- \( H4c \) Organisational decision-makers will hold negative discriminatory attitudes toward older workers

RQ4. What specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers?

- \( H5b \) Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers
- \( H5c \) Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers
- \( H5d \) Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers
- \( H6b \) Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers
- \( H6c \) Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers
- \( H6d \) Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers
- $H7b$ Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

- $H7c$ Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

- $H7d$ Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

- $H8b$ Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

- $H8c$ Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

- $H8d$ Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

- $H9b$ Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

- $H9c$ Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

- $H9d$ Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

- $H10b$ The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

- $H10c$ The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

- $H10d$ The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older worker

- $H11b$ The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

- $H11c$ The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

- $H11d$ The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

- $H12b$ The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers
➤ \textit{H12c} The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

➤ \textit{H12d} The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

➤ \textit{H13b} The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

➤ \textit{H13c} The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

➤ \textit{H13d} The percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

Table 4.12 presents the means, standard deviations and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity.

\textbf{Note:} The perceived age at when a worker is an ‘older worker’ according to the decision-makers in this study, which provides the critical dependent variable in Section Two, is included in the correlation analysis of Section Three in order to explore whether or not this variable had any effect on the measured decision-maker attitudes toward older workers. No significant relationships between the perceived age at when a worker becomes ‘older’ and any of the attitudinal components of the study are observed.
Table 4.12 Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlations

|                  | Mean | SD  | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     | 9     | 10    | 11    | 12    | 13    | 14    | 15    | 16    | 17    |
|------------------|------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Female        |      |     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 2. Age           | 5.77 | 2.023 | - .179** |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 3. StigicPos     |      |     | - .250** |      | .008 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 4. OperatPos     |      |     |        | .008 | .050 | - .582** |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 5. PosTen        | 5.93 | 5.162 | - .072 | .509** | .052 | - .106 |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 6. OrgTen        | 11.35 | 10.46 | - .179** | .665** | - .104 | .212** | .513** |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 7. OrgSize       | 288.02 | 632.23 | .044 | - .376** | .145* | .007 | .101 |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 8. Industry (Manuf) | 18.85 | 20.02 | - .092 | - .066 | - .213** | .119 | - .007 | - .012 | .452** |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 9. EqPolicy      |      |     |        | .127* | - .104 | - .327** | .247** | - .106 | .046 | .224* | .050 |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 10. %OlderW      | 18.85 | 20.02 | - .019 | .188** | - .096 | .179** | .020 | .223** | .156* | .091 | .104 |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 11. OldAge       | 52.69 | 7.90 | - .111 | - .028 | - .018 | .072 | .040 | .020 | - .103 | - .099 | - .402** |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 12. WE           | 3.69 | .875 | - .266** | .194** | .011 | .239** | .229** | - .210** | - .113 | - .104** | .117 | - .074 |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 13. WA           | 4.16 | .671 | .146* | - .154* | .078 | - .005 | .050 | .000 | - .059 | .049 | .002 | .085 | - .076 |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |
| 14. RTC          | 3.47 | .928 | .198** | - .282** | .073 | - .051 | .039 | .141* | .030 | .103 | .018 | .075 | - .207* | .593** |      |       |       |       |       |       |
| 15. IPS          | 3.79 | .905 | - .286** | .329** | .255** | .073 | .187** | .283** | - .105 | - .066 | - .137* | .137* | - .081 | .667** | - .136* | - .351* |      |       |       |
| 16. EOW          | 4.03 | .444 | .177** | .032 | - .187** | - .003 | - .081 | .062 | .093 | .043 | .091 | - .014 | - .008 | - .092 | .744** | .539** | - .188* |      |       |       |

**Notes:** *Significant at the 0.05 level, **significant at the 0.01 level

4.4.1 The Nature of Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

The present research investigates the attitudes of organisational decision-makers toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland, where ageist attitudes comprise stereotypes (cognitive component), prejudicial feelings (affective component) and discriminatory predispositions (behavioural component), as discussed previously in Chapter Two. Five attitude scales were used to measure stereotypes of ‘older workers’: (1) ‘work effectiveness’; (2) ‘work adaptability’; (3) ‘reaction to criticism’; (4) ‘interpersonal skills’; (5) ‘employment of older workers’. One attitude scale was used to measure prejudice toward ‘older workers’; (1) ‘feelings about older workers’. Two attitude scales were used to measure discriminatory predispositions toward older workers: (1) ‘behavioural intention-recruitment’; (2) ‘behavioural intention-retention’, as discussed previously in Chapter Three. Decision-makers were asked to rate all items on each of these scales according to a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Scores above 4 indicate a positive attitude, whereas scores below 4 indicate a negative attitude.

4.4.1.1 Stereotypical Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

The results in Table 4.12 show that decision-maker stereotypes about the ‘work adaptability’ of older workers (mean (M) = 4.16, standard deviation (SD) =.671), and decision-maker stereotypes about the ‘employment of older workers’ (M=4.03, SD=.444) are, on average, positive in nature among the sample. Stereotypes about the ‘work effectiveness’ of older workers (M=3.69, SD =.875), and stereotypes about the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers (M=3.79, SD=.905) are, on average, more negative than positive among the sample. Stereotypes about older workers’ ‘reaction to criticism’ (M=3.47, SD=.928) are, on average, negative among the sample. H4a (Organisational decision-makers will hold negative stereotypical beliefs about older workers) is partially supported.
4.4.1.2 Prejudicial Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

The results in Table 4.12 show that prejudicial ‘feelings about older workers’ (M=3.26, SD=.849) are, on average, negative among the sample. H4b (Organisational decision-makers will hold negative prejudicial feelings about older workers) is supported.

4.4.1.3 Discriminatory Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

The results in Table 4.12 show that discriminatory predispositions in terms of ‘behavioural intentions in retention’ of older workers in employment (M=4.54, SD=.825) are, on average, positive in nature among the sample. Conversely, discriminatory predisposition in terms of ‘behavioural intentions in recruitment’ of older workers (M=3.26, SD=.807) are, on average, negative in nature among the sample. Therefore, H4c (Organisational decision-makers will hold negative discriminatory attitudes toward older workers) is partially supported.

4.4.2 Factors influencing Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

Having identified the nature of stereotypical, prejudicial, and discriminatory attitudes toward older workers, the significant correlations, and therefore, the relationships extant between these dependent attitudinal variables and the independent variables are the focus of this section. Two sets of independent variables are measured in the study, including both individual and organisational variables. Five individual-level variables are measured: age, gender, job position; position tenure; and organisation tenure. Four organisational-level variables are measured: company size (referring to the number of employees working in the organisation); industry type (based on the EU NACE industry codes); whether or not the decision-makers organisation has an explicit equality or diversity policy in place; and the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations.
4.4.2.1 The Influence of Decision-Maker Age

Decision-maker age shows a small but positive relationship with stereotypes about the ‘work effectiveness’ of older workers ($r=0.266$, $p<.01$), stereotypes about the ‘work adaptability’ of older workers ($r=0.146$, $p<.05$), and behavioural intentions toward the ‘recruitment’ of older workers ($r=0.209$, $p<.05$), where older decision-makers are suggested to hold more positive attitudes on each of these attitude domains. Decision-maker age is further moderately and positively associated with both stereotypes about the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers ($r=0.329$, $p<.01$), and overall ‘feelings about older workers’ ($r=0.313$, $p<.01$), again, where the older the decision-maker, the more positive their attitudes on these attitude domains is indicated to be.

4.4.2.2 The Influence of Decision-Maker Gender

Decision-maker gender is positively associated with beliefs about the ‘work adaptability’ of older workers ($r=0.193$, $p<.01$), beliefs about older workers’ ‘reaction to criticism’ ($r=0.198$, $p<.01$), beliefs about the ‘employment of older workers’ ($r=0.177$, $p<.01$) and behavioural intentions toward the ‘retention’ of older workers ($r=0.199$, $p<.01$), where these small relationships suggest that female decision-makers are more likely to hold positive attitudes on each of these attitudinal domains than male decision-makers. Conversely, gender correlated negatively with the work effectiveness of older workers ($r=-0.138$, $p<.05$), beliefs about the interpersonal skills of older workers ($r=-0.285$, $p<.01$), feelings toward older workers ($r=-0.174$, $p<.01$), where these small relationships indicate that females hold more negative attitudes than males on these attitudinal domains.

4.4.2.3 The Influence of Decision-Maker Position

Decision-maker strategic position is positively related to stereotypes about the ‘work effectiveness’ of older workers ($r=0.194$, $p<.01$), stereotypes about the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers ($r=0.255$, $p<.01$), prejudicial ‘feelings about older workers’ ($r=0.216$, $p<.01$), and behavioural intentions in recruitment
of older workers \( r=0.219, p<.01 \), such that those in strategic level decision-making positions are suggested to hold more positive attitudes on these domains that those working in operational level or HR level decision-making positions. Conversely, decision-maker strategic position shows small but negative relationships with stereotypes about the ‘work adaptability’ of older workers \( r=-0.153, p<.05 \), stereotypes about older workers’ ‘reaction to criticism’ \( r=-0.282, p<.01 \), and stereotypes about the ‘employment of older workers’ \( r=-0.197, p<.01 \).

4.4.2.4 The Influence of Decision-Maker Position Tenure

The position tenure of decision-makers is positively related to stereotypes about the ‘work effectiveness’ of older workers \( r=0.252, p<.01 \), stereotypes about the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers \( r=0.230, p<.01 \), overall ‘feelings about older workers’ \( r=0.318, p<.01 \) and behavioural intentions toward the ‘recruitment’ of older workers \( r=0.254, p<.01 \), where these small to moderate relationships indicate that the longer a decision-maker is working in their current role or position, the more positive their attitudes on these particular attitude domains. Conversely, the correlation suggests that the longer a decision-maker is working in their current position, the more negative their behavioural intentions toward retaining older workers, given the small but negative relationship observed \( r=-0.228, p<.01 \).

4.4.2.5 The Influence of Decision-Maker Organisational Tenure

The organisational tenure of decision-makers is positively related to stereotypes about the ‘work effectiveness’ of older workers \( r=0.245, p<.01 \), stereotypes about the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers \( r=0.306, p<.01 \), and overall ‘feelings about older workers’ \( r=0.244, p<.01 \), where longer period of employment in the decision-makers’ organisations is associated with more positive attitudes on these attitude domains. A small positive relationship is also observed between organisational tenure and behavioural intentions toward recruiting older workers \( r=0.189, p<.01 \), suggesting that the longer a decision-
maker is employed by their organisation, the more positive they become about employing older workers. However, a small but negative relationship also existed between organisation tenure and behavioural intentions toward retaining older workers ($r=-0.168$, $p<.01$), where these intentions are suggested to become more negative the longer a decision-maker works in their organisation.

### 4.4.2.6 The Influence of Organisation Workforce Age Demographics

Finally, the percentage of older workers employed by the decision-makers’ organisations is positively related to both stereotypes about the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers ($r=0.139$, $p<.05$), and overall ‘feelings about older workers’ ($r=0.145$, $p<.05$), where a small association suggests the greater percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers organisations’, the more positive the attitudes they appear to hold on these domains.

### 4.4.3 Regression Analysis

Hypotheses 5b, 5c, and 5d through to 13b, 13c and 13d were tested using eight separate multiple regression analyses. The first analysis (Table 4.13), involved regressing stereotypes about the work effectiveness of older workers on the decision-makers’ individual and organisational level independent variables discussed in the previous section. This is repeated for stereotypes about the ‘work adaptability’ of older workers (Table 4.14), stereotypes about ‘older workers’ ‘reaction to criticism’ (Table 4.15), stereotypes about the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers (Table 4.16), stereotypes about the ‘employment of older workers’ (Table 4.17), prejudicial ‘feelings about older workers’ (Table 4.18), ‘behavioural intentions in recruitment’ of older workers (Table 4.19), and ‘behavioural intentions in retention’ of older workers (Table 4.20).
4.4.3.1 Work Effectiveness Stereotype Model

The Work Effectiveness Stereotype Model, explaining 19.8 percent of variance ($p<.001$) is presented in Table 4.13. Decision-maker operational position, industry type, and the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations were entered at Step 1 as control measures, given the non-significant relationships observed between these variables and the Work Effectiveness Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by Model 1 is 4.2 percent. Decision-maker age, gender, strategic position, position tenure, organisational tenure, organisation size, and equality policy presence were entered at Step 2, given the significant relationships observed between these variables and the Work Effectiveness Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 19.8 percent, $F = 4.951, p<.001$. Model 2 explained an additional 15.7 percent of variance, $R^2$ change = .157, $F$ change = 5.582, $p<.001$. Decision-maker age emerges as the unique and significant predictor of decision-maker stereotypes about the work effectiveness of ‘older workers’ ($beta=.171, p<.01$), where older decision-makers hold more positive stereotypes about the work effectiveness of older workers than younger decision-makers.

| Table 4.13 Work Effectiveness Stereotype Model |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Step 1:                                      | Model 1                | Model 2                |
|                                               | $\beta$ | $t$     | $\beta$ | $t$     |
| OperatPos                                    | -.065   | -.933  | .049   | .583   |
| Industry                                     | -.165   | -2.397 | -.073  | -.998  |
| %olderworkers                                | .116    | 1.670  | .071   | 1.051  |
| Step 2:                                      |         |         |         |         |
| Age                                          |         |         | $\mathbf{.171^*}$ | 1.953  |
| Gender                                       | -.029   | -.419  |         |         |
| StgicPos                                     | .154T   | 1.743  |         |         |
| PosTen                                       | .103    | 1.335  |         |         |
| OrgTen                                       | .104    | 1.138  |         |         |
| OrgSize                                      | -.135T  | -1.763 |         |         |
| EqPolicy                                     | -.075   | -1.078 |         |         |
| $F$                                          | $\mathbf{3.012^*}$ | $\mathbf{4.951^{***}}$ |         |         |
4.4.3.2 Work Adaptability Stereotype Model

The Work Adaptability Stereotype Model, explaining 11.6 percent of variance ($p<.001$) is presented in Table 4.14. Decision-maker operational position, position tenure, organisational tenure, organisation size, industry type, equality policy presence, and the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations were entered at Step 1 as control measures, given the non-significant relationships observed between these variables and the Work Adaptability Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by Model 1 is 1.3 percent. Decision-maker age, gender, and strategic position, were entered at Step 2, given the significant relationships observed between these variables and the Work Adaptability Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 11.6 percent, $F = 2.572$, $p<.001$. Model 2 explained an additional 10.3 percent of variance, $R$ squared change = .103, $F$ change = 7.579, $p<.001$. Decision-maker gender emerges as the most significant predictor ($beta=0.186$ $p<.001$), where female decision-makers hold more favourable stereotypes about the work adaptability of older workers than male decision-makers. Decision-maker age was also significantly predictive ($beta=.313$, $p<.01$), where older decision makers hold more favourable stereotypes about the work adaptability of older workers than younger decision-makers.

| $\Delta F$ | 5.582*** |
| $R^2$ | .042* |
| $\Delta R^2$ | .198*** |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | .157*** |

Notes: *Significant at the 0.05 level, ***significant at the 0.001 level
4.4.3.3 Reaction to Criticism Stereotype Model

The Reaction to Criticism Stereotype Model, explaining 13.1 percent of variance (p<.01) is presented in Table 4.15. Decision-maker age, operational position, position tenure, organisational tenure, industry type, equality policy presence, and the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisation were entered at Step 1 as control measures, given the non-significant relationships observed between these variables and the Reaction to Criticism Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by Model 1 is 5.2 percent, where decision-maker age emerges as a significant predictor (\(\beta = -0.140, p<.01\)). Decision-maker gender, strategic position, and organisation size were entered at Step 2, given the significant relationships observed between these variables and the Reaction to Criticism Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 13.1 percent, \(F = 3.041, p<.01\). Model 2 explained an additional 7.9 percent of
variance, $R$ squared change = .790, $F$ change = 6.033, $p<.01$. Decision-maker age emerges as the most unique and significant predictor ($beta$=-0.281, $p<.01$), where older decision-makers hold more favourable stereotypes about ‘older workers’ reaction to criticism than younger decision-makers. Decision-maker position is also a significant predictor ($beta$=-.251, $p<.01$) where those in strategic decision-making roles hold less favourable stereotypes than those in HR or operational level positions. Females are also found to hold more favourable stereotypes about how ‘older workers’ react to criticism than males, given the predictive and significant nature of decision-maker gender in this model ($beta$=.144, $p<.05$).

Table 4.15 Reaction to Criticism Stereotype Model

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Notes: *Significant at the 0.05 level, **significant at the 0.01 level
4.4.3.4 Interpersonal Skills Stereotype Model

The Interpersonal Skills Stereotype Model, explaining 24.8 percent of variance ($p<.001$) is presented in Table 4.16. Decision-maker operational position, organisation size, and industry type were entered at Step 1 as control measures, given the non-significant relationships observed between these variables and the Interpersonal Skills Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by Model 1 is 1.3 percent. Decision-maker age, gender, strategic position, position tenure, organisational tenure, equality policy presence, and the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations were entered at Step 2, given the significant relationships observed between these variables and the Interpersonal Skills Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 24.8 percent, $F = 6.695$, $p<.001$. Model 2 explained an additional 23.5 percent of variance, $R$ squared change = .235, $F$ change = 9.066, $p<.001$. Decision-maker position emerges as the most unique and significant predictor ($beta=0.231$, $p<.001$), where those in strategic level positions hold more favourable stereotypes about the interpersonal skills of older workers than those in operational or HR level positions. Decision-maker age is also significant in explaining stereotypes about the interpersonal skills of older workers ($beta=0.193$, $p<.05$) where older decision-makers hold more favourable stereotypes in this regard. Finally, decision-maker gender is significant ($beta=-0.157$, $p<.05$), where female decision-makers hold less favourable stereotypes about the interpersonal skills of older workers than male decision-makers.

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4.4.3.5 Employment of Older Workers Stereotype Model

The Employment of Older Workers Stereotype Model, explaining 9.2 percent of variance \((p<.05)\) is presented in Table 4.17. Decision-maker age, operational position, position tenure, organisation tenure, organisation size, industry type, equality policy presence, and percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisation were entered at Step 1 as control measures, given the non-significant relationships observed between these variables and the Employment of Older Workers Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by Model 1 is 4.8 percent, where decision-maker age emerges as a significant predictor \((beta=0.265, p<.01)\). Decision-maker gender and strategic position were entered at Step 2, given the significant relationships observed between these variables and the Employment of Older Workers Stereotype in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 9.2 percent, \(F = 1.975, p<.05\). Model 2 explained an additional 4.3 percent of variance, \(R^2 \text{change} = .043, F \text{change} = 4.685, p<.01\). Decision-maker age emerges as the most unique and significant predictor \((beta=-0.278, p<.01)\) where older decision-makers hold more favourable stereotypes than younger decision-makers. Decision-maker position was also predictive, \((beta=-0.182, p<.05)\), where those in strategic level positions hold less favourable stereotypes about the employment of older workers than those in operational or HR level positions.
### Table 4.17 Employment of Older Worker Stereotype Model

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<td>StrticPos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.182*</td>
<td>-1.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F )</td>
<td>1.251</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.975*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \Delta F )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.685**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td></td>
<td>.092*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \Delta R^2 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.043**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted ( R^2 )</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td></td>
<td>.045**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *Significant at the 0.05 level, **significant at the 0.01 level, *** significant at the 0.001 level

### 4.4.3.6 Prejudicial Feelings about Older Workers Model

The Feelings about Older Workers Prejudice Model, explaining 17.6 percent of variance \( (p<.001) \) is presented in Table 4.18. Decision-maker operational position and industry type were entered at Step 1 as control measures, given the non-significant relationships observed between these variables and the Prejudicial Feelings about Older Workers in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by Model 1 is 1.1 percent. Decision-maker age, gender, strategic position, position tenure, organisational tenure, organisation size, equality policy presence, and the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations were entered at Step 2, given the significant relationships observed between these variables and the Prejudicial Feelings about Older Workers in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 17.6 percent, \( F = 4.317, p<.001 \). Model 2 explained an
additional 16.5 percent of variance, $R$ squared change = .165, $F$ change = 5.054, $p<.001$. Decision-maker age emerges as the most unique and significant predictor ($beta=0.206$, $p<.05$), where older decision-makers hold more favourable overall feelings about older workers than younger decision-makers. Decision-maker position is also significant ($beta=.195$, $p<.05$), where those in strategic level positions hold more favourable feelings about older workers than those in operational or HR level positions.

Table 4.18 Feelings about Older Workers Prejudice Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$t$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 1:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OperatPos</td>
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<td>-0.849</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>-0.078</td>
<td>-1.125</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
<td>-0.578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.206*</td>
<td>2.361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.075</td>
<td>-1.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StrgicPos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.195*</td>
<td>2.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PosTen</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>1.597</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OrgTen</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OrgSize</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
<td>-0.822</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EqPolicy</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-1.057</td>
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<td>%olderworkers</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>1.187</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.317***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta F$</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5.054***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
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<td>0.176***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>0.165***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.135***</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *Significant at the 0.05 level, **significant at the 0.01 level, ***significant at the 0.001 level

4.4.3.7 Behavioural Intentions in Recruitment Model

The Behavioural Intentions in Recruitment Discriminatory Predisposition Model, explaining 12.7 percent of variance ($p<.01$), is presented in Table 4.19. Decision-maker gender, operational position, industry type, equality policy presence, and the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-
makers’ organisations were entered at Step 1 as control measures, given the non-
significant relationships observed between these variables and the Behavioural
Intentions in Recruitment in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained
by Model 1 is 3.9 percent. Decision-maker age, strategic position, position
tenure, organisational tenure, and organisation size were entered at Step 2, given
the significant relationships observed between these variables and the
Behavioural Intentions in Recruitment in the correlation analysis. The total
variance explained by the model as a whole was 12.7 percent, $F = 2.935$, $p<.01$.
Model 2 explained an additional 8.8 percent of variance, $R^2$ change = .088, $F$ change = 4.074, $p<.01$. Decision-maker position emerges as the only
unique and significant predictor ($\beta=0.234$, $p<.01$) where those in strategic
level positions hold more favourable intentions toward recruiting ‘older workers’
than those in operational or HR level positions.

Table 4.19 Behavioural Intentions in Recruitment Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
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<th>Model 2</th>
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<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$t$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 1:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.692</td>
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<td>.263</td>
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<td>-.056</td>
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<td>%olderworkers</td>
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<td>StrticPos</td>
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<tr>
<td>OrgTen</td>
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<td>1.205</td>
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<td>2.935**</td>
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<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
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<td>.084**</td>
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</table>

Notes: **Significant at the 0.01 level
4.4.3.8 Behavioural Intentions in Retention Model

The Behavioural Intentions in Retention Discriminatory Disposition Model, explaining 10.5 percent of variance (p<.01) is presented in Table 4.20. Decision-maker age, strategic position, operational position, organisation size, industry type, equality policy presence, and the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations were entered at Step 1 as control measures, given the non-significant relationships observed between these variables and the Behavioural Intentions in Retention in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by Model 1 is 3.3 percent. Decision-maker gender, position tenure, and organisational tenure were entered at Step 2, given the significant relationships observed between these variables and the Behavioural Intentions in Retention in the correlation analysis. The total variance explained by the model as a whole was 10.5 percent, $F = 2.363$, $p<.05$. Model 2 explained an additional 6.1 percent of variance, $R$ squared change = .061, $F$ change = 5.381, $p<.01$. Decision-maker position tenure emerges as the most unique and significant predictor ($beta=-.233$, $p<.01$), where the longer a decision-maker is working in their position, the less favourable intentions they have about retaining older workers. Decision-maker gender is also significant ($beta=.173$, $p<.05$), where female decision-makers hold more favourable intentions toward the retention of older workers than male decision-makers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>.007</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PosTen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OrgTen</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>2.363*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *Significant at the 0.05 level, **significant at the 0.01 level

4.4.3.9 Regression Analyses Summary

Decision-maker age is significant in predicting stereotypes about the ‘work effectiveness’ of older workers, the ‘work adaptability’ of older workers, older workers’ ‘reaction to criticism’, the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers, and stereotypes about the ‘employment of older workers’ offering support to H5b (Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers). Decision-maker age is significant in predicting prejudicial ‘feelings about older workers’, therefore, H5c (Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers) is supported. Decision-maker age is not significant in predicting discriminatory attitudes toward older workers, so H5d (Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers) is rejected.

Decision-maker gender is significant in predicting stereotypes about the ‘work adaptability’ of older workers, older workers’ ‘reaction to criticism’, and the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers. H6b (Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers) is supported. Decision-maker gender is not significant in predicting prejudicial ‘feelings about older workers’, therefore, H6c (Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers) is rejected. Decision-maker gender is significant in explaining behavioural intentions in retention of older workers, therefore, H6d (Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers) is supported.
Decision-maker position is significant in predicting stereotypes about older workers’ ‘reaction to criticism’, the ‘interpersonal skills’ of older workers, and the ‘employment of older workers’, therefore, **H7b (Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers)** is supported. Decision-maker position is significant in explaining prejudicial ‘feelings about older workers’, therefore **H7c (Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers)** is supported. Decision-maker position is significant in explaining behavioural intentions in recruitment of older workers, therefore, **H7d (Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers) is supported.**

Decision-maker position tenure is not significant in explaining stereotypes about older workers. **H8b (Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers) is rejected.** Decision-maker position tenure is not significant in explaining prejudicial ‘feelings about older workers’. **H8c (Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers) is rejected.** Decision-maker position is significant in explaining behavioural intentions in retention of older workers, therefore **H8d (Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers) is supported.**

Decision-maker organisational tenure is not significant in explaining stereotypes about older workers. **H9b (Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers) is rejected.** Decision-maker organisational tenure is not significant in explaining prejudicial feelings about older workers. **H9c (Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers) is rejected.** Decision-maker organisational tenure is not significant in explaining discriminatory attitudes toward older workers. **H9d (Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their discriminatory attitudes toward older workers) is rejected.**
organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers) is rejected.

Organisation size is not significant in explaining stereotypes about older workers. H9b (Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers) is rejected. Organisation size is not significant in explaining prejudicial feelings toward older workers, H10c (The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers) is rejected. Organisation size is not significant in explaining discriminatory attitudes toward older workers, thus H10d (The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older worker) is rejected.

Industry type is not significant in explaining stereotypes about older workers. H11b (The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers) is rejected. Industry type is not significant in explaining prejudicial feelings toward older workers. H11c (The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers) is rejected. Industry type is not significant in explaining discriminatory attitudes toward older workers. H11d (The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers) is rejected.

Equality policy is not significant in explaining stereotypes of older workers. H12b (The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers) is rejected. Equality policy is not significant in explaining prejudicial feelings about older workers. H12c (The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their
prejudicial feelings toward older workers is rejected. Equality policy is not significant in explaining discriminatory attitudes about older workers. **H12d** (The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers) is rejected.

Workforce age demographics are not significant in explaining stereotypes of older workers. **H13b** (The perceived percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers) is rejected. Workforce age demographics are not significant in explaining prejudicial feelings about older workers. **H13c** (The perceived percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers) is rejected. Workforce age demographics are not significant in explaining discriminatory attitudes toward older workers. **H13d** (The perceived percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers) is rejected.

These results are explicated in Figure 4.12 below.
Figure 4.12 Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’ Results

Decision Maker Characteristic

- Age
- Gender
- Position
- Position Tenure
- Organizational Tenure
- Organization Size
- Industry Type
- Equality Policy
- Workforce Age Demographics

Scale Measures

- Work Effectiveness
- Work Adaptability
- Reaction to Criticism
- Interpersonal Skills
- Employments of Older Workers

Attitude toward ‘Older worker’

- Stereotypes
- Prejudice
- Discriminatory Prejudice
- Negative Attitude
- Positive Attitude

Arrows indicate the direction of influence:

- Positive Significant Relationship
- Negative Significant Relationship

Behaviours:

- Behavioural Intention Recruitment
- Behavioural Intention Retention
4.5 Overview of Results

Table 4.21 below presents an overview of all the results presented in this chapter. The thesis now turns to a critical discussion of these results in Chapter Five.

Table 4.21 Overview of Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question and Hypotheses</th>
<th>Support/Reject Hypothesis Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1. Who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H1 Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ at varying chronological ages</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H2 Decision-makers will define a female worker to be an ‘older worker’ at a younger age than a male worker</td>
<td>Limited Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H3 Decision-makers will define workers as ‘older workers’ from varying perspectives</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2. What are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H4a Organisational decision-makers will hold negative stereotypical beliefs about older workers</td>
<td>Partial Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H4b Organisational decision-makers will hold negative prejudicial feelings about older workers</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H4c Organisational decision-makers will hold negative discriminatory attitudes toward older workers</td>
<td>Partial Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3. What specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H5a Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H6a Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H7a Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ H8a Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- **H9a** Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'  
  - **Reject**

- **H10a** The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'  
  - **Reject**

- **H11a** The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'  
  - **Partial Support**

- **H12a** The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker'  
  - **Reject**

- **H13a** The perceived percentage of 'older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining the age at which they define a worker as an 'older worker’  
  - **Support**

RQ4. What specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers?

- **H5b** Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers  
  - **Support**

- **H5c** Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers  
  - **Support**

- **H5d** Decision-maker age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers  
  - **Reject**

- **H6b** Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers  
  - **Support**

- **H6c** Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers  
  - **Reject**

- **H6d** Decision-maker gender will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers  
  - **Support**

- **H7b** Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers  
  - **Support**
- $H_{7c}$ Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers
  - Support

- $H_{7d}$ Decision-maker job position will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers
  - Support

- $H_{8b}$ Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers
  - Reject

- $H_{8c}$ Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers
  - Reject

- $H_{8d}$ Decision-maker position tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers
  - Support

- $H_{9b}$ Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers
  - Reject

- $H_{9c}$ Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers
  - Reject

- $H_{9d}$ Decision-maker organisational tenure will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers
  - Reject

- $H_{10b}$ The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers
  - Reject

- $H_{10c}$ The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers
  - Reject

- $H_{10d}$ The size of the organisations within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older worker
  - Reject

- $H_{11b}$ The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers
  - Reject

- $H_{11c}$ The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers
  - Reject
- **H11d** The industry type within which the decision-maker is employed will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

- **H12b** The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

- **H12c** The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

- **H12d** The presence of an equality policy in the decision-makers organisations age will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers

- **H13b** The perceived percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their stereotypes of older workers

- **H13c** The perceived percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their prejudicial feelings toward older workers

- **H13d** The perceived percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers’ organisations will be significant in explaining their behavioural intentions toward older workers
Chapter 5 Discussion

The two general objectives of research are fact-finding and theory building

(Wacker, 1998:371)

5.1 Introduction

In line with Wacker’s (1998) observation above, the core objective of the present research is to unearth new empirical evidence on organisational decision-maker attitudes toward those who they consider to be ‘older workers’, and, from this, to attempt to build a better understanding of these attitudes in the context of workforce ageing. Schultz and Adams (2007:307) have argued that ‘additional empirical and theoretical work is needed given the evolving landscape of ageing and work’. This is especially important now there is a requirement for ‘older workers’ to remain in the labour market for longer because of social security pressures and an insufficient replacement rate of younger workers (DELSA, 2006). Workplace ageism, however, remains a serious concern (cf. Walker, 1999; EEA, 2010). This necessitates a better understanding of the ways in which ‘older workers’ are viewed in organisations, as previously discussed in Chapter One. Chapter Two detailed what is already known about attitudes toward ‘older workers’, while also charting the ‘unknowns’ requiring investigation. Chapter Three outlined the framework for this investigation, and, having presented an analysis of the results in the last chapter, accordingly, this chapter centres on a critical discussion of the findings. Particularly, and with a view to supporting their interpretation and understanding, these findings are reflected upon in light of previous theory and research, as reviewed in Chapter Two. The discussion is specifically directed toward the research questions posed by the study, and the chapter is divided into three key sections. The first section focuses on defining the ‘older worker’ in order to specifically address the research questions: who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be?, and, what specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be? Consequently, the second section addresses attitudes toward ‘older workers’, in order to explicitly
consider the research questions: what are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers? and, what specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers?.

5.2 Defining the ‘Older Worker’

The first and rather fundamental purpose of this study was to address who organisational decision-makers consider ‘older workers’ to be. Despite it’s obvious importance to any analysis of attitudes toward older workers, or, indeed, any research study pertaining to the ageing workforce, how we define an ‘older worker’ has received limited attention in the literature (cf. Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007; Peeters and van Emmerick, 2008; Kooij et al, 2008). This is surprising when the problems associated with this limited attention in terms of research, practice, and policy direction are widely acknowledged (cf. Bytheway, 1995; Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005). To highlight the significance of this issue, Finkelstein and Farrell’s (2007:100-101) argument is revisited momentarily:

It is difficult to really understand older worker bias if we do not know what we are talking about when we use the word ‘old’…the work specific age bias literature needs to start looking at this systematically.

Before attitudes, and more specifically, ageist attitudes toward ‘older workers’ can be examined and understood, pursuing some sort of closure on who is actually considered an ‘older worker’ is a necessary prerequisite. In response to calls for refining the measurement of age identity at work (Finkelstein and Burke, 1998), and for identifying what we mean by an ‘older worker’ (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007; Kooij et al, 2008), the first concern of this discussion chapter is therefore to draw together the results recounting how organisational decision-makers define an ‘older worker’ in this study.
The review of the literature on this issue exposed a distinct lack of consensus on the term ‘older worker’, such that ‘older workers’ have been referred to as those aged anywhere between 40 and 75 years (cf. Stein and Rocco, 2001). Sterns and Doverspike’s (1989) conceptualisations of age model, Cleveland and Shore’s (1992) person/context-based age model, and more recently, Pitt-Catsouphes’ et al (2010) ‘prism of age’ model, however, note that calendar or chronological age is not the only age marker present in the workplace. These particular models, discussed in Chapter Two, suggest that workers in organisations are also viewed in terms of age from a social age perspective (the age a worker is perceived to be by others); an organisational age perspective (the age a worker is perceived to be according to their tenure or career-stage, as well as organisational age norms); a functional age perspective (the age a worker is perceived to be according to their physical and performance-based abilities); and a life-span age perspective (the age a worker is perceived to be according to their transitions in and out of life roles). Research by Itzen and Phillipson (1993; 1994) and Eurolink (2001) provided some evidence to suggest that the gender of a worker also has some bearing on when, or how, they are viewed in terms of age, or as ‘older’ at work.

As reported in the analysis in Chapter Four, the present research finds considerable evidence to support the view that workers are defined as ‘older’ at different chronological ages, and also from differing perspectives at work, but some new discoveries emerged, which are discussed later in this section. There also appears to be a gender influence on the definition of an ‘older worker’. The results additionally indicate that individual and organisational characteristics of observers, in this case, organisational decision-makers, influence how they define workers as ‘older workers’, an issue that has not been heretofore addressed in the literature. In light of these findings, it is now possible to revisit part of the conceptual framework presented earlier, and to produce a new model of the definition of an ‘older worker’. Figure 5.1 below presents this new model. In homage to Pitt-Catsouphes’ et al (2010) earlier work, the ‘Prism of Age’, which illustrates differing nuances associated with age at work, the ‘Older Worker Spectrum’ model presented here extends the earlier model toward specifically defining an ‘older worker’, from the perspective of decision-makers in organisations. This model represents an attempt to integrate prior work with the
results unearthed as part of this study, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the term ‘older worker’. The components of this model therefore provide the focus for debate in this section.
Figure 5.1 The Older Worker Spectrum
The ‘Older Worker Spectrum’ illustrated in Figure 5.1 is framed using both the quantitative and qualitative empirical evidence gathered in this study on defining an ‘older worker’. It comprises a number of separate, yet interrelated, components. It represents, as a spectrum does in the purely scientific sense, the distribution of the characteristics of a phenomenon across a range of measurement; the phenomenon here, being the definition of an ‘older worker’. The range of measurement, depicted in the ‘chronological age’ block, characterises the varying calendar, or chronological ages used to define an ‘older worker’ by the organisational decision-makers in this study on a sliding scale from 30 years to 90 years of age. This range of measurement then radiates from the middle, here between the average age of 52 and 53 years and the median age of 55 years reported in the results, dispersing a wavelength of colour from violet to red. Six colours are usually distinguished in a spectrum, ranging from the shortest wavelength, violet; through indigo, blue, green, yellow, to the longest wavelength, red. These colours are used in this model to represent the varying perspectives from which decision-makers define an ‘older worker’ in the study. A smaller number of decision-makers take a physical age perspective to define an ‘older worker’ (violet, the shortest wavelength), while a larger number of decision-makers take a retirement age perspective (red, the longest wavelength). While ‘physical age’, ‘life-stage age’, ‘workplace age’, ‘career age’, and ‘retirement age’ are all perspectives supported by previous research, these perspectives have not been previously addressed in terms of decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Neither has the chronological age associated with each perspective been empirically investigated. These issues are addressed in the present model, and discussed later in the section. A new perspective, described as ‘industry age’, is also presented in this way, constructed from the evidence reported in Chapter Four, and discussed in the sections below.

Knitted between the dispersion of perspectives on defining an ‘older worker’, and the chronological age range of measurement in defining an ‘older worker’, is the gender of an ‘older worker’. In this study, some quantitative evidence emerged to suggest that females are considered an ‘older worker’ at younger ages than males. The female arrow is therefore pointed toward the younger
chronological age range of measurement, and the male arrow is pointed toward the older age range of measurement. This gender marker is, however, placed within the radiation component of the spectrum because the qualitative evidence in this study suggests that ‘gender age’ is also a perspective from which decision-makers define ‘older workers’, and is discussed later in the section.

Underneath the spectrum then, are the factors relating to the ‘definers’, the observers, i.e. the decision-makers themselves, which help to further explain the chronological age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’. Workplace age demographics are most significant in explaining the chronological age at which a worker is defined as ‘older’: the greater the percentage of ‘older workers’ in the organisation within which a decision-maker is employed, the younger the age they define an ‘older worker’ at; the age of the decision-maker is also significant, where the older the decision-maker, the older the age they define an ‘older worker’ at. Partial evidence was also found to suggest that the type of industry within which a decision-maker is employed has an influence on how they define an ‘older worker’. Since the ‘Older Worker Spectrum’ is an interrelated model on defining the ‘older worker’, the remainder of this section provides a blended discussion on each of the core features of this model.

### 5.2.1 Chronological Age Markers

Chronological age markers presented in Figure 5.1 refer to the specific calendar ages given to define a worker as an ‘older worker’, as reported in the quantitative findings on defining an ‘older worker’ in the last chapter. Much of the existing research that focuses on ‘older workers’ either pre-defines a specific calendar age for an ‘older worker’, varying from 40 to 75 years of age (Stein and Rocco, 2001), or, in the absence of a definition, clearly makes the assumption that ‘older workers’ represent an homogenous grouping. The findings of this research illustrate that this is not the case. There was a broad consensus among the decision-makers in this study that the term ‘older worker’ refers to workers in their 50’s, with a mean age of 52.69 years reported, indicating that, on average, decision-makers believe an ‘older worker’ refers to those workers aged between
52 and 53 years of age. The results, however, show a sliding scale from 30 to 90 years of age, which is a much wider range than the variations between 40 to 75 years of age used to define an ‘older worker’ in previous studies (Stein and Rocco, 2001). This finding is interesting as it demonstrates that workers are actually considered older at a younger age than we might otherwise think. Consequently, the generic, and mostly arbitrary social cut-offs of 55 years of age used to define ‘older workers’ in discussions about labour force participation (DELSA, 2006; AARP, 2010); and legal age cut-offs of 65 years of age used to define ‘older workers’ in discussions about retirement and pension reforms (OECD, 2005) may not reflect the actual situation in operation in the workplace. Here, workers may be perceived by those making important workplace decisions about them to be older at a much younger age than they might ordinarily expect, and, as has already been shown in Chapters One and Two, being viewed as an ‘older worker’ has negative connotations (Nelson, 2005; Schultz and Adams, 2007). Where these age perceptions are held by key decision makers in organisations, they are likely to at least influence a number of important decisions including initial access to selection, promotion, training, career development and even redundancy (Taylor, 2001), and may be related to a number of work outcomes (Cleveland and Shore, 1992; Cleveland, Shore and Murphy, 1997). When one considers the depth of career ladders in many organisations, it is conceivable that individuals may be ruled out of the ‘game’ before they have even had a chance to prove their worth simply because of their chronological age.

What is more, the variation of chronological definitions, ranging from 30 to 90 years of age, used to define an ‘older worker’ by the decision-makers in this study supports the notion that individuals will use their own unique conceptualisations of age to define ‘older’ (Sterns and Gray, 1999), and so, the chronological age at which workers are defined as ‘older’ is likely to differ among decision-makers across the workplace. As such, the findings from this study indicate that, to some extent, the type of industry within which a decision-maker works has an influence on the age at which they define a worker as an ‘older worker’. Specifically, those working in the retail and hospitality sectors, on average, defined an ‘older worker’ as being in their forties, compared with
decision-makers in other industries, who, on average, defined an ‘older worker’ as being in their fifties. Where Adler and Hibler (2009) found that the accommodation and food sectors stood ‘apart from all other industries’ as having an under-representation of older workers, this finding indicates that those making critical decisions about the employment of workers in the retail and hospitality sectors may consider those in the age range after their 40’s as being, perhaps, ‘too old to work’, and so these workers may not even be considered for employment in these industries. This finding leads to a new position, in that an ‘industry-age’ approach may be inter-related to the chronological approach in defining an ‘older worker’. Policies aimed at increasing the labour force participation of ‘older workers’ may therefore need to direct their efforts more specifically toward different industry sectors.

What is significant in explaining the varying chronological definitions, however, is the age of the decision-maker, where, not surprisingly, the older the decision-maker, the older the age they used to define an ‘older worker’. This may be explained by the probability that people evaluate other people in light of similarity to themselves (Finkelstein et al., 1995; Chiu et al., 2001). Here, older decision-makers may define themselves as ‘older’ workers, and therefore define an ‘older worker’ at a similar age to themselves, which arguably makes sense.

Interestingly, the percentage of ‘older workers’ employed in the decision-makers organisations emerged as the most significant predictor of the chronological definition for an ‘older worker’, even when controlling for decision-maker age. Curiously, this has a negative effect. Decision-makers who are based in organisations with a greater percentage of ‘older workers’ employed there, actually defined ‘older workers’ at a younger age than decision-makers with a lower percentage of older workers employed in their organisations. Certainly this is an issue that warrants further inquiry and explanation, where this finding is perhaps counter-intuitive. It appears to be in conflict with the logic of Relational Demography, which proposes that similarity between an individual and their workgroup will result in more ‘attractive’ perceptions about this individual (Tsui et al., 1995). One possible explanation could lie in the relatively low percentage of ‘older workers’ perceived to be employed overall within organisations in this
study. This finding regarding workplace age demographics, however, could feasibly be linked with Remery et al’s (2003) evidence that organisations with more ‘older workers’ actually have more negative opinions about them. The possibility here is that as the workforce ages, ageism could become more prevalent and affect more workers, as proposed by Walker (1999). This potential phenomenon would be detrimental to the required facilitation of a more age diverse, ‘older-friendly’, workplace in the coming years.

Importantly, chronological age is not the only defining characteristic of an ‘older worker’ in the ‘Older Worker Spectrum’, as was revealed by the qualitative findings in this study on why organisational decision-makers consider workers to be ‘older workers’ at the specific ages reported, on a range of 30 to 90, as is discussed in the following sections.

5.2.2 Retirement Age Markers

A large number of decision-makers in this study (n=54) used a ‘retirement age’ approach when defining workers as ‘older’, as presented earlier in the model. These decision-makers believe that, on average, 65 years is representative of the age at which employees begin to prepare for retirement, and so the age at which they can be considered an ‘older worker’. This finding is perhaps not very surprising considering that, until 12 months ago, 65 was age at which individuals could receive the State Pension in Ireland (CI, 2011). The state pension age, however, has now been raised to 66 years of age in response to the pressures of workforce ageing, as previously discussed in Chapter One. Nonetheless, this ‘retirement age’ perspective may be explained by the fact that, as pointed out by Evans et al (1995), when older age ranges are used to define ‘older workers’, discussions are often about ‘older workers’ preparing for retirement. Consequently, these types of discussions may account for the belief in this study that workers are defined as ‘older workers’ because they are nearing retirement, explicitly stated in Figure 5.1 under a new label, ‘retirement age’. Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) proposes that attitudes toward social groups are derived, in part, from the observed or expected behaviours of these groups. This perspective
is useful here, then, in explaining that workers are defined as ‘older workers’ because they are viewed as those who are nearing retirement. If, however, decision-makers in organisations believe those who are ‘older workers’ are those who are ‘approaching retirement’ in general, the implication is that, firstly, organisations may ignore important strategies proposed to preserve the knowledge and skills of older employees and encourage them to stay longer in employment (OECD, 2005; DELSA, 2006; Harper et al, 2006). Secondly, those considered to be ‘older workers’ may continue to face the existing barriers in accessing new employment (Johnson, 2007) if the perception is that workers who are ‘older’ will be shortly withdrawing from the labour force.

5.2.3 Career Age Markers

The next perspective from which a number of decision-makers in this study (n=25) define a worker as an ‘older worker’ is the career age perspective. These particular decision-makers believe that, on average, 49 years is representative of the age at which workers reach a particular point in their career allowing them to be defined as ‘older’. This finding fits with the organisational age (Sterns and Doverspike, 1989) and the career-stage age approaches (Lawrence, 1987; 1988; Pitt-Catsouphes et al, 2010) which purport that a worker may be defined in terms of age by describing a stage in their career. This study, however, discovered that 49 years may be the age from which workers are considered as ‘older’ in relation to their career. This evidence therefore sheds new light on the chronological age markers that are associated with the career-age approach to defining an ‘older worker’. This career-age perspective may be explained by Cook’s (1995) argument that, when workers are referred to as ‘older workers’, it is linked to discussions about declining career development or training opportunities. This issue is highlighted here, with one decision-maker maintaining that ‘by 50 a career path has been well formed if not exhausted and so opportunities become more limited’. This finding suggests then, as workers enter their fifties, they may be considered to have reached, or even passed, the pinnacle of their career; casting doubt on whether decision-makers believe that promotional and training opportunities (arguably considered central to careers) after this age are important,
as argued by Falkenberg (1990). Where ‘older workers’ have been found to participate less in training and development activities than younger workers (Cleveland and Shore, 1992; Posthuma and Campion, 2009), this current finding indicates that the trend could be set to continue, particularly for workers aged 49 years and above, which appears a ‘young’ age for a career to, as stated in this study, ‘stall’.

As we now require people to work longer, and to older ages as a result of the constrains of workforce ageing (DELSA, 2006), this career age represents a critical problem if those who make decisions about training and development believe workers no longer have a career, as such, from their late forties. Moreover, being deprived of development opportunities at work may have a negative effect on older individuals’ self-efficacy for career relevant development (Maurer, 2001), which is especially pertinent given that the recent economic downturn has forced some older workers to change their career paths (Browning and Silver, 2008). This could have particularly negative consequences for those perceived as ‘older workers’. Research has demonstrated that ‘older workers’ experience difficulties re-entering the workplace following a period of unemployment (Loretto and White, 2006). In Ireland, the greatest increases in unemployment were seen among those aged 35-44 years between 2005 and 2011 (CSO, 2011). If it is the perception that career and development opportunities are ‘exhausted’ toward the end of a worker’s forties, as is suggested here, then these unemployed workers may face serious difficulties in gaining re-employment in Ireland, both at present, and in the coming years.

5.2.4 Workplace Age Markers

Considerable quantitative evidence emerged in this study to suggest that workplace age demographics have an impact on the age at which workers are defined as ‘older workers’ (see 5.2.1). In fact, workplace age demographics were found to be predictive of the chronological age that decision-makers use to define workers as ‘older workers’. Qualitative evidence, however, also emerged in this
respect. Workplace age markers are therefore used in the ‘Older Worker Spectrum’ to refer to the beliefs of some decision-makers in this study (n=22), such that, an average of 42 years is representative of the age at which worker can be considered ‘older’ in comparison to other workers in the organisation. While organisational age approaches have been used previously by Doverspike and Sterns (1989), Lawrence (1988), Cleveland and Shore (1992), and Pitt-Catsouphes et al (2010) to describe the age of a worker within the context of those in the organisation, the findings presented in this research indicate that 42 years is the chronological age marker associated with this perspective. This appears to be a rather ‘young’ age at which to be considered ‘older’ in an organisation, given those aged above 40 comprise a large percentage of the overall labour force in Ireland (CSO, 2011). One decision-maker explained, however, that ‘average age in this plant is 42’. These particular decision-makers in the study may take into consideration the average age of their workplace, and ascribe that age as the age of an ‘older worker’, believing that any age above the average workplace age is considered the ‘age of onset’ for ‘older’ workers. Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) and, indeed, Relational Demography (Tsui et al, 1995) become useful, as they explain that attitudes toward groups, such as ‘older workers’, are influenced by the demographics of organisational workforces.

Nevertheless, McCain, O’Reilly and Pfeffer (1983) found that being ‘older’ in work groups dominated by younger workers led to an increased tendency for the older workers to leave the organisation. If it is the case that some who are considered ‘older workers’ are defined as such because they are ‘older than most of the other workers in the organisation’, there is the possibility that these workers are less likely to be encouraged to remain in employment for longer, a position which is glaringly at odds with current policy direction. This position might be explained by the ‘tide of early exit’ phenomenon (Scales and Scase, 2000, Loretto et al, 2005; Loretto and White, 2006) discussed in Chapter One, which describes the sharp decline in labour force participation among workers entering their fifties, and is obviously regarded as a serious concern in the
context of workforce ageing, given the necessity for ‘older workers’ to remain in the labour market (DELSA, 2006).

5.2.5 Life-Stage Age Markers

Further evidence was found in this study to suggest that decision-makers define workers as ‘older workers’ from a life-stage age perspective. The life stage-age approach in the ‘Older Worker Spectrum’ model refers to the age a worker is defined as an ‘older worker’ according to their transitions in and out of life roles. While retirement represents one of the most important later-life status transitions (Szinovacz, 1980; Kim and Moen, 2002), and emerged as one role perspective in defining the ‘older worker’, discussed earlier in section 5.2.2, another role transition became apparent in this study. Some decision-makers believe (n=15) that an average age of 51 years is representative of the age at which workers experience a change in priorities from work to more personal concerns. This belief was used by these decision makers then to frame their definition of an ‘older worker’ as those who, as cited by one decision-maker, are ‘looking toward the next phase of their lives’. This may be explained by observed or expected role transitions of older people in the labour market, as one decision-maker in this study highlighted, being an ‘older worker means you are ready to go part-time and enjoy life’. While the life-age approach has been considered previously by Sterne and Doverspike (1989), Cleveland and Shore (1992) and Pitt-Catsouphes et al (2010), the findings in this study indicate that those aged 51 years and above may be considered ‘older’ in this respect. If it is the case that decision-makers define ‘older workers’ as those seeking a reduction in working hours, then, again, there is the possibility that these decision-makers could ignore the strategies proposed to encourage older workers to remain longer in employment after their fifties (Harper et al, 2006; Loretto and White, 2006).
5.2.6 Industry Age Markers

As discussed earlier in section 5.2.1, the quantitative data analysis showed that industry type had some effect on the chronological ages at which workers were defined as ‘older workers’. Qualitative evidence also emerged in this respect, leading a new finding where an ‘industry-age’ perspective may also be used in defining workers as ‘older’. Some decision-makers (n=14) believe that an average of 42 years of age represents an ‘older worker’ within the context of the industry within which they work. Notably, all of these decision-makers are employed in services-type industries. Earlier findings in this study regarding an ‘industry effect’ on variance of the ‘older worker’ age, taken together with this qualitative data, may be explained by DeMicco’s (2005) assertion that customer-driven industries, and more specifically the retail and hospitality sectors, favour younger workers over ‘older workers’. This notion of an ‘industry age’ approach to defining an ‘older worker’ became particularly apparent where some of the decision-makers believed workers could be defined as ‘older’ because, within their industry, those seeking positions ‘above the age of 35 are viewed as ‘having little ambition’, as strikingly indicated by one decision-maker, or, as another stated, their industry is ‘more suited to younger workers’. The suggestion then, is that workers beyond their forties are not considered for employment or promotion in these sectors. This is an important finding because it may explain the comparable under-representation of ‘older workers’ in service-type industries (DeMicco, 2005; Adler and Hibler, 2009), and is particularly pertinent in Ireland, where one of the largest increases in unemployment occurred for workers in the retail sector between 2005 and 2011 (CSO, 2011). Moreover, the decline in manufacturing employment against an increase in more service-orientated employment (CSO, 2009), presents the possibility, then, that employment prospects for ‘older workers’ may become even weaker.
5.2.7 Physical Age Markers

Physical age markers in the ‘Older Worker Spectrum’ refer to the beliefs of some decision-makers in this study (n=13) that an average of 51 years of age is representative of the age at which the physical appearance of workers defines them as ‘older’. In terms of a worker looking ‘older’, as was reported in this study, Kite et al (1991) and Fiske (1998) have stated that age is one of the first characteristics that we notice about others and may influence our perceptions about them. It may be that workers’ physical appearance could lead to them being defined as an ‘older worker’, as is also suggested by Levin (1988) and Cleveland, Shore and Murphy (1997). And, as Adamitis (2000) states, the consideration of appearance in employment decision-making contexts is prevalent, and can lead to discrimination, therefore those workers who look ‘older’ could be discriminated against on the basis of their appearance. While Pitt-Catsoupes’ et al (2010) note that a ‘physical age’ approach is used to describe the age of a worker in relation to the the biological ageing process, the findings in this study indicate that 51 years may be the chronological age associated with this perspective.

5.2.8 Gender Age Markers

Evidence also emerged in this study to suggest that women might be disproportionately affected when being defined as ‘older’ at work because of their chronological age as, while small in number, some decision-makers in this study believe that females age faster than men at work, where they consider a female to be ‘older’ at younger ages than men. This finding supports earlier evidence that some employers believe the term ‘older worker’ differs for males and females (Eurolink, 2001), and provides some confirmation of the ‘double jeopardy’ (cf. Colwill, 1982; Cleveland, Stockdale and Murphy, 2000; Meyerson and Feltcher, 2000; Schein, 2001; Kite, Deaux, and Haines, 2008), older women can experience. While the prevalence of sexism at work toward females is widely documented, Ainsworth (2002) describes how older women can become ‘invisible’ in the workplace, and it is therefore possible that women may also be
more susceptible to ageist attitudes in the workplace if they are considered to reach ‘older worker’ status at younger ages than men. In the present research, descriptions about ‘older female workers’ having an older physical appearance than men, as well as having more child-rearing responsibilities than men outside of the home, were given as reasons for defining men and women as ‘older’ at different ages. This finding fits with earlier research by Kite et al (2005) suggesting that females are more likely to be perceived to lose their physical attractiveness as they age, but that the value in their ‘motherly’ or ‘grandmotherly’ role continues - both of which influence perceptions about them being ‘older’. It was suggested here in this study, that the roles that women occupy may influence perceptions about them being defined as ‘older workers’ also. Where earlier theoretical work desired the concept of ageism to be detached from notions of sexism (Bytheway, 1995) for the purposes of examining ageism as ‘a distinct form of oppression in its own right’ (Duncan and Loretto, 2004:98), the findings in this research suggest that inequalities based on age and gender may be inherently linked, and perhaps mutually reinforcing.

### 5.2.9 Overview

In the search for a better understanding of the ways in which ‘older workers’ are viewed in organisations, the discussion presented in this section draws together the results of this study pertaining to the definition of an ‘older worker’, in order now to effect some kind of closure on the term ‘older worker’. As discussed previously, there have been calls for the refinement of age identity as a measurement, and calls for a better explication of the term ‘older worker’ (Finkelstein and Burke, 1998; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007), so that the attitudes that exist toward these ‘older workers’ can be sufficiently understood. Where a lack of consensus on the definition of this term is considered problematic (cf. Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005), the findings of this research demonstrate that, actually, seeking one concrete, all-encompassing definition of an ‘older worker’ is not possible, nor is it useful. This is because the findings here reveal myriad ways in which workers are defined as ‘older’ in organisations. First, in terms of a chronological definition, there appears to be a huge variation in the specific age a
worker is considered to be an ‘older worker’, starting from 30 years of age and upwards. This is surprising given that workers aged 30 years and up make up a majority of the workforce (CSO, 2011), suggesting that workers are likely to be viewed as ‘older workers’ at different ages across the workplace. Certainly, the average chronological age at which workers are defined as ‘older workers’, here between 52 and 53 years of age, is helpful. It provides some sort of instant vision toward who the so-called ‘older workers’ in organisations are considered to be, but appears younger than the mostly arbitrary ‘older worker’ ages of 55 and 65 previously used in the literature. However, given the broad variation in ‘older worker’ ages, one singular chronological definition cannot, therefore, wholly address the term ‘older worker’. This begs the question, then, under what circumstances is a worker an ‘older worker’?

Workforce age demographics, and, to some extent, industry sector, appear to play a particularly important role. Therefore, it might be more useful to consider the definition of an ‘older worker’ in the context of individual organisations, or even in specific industries, rather than more generally in the labour market. It appears that in some organisations, workers are considered ‘older’ because they are approaching retirement age. In other organisations, workers are considered ‘older’ because career and development opportunities may become less certain as workers enter their fifties. Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) becomes useful, then, for understanding the ways in which the ‘older worker’ group are defined because of certain roles they are perceived to occupy by the decision-makers in this study. Career Timetables (Lawrence, 1987; 1988) can also be used here to illuminate these findings, because some decision-makers in this study believe a worker is defined as an ‘older worker’ by their career-stage. Furthermore, ‘older workers’ may be considered as such because they are ‘older’ compared to others in a particular organisation. In more service oriented industries, workers appear to be considered ‘older’ at younger ages than in manufacturing orientated industries. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Finkelstein et al, 1995) and Relational Demography (Tsui et al, 1995) are perhaps more helpful with respect to these findings because they explain how workers may be
perceived in terms of similarity or differences to others in their particular workgroup.

Clearly, then, the term ‘older worker’ comprises a multitude of definitions much broader than chronological age, suggesting the need for a re-conceptualisation of the term ‘older worker’. The ‘Older Worker Spectrum’ model presented in this section is an attempt toward this re-conceptualisation, explicating a refinement of the term ‘older worker’ constructed from the findings of this study. It is difficult to escape the conclusion, however, regardless of how decision-makers in organisations define an ‘older worker’; each definition will likely have an influence on a number of important decisions relating to their employment. As is discovered in this study, ‘older worker’ may be a term synonymous with labour force exit; career stalling; physical unattractiveness; or even, ‘too old to work here’. None of these perceptions of an ‘older worker’ point toward positive employment-related connotations allied with the term, which is a significant concern set against the backdrop of an increasingly ageing workforce. These are issues that will undoubtedly have to be addressed by the research, policy and practice aimed at stimulating the labour force participation of ‘older workers’; which are discussed in more detail in the following chapter. It is, however, necessary now to delve deeper into the ways in which these workers are viewed in organisations, having established a somewhat wide-ranging, yet better understanding of the term ‘older worker’. The next section examines the findings presented in Chapter Four relating to attitudes of organisational decision-makers toward these ‘older workers’.

5.3 Attitudes toward ‘Older’ Workers

Once an understanding of who is considered an ‘older worker’ was achieved, the second purpose of the study was to address the prevailing attitudes that exist toward ‘older workers’ among organisational decision-makers in Ireland. This investigation was considered particularly important given that, while ageism appears to be ‘deeply ingrained’ in the Irish workplace, it remains a ‘hidden phenomenon’ (Equality Authority, 2010:1) to be unearthed, as discussed
previously in Chapter One. CARDI (2010) highlight that while workplace age discrimination cases are on the rise, there is no empirical evidence on the attitudes that exist toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland. This type of evidence is considered necessary in order to address the issues of ‘working longer’ at a time when the workforce is getting older (CARDI, 2010). It was set within this context that the second objective of the present research, to unearth and understand the attitudes of organisational decision-makers toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland, had its origin.

The literature review presented a wealth of information on ‘attitudes’, and more specifically, the concept of ‘ageist’ attitudes. This review established that attitudes comprise a cognitive component consisting of beliefs (stereotypes); an affective component consisting of emotion or feeling (prejudice); and a behavioural component consisting of a predisposition to act in a certain way (discriminatory predisposition). Moreover, these attitude components, which are empirically distinct, are found to vary between two endpoints - positive and negative (cf. Thurstone, 1931; Allport, 1935; Fazio, Eiser and Shook, 2004). Much of the research that has investigated attitudes toward ‘older workers’ demonstrates that negative attitudes exist (cf. Kirchner and Dunnette, 1954; Rosen and Jerdee, 1976; Bird and Fischer, 1986; Lyon and Pollard, 1987; Chiu et al, 2001; Brooke and Taylor, 2005), while more recent work indicates that these types of attitudes are becoming more positive (Krings and Kluge, 2008). Previous empirical work in this area has, however, placed an emphasis on stereotypical attitudes about ‘older workers’, which comprises just one component of an ageist attitude. With the exception of Chiu et al (2001), who also focus on discriminatory predispositions, few empirical studies have addressed the behavioural component, while the affective component has been almost completely neglected (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007). The dearth of empirical evidence on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland, combined with the poor operationalisation of the tripartite attitude structure evident in previous research, highlights the necessity of a current investigation into the multi-dimensional nature of attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Taking into account earlier indications that negative stereotypes about ‘older workers’ exist, it was hypothesised in this study that organisational decision-makers in Ireland will
hold negative stereotypes, prejudicial feelings, and discriminatory predispositions toward ‘older workers’, as outlined as part of the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two.

As reported in the quantitative results in Chapter Four, this research found evidence to support the view that, by and large, the attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward ‘older workers’ are more negative than they are positive. These findings therefore provide the focus for discussion in this section.

5.3.1 Stereotypes

The cognitive component of an attitude represents beliefs about the attributes of a social group, or stereotypes (Fishbein and Adjzen, 1975; Albarracin et al., 2005). As discussed earlier in this section, stereotypes have been the main focus of research on attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Much of this research, however, has taken place in the last century, before the onset of the global financial crisis, and before the amplified concern regarding the consequences of global ageing. This study, therefore, sought to address stereotypes of ‘older workers’ in this new employment context, and more specifically, in the Irish context, where little empirical evidence of this nature exists. Five separate measures of decision-maker beliefs about the attributes of ‘older workers’ were examined: ‘work effectiveness’; ‘work adaptability’; ‘reaction to criticism’; ‘interpersonal skills’; and ‘employment of older workers’.

Beliefs about the work effectiveness of ‘older workers’, the interpersonal skills of ‘older workers’; and the ways in which ‘older workers’ react to criticism were found to be largely negative among the decision-makers in this study. This is consistent with earlier research that suggests that older workers are commonly stereotyped as being less productive, less motivated, and less able to handle criticism, than younger workers (cf. Tuckman and Lorge 1952; Rosen and Jerdee, 1976; Craft et al, 1979 Finkelstein et al, 1995; Perry et al, 1996; Gordon and Arvey, 2004; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). There appears, then, to be a persistent belief that increases in age may be associated with declines in
performance, even though there is a distinct lack of empirical evidence to support this stereotype (cf. Cleveland and Landy, 1983; Czaja, 1994; Salthouse and Maurer, 1996; Cuddy and Fiske, 2002; Cleveland and Lim, 2007; Posthuma and Campion, 2009).

The findings regarding negative stereotypes about the interpersonal skills of ‘older workers’ in this study, however, stand in isolation from previous research by AARP (2000) that found employers believed that ‘older workers’ have better people skills than younger workers. This may be explained by the negative prejudicial feelings toward working alongside ‘older workers’ found in this study (discussed in the following section). A strong correlation was observed between these two variables, suggesting, if decision-makers have negative feelings about working alongside ‘older workers’, they are unlikely to have positive beliefs about the interpersonal skills of ‘older workers’.

Interestingly, beliefs about some employment-related attributes of ‘older workers’ were found to be more positive in nature among the decision-makers in this study, which is not so surprising given that, even when negative stereotypes exist, employers have consistently and simultaneously been found to hold positive stereotypes about older workers, such as their conscientiousness (Warr and Pennington, 1993), their lower rates of absenteeism and their unlikeliness to quit their jobs (Broadbridge, 2001; Hedge et al., 2006). Positive stereotypes about the work adaptability of older workers found in this study, however, challenges previous work suggesting that older workers are seen as non-adaptive to change (Britton and Thomas, 1973; Rosen and Jerdee, 1977; AARP, 2000; Weiss and Maurer, 2004), and less flexible (Barth et al, 1993; Brooke and Taylor, 2005). Decision-makers in this study hold largely positive beliefs about the work adaptability of ‘older workers’. While little attention has been paid to the factors that influence older workers’ ability to adapt to change (Yeatts et al, 2010), one possible explanation could be that, set within a context of downsizing, all employees can show adaptability to change (DeVries, 2006), which would be particularly relevant given the recent global economic downturn, and the current increases in unemployment in Ireland, as discussed in Chapter One.
It must now be considered that stereotypes are often seen as a precursor to discrimination (Hassell and Perrewe, 1995; Dovidio et al., 1996; Posthuma and Campion, 2009), so it is conceivable that decision-makers in organisations who are found to hold negative beliefs about ‘older workers’ may be less willing to hire, develop, and retain them in employment. For example, Rosen and Jerdee (1974) argue that one potentially serious consequence of the stereotypes of ‘older workers’ is that they may serve to offer limited opportunities to older people at work. This becomes especially problematic as it may reinforce the perceptions found in this study to suggest that ‘older workers’ are those whose career is essentially ‘exhausted’ by their early fifties. The findings in this study are therefore important set within the new employment context of workforce ageing (discussed in more detail in section 5.3.5 below). These findings also offer new empirical evidence on the stereotypes of ‘older workers’, specifically in an Irish context.

5.3.2 Prejudice

The affective component of an attitude represents the emotions, or the feelings, a person holds toward a certain social group (Amodio and Devine, 2006). The affective component in terms of ageist attitudes, prejudice, is largely neglected in the empirical literature (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007). This study, therefore, sought to address this affective component of ageist attitudes at work, by way of measuring the ‘prejudicial feelings’ decision-makers hold toward ‘older workers’. Here, these prejudicial feelings comprise the emotions associated with working alongside ‘older workers’, such as whether ‘older workers’ are easier to work with when compared to younger workers, as well as feelings about the decisions ‘older workers’ make in the organisation. The results presented in Chapter Four show that negative prejudicial feelings exist among decision-makers in this study toward ‘older workers’. This is an important finding because, firstly, little empirical evidence exists on affect toward ‘older workers’, and so, this finding sheds new light on the issue. Secondly, given that research tends to support the view that attitudes based on emotions are stronger, or at least more stable, than attitudes based on beliefs (cf. Edwards, 1990; Edwards and von
Hippel, 1995; Giner-Sorolla, 2001). The prejudicial feelings toward ‘older workers’ found in this study may be stronger than the stereotypes of ‘older workers’ which were discussed in the last section. Where some stereotypes of ‘older workers’ were found to be positive in nature, the actual situation in the workplace may be that those making employment decisions inherently hold negative feelings about working alongside ‘older workers’, irrespective of whether they hold positive or negative beliefs about ‘older workers’. Moreover, where behaviour is thought to be affectively driven (Esses and Dovidio, 2002), the implication is that decision-makers who hold negative prejudicial feelings toward ‘older workers’ may be inclined to behave more negatively toward ‘older workers’. Obviously, this would increase the likelihood of age discrimination at work. Taylor and Walker (1998), for example, found that where there was prejudice against ‘older workers’ in organisations, there was a reluctance to accept policies for their integration. This could account, in part at least, for the increasing number of age discrimination cases brought before the Irish employment equality legislature (Equality Authority, 2010); where workers perceive that they are discriminated against because they are ‘older’.

5.3.3 Discriminatory Predispositions

The behavioural component of an attitude represents a predisposition to behave in a certain way (Fazio, 1986; 1995). The behavioural component of ageist attitudes, with the exception of Chiu et al (2001), has also been largely neglected in the empirical literature. This study, however, addressed the behavioural component of attitudes toward ‘older workers’ by way of measuring decision-makers’ intentions to recruit ‘older workers’; and their intentions to develop and retain ‘older workers’ in organisations. Although some positive beliefs about the employment of older workers were found to exist, as discussed in section 5.3.1, the picture regarding the willingness of decision-makers to recruit and retain ‘older workers’ is both dichotomous and perplexing. For example, the results highlight the existence of adverse intentions toward recruiting ‘older workers’. One explanation for this finding may be related to the aforementioned negative prejudicial feelings about ‘older workers’ existing among the decision-makers in
the study. In earlier discussions regarding prejudice here, it was noted that affective attitudes are thought to drive behaviour (cf. Edwards, 1990; Edwards and von Hippel, 1995; Giner-Sorolla, 2001). The negative prejudicial feelings observed in this study may be the driving force behind the unwillingness among the decision-makers to recruit ‘older workers’, especially as a strong correlation was observed between these two variables. This finding gives some credence then, to the perception that ageism exists in some Irish organisations (EEA, 2010). On the other hand, decision-makers appear willing to develop and retain ‘older workers’ in employment, suggesting that these decision-makers may be aware of the knowledge and experience associated with ‘older workers’ (DELSA, 2006). While these findings present some positive, but tentative, news for ‘older workers’ who are currently employed in Ireland, for those ‘older workers’ who are currently unemployed, seeking re-employment may be as difficult as previous research has suggested (Loretto and White, 2006).

Having discussed these discriminatory predispositions existing among organisational decision-makers in this study, along with the stereotypes and prejudicial feelings toward ‘older workers’, it is now necessary to examine the individual and organisational factors that appear to influence these attitudes.

5.3.4 Determinants of Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

One of the key issues of interest in this study was to shed some light on the factors that might go some way towards helping us understand what influences attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Particularly, the present research sought to ascertain whether important organisational factors such as organisation size; industry type; the presence of an equality or diversity policy; and workforce age demographics hold any explanatory power. By and large, the influence of organisational characteristics is much less understood than the influence of individual characteristics on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ (Perry, 1994; 1997; Perry and Parlamis, 2005). The results indicate, however, that these organisational factors appear to have very little explanatory power. Rather, the findings show that the individual characteristics of decision-makers are
significantly more influential. Specifically, the decision-makers’ age, gender, position, and to a degree, position tenure, emerged as unique contributors to their attitudes towards ‘older workers’. The discussion turns now toward a consideration of these issues in greater detail.

The literature review revealed some evidence to suggest that older employers tend to hold more positive stereotypes toward ‘older workers’ than do younger employers (Bird and Fisher; 1986; Hassell and Perrewe 1995; Chiu et al, 2001). Consequently, it was hypothesised in this study that decision-maker age would be significant in explaining not only the stereotypes, but the prejudicial feelings, and the discriminatory predispositions of decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’. As expected, the age of a decision-maker is a positive predictor of both stereotypes and prejudicial feelings about ‘older workers’, indicating that the older the decision-maker, the more positive their stereotypes and prejudicial feelings toward ‘older workers’. This supports earlier findings that older individuals hold more positive attitudes toward older workers (Kirchner and Dunnette, 1954; Bird and Fischer, 1986; Hassell and Perrewe, 1995, Chiu et al, 2001; Chasteen et al 2002), and that younger individuals generally hold more negative attitudes toward older people (Kogan, 1961; Gordon and Avery, 2004). As a consequence, older decision-makers in organisations may be much more likely to hire, develop and retain ‘older workers’ in employment. It is increasingly common, however, for ‘older workers’ to report to managers who are younger than them (Capelli and Novelli, 2010). This finding in relation to decision-maker age is important then, considering that Shore, Cleveland and Goldberg (2003) found evidence to suggest that employees who are older than their managers can experience negative career-related outcomes. It may be the case that when younger individuals make employment related decisions about workers in organisations, ‘older workers’ could be negatively affected in terms of employment and development opportunities.

While this finding provides some support for the in-group bias hypothesis under Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Finkelstein et al, 1995), where people are inclined to evaluate others similar to them in a more favourable light,
decision-maker age emerges as the most unique predictor of only four attitude measures; ‘work effectiveness’, ‘work adaptability’ ‘employment of older workers’ and ‘prejudicial feelings’ when all other variables measured in the study were controlled for. Hence, and as previously discussed in Chapter Two, a Social Identity Theory perspective on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ may only account for some explanation of these attitudes, especially as individual variables other than decision-maker age emerge as predictive of attitudes toward ‘older workers’, discussed below.

Turning toward the influence of decision-maker gender, Kogan and Shelton (1962) argued the importance of considering gender differences in ageist attitudes; they found evidence to suggest that ageist attitudes can vary according to the gender of the observer. Accordingly, it was hypothesised in this study that the gender of a decision-maker would also be significant in explaining attitudes toward ‘older workers’. The results show that decision-maker gender is predictive of stereotypes and discriminatory predispositions toward ‘older workers’. Here, female decision-makers were found to hold, in general, significantly more positive attitudes toward ‘older workers’ than males. These findings support previous studies where women have been found to hold more favourable attitudes toward older people than men (Connor et al, 1978; Fraboni et al, 1990; Kalavar, 2001) as well as more positive attitudes toward ‘older workers’ than men (Kite and Stockdale, 2004). One explanation for this could be Deaux’s (1985) finding that women are less-critical than men, such that women are generally perceived as being ‘concerned for the welfare of others’ under the Social Role Theory framework (Deaux and Kite, 1993:113; Eagly, 1997). Of course this explanation represents a stereotypical, or indeed prejudicial, belief in itself. Nonetheless, it could be that female decision-makers in this study are inherently more inclined to evaluate all workers, including ‘older workers’, in a more positive light than male decision-makers. Where they hold more positive discriminatory predispositions than males, women in decision-making positions may be less likely, then, to discriminate against ‘older workers’ than men in decision-making positions at work.
A third key finding on the influential factors relating to decision-makers’ attitudes of ‘older workers’ emerged; the position of a decision-maker within an organisation is significant in predicting stereotypes and prejudicial feelings, as well as discriminatory predispositions toward ‘older workers’. Interestingly, the results in this respect are mixed. Strategic level decision-makers were found to hold significantly more positive stereotypes, prejudicial feelings and discriminatory predispositions (in terms of recruitment) than those in operational or HR level roles. This represents some good news, albeit cautiously, for the employment prospects of ‘older workers’ in Ireland. While Itzin and Phillipson (1993) indicated that negative attitudes among line managers toward older workers were identified by top management as a barrier to the employment of older workers, Taylor and Walker (1998) demonstrated that where top management have been influential at the operational level of the organisation, older workers have experienced increased employment and development opportunities. Where strategic level decision-makers in this study hold positive attitudes, they may be influential in increasing the employment and development prospects for ‘older workers’ in their organisations. However, decision-makers at the strategic level were also found to hold more negative employment-related beliefs, specifically about ‘work effectiveness’ and ‘reaction to criticism’, than those in operational or HR positions. It is possible that these particular findings are related to the fact that top management are less likely to have as much day-to-day interaction with general workers as those in operational or HR decision-making roles (Robbins and DeCenzo, 2001), and so they may not have clearly formed beliefs about all workers in their organisations, including ‘older workers’.

The position tenure of decision-makers was only found to be predictive of discriminatory predispositions toward ‘older workers’, but it was the most unique predictor in this regard. Here, decision-makers who have spent a longer time working in their current positions actually hold more negative intentions about retaining ‘older workers’ in employment. This finding could be reflective of the negative effect chronological and organisational age has been found to have on the motivation to continue to work (Kooij et al, 2008). Those decision-makers who are ‘older’ both chronologically, and organisationally in terms of position tenure, may assign their own lack of motivation to continue working to ‘older
workers’ in general, leading toward their more negative attitudes about the retention of older workers in employment.

Finally, the evidence from this study suggests that, organisational factors do not explain differences in decision-makers’ attitudes toward ‘older workers’. One non-significant relationship in particular, though, is worth drawing out and highlighting. The presence of an equality or diversity policy within an organisation appears to have no significant influence on whether decision-makers’ attitudes toward ‘older workers’ are positive or negative. This is rather surprising, as the obvious objectives of equality and diversity policies are to reduce negative attitudes about workers such as ‘older workers’, in an effort to reduce discrimination in organisations (cf. Hurtsfield and Akroyd, 2005). Yet, the presence of such a policy in this study had no impact on the decision-makers attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Arguably, this could have important implications for those charged with facilitating age diversity in organisations, especially where the introduction and implementation of such policies is seen as a means of achieving this. If it is the case that the presence of an equality or diversity policy generally has no influence on attitudes toward ‘older workers’, or indeed gender, disability, race and other organisational diversity markers, then organisations will need to find more innovative approaches to inform their employees on the importance of workplace diversity, and challenge existing stereotypes.

5.3.5 Overview

The discussion presented in this section draws together the results of this study pertaining to the stereotypical, prejudicial, and discriminatory attitudes of organisational decision-makers toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland. These findings represent new empirical evidence on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in an Irish context. They also signify new knowledge on these types of attitudes set against a backdrop of 21st century workplace change. Turning specifically to the tripartite structure of ageist attitudes, the findings in this study point toward the importance of investigating the multiple dimensions of attitudes toward ‘older
workers’. While there is a large body of evidence to suggest that negative stereotypes about ‘older workers’ exist, the findings presented in this section also confirm the existence of negative prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in organisations. Knowledge of these types of attitudes is important in the context of workforce ageing, because, as already discussed, affective and behavioural attitudes are more likely to predict behaviour in organisations than cognitive attitudes. Where prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes are negative among decision-makers, as was largely the case in this study, then there is there is a greater likelihood that these decision-makers could discriminate against ‘older workers’ in employment. Obviously, there are legal concerns here, but, at a more practical level; these findings suggest a reality that ‘older workers’ will continue face significant barriers in accessing employment. This became particularly apparent where the emotions attached to working alongside ‘older workers’ were found to be negative, as well as the reluctance of some decision-makers to even consider recruiting ‘older workers’. These findings demonstrate that the lack of attention in the literature on these affective and prejudicial attitude components represents a shortcoming, because these attitudes offer important insights for policy makers and practitioners, as will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. This is not to say, however, that the investigation of the stereotypes existing toward ‘older workers’ is fruitless. On the contrary, beliefs about ‘older workers’ in this study serve to confirm what has already been suggested; that they are largely negative. The presence of positive stereotypes about the adaptability of ‘older workers’, however, challenges what is already known, and highlights the importance of investigating attitudes toward ‘older workers’ across different employment contexts. Beliefs about ‘older workers’ may therefore have the propensity to change as the workforce changes. This is a hopeful thought in the face of the challenges associated with workforce ageing, but it is, again, difficult to escape the conclusion that the results presented in this section do not paint an optimistic picture for the employment prospects of ‘older workers’ in Ireland.
5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a critical discussion of the findings unearthed by the study. The discussion was framed around each of the study’s research questions, highlighting how the findings confirm, challenge, and add to previous knowledge on attitudes toward ‘older workers’. The next chapter moves toward an overall reflection on these findings, set within the context of workforce ageing. Consequently, the important implications of the findings presented in this chapter with respect to policy, practice, and future inquiry are also discussed in the next chapter; where we now turn in order to affect an overall synthesis of the thesis.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Changing demographic landscapes, not least in Ireland, but across the developed world, have resulted in, *inter alia*, a rapidly ageing global labour market. This workforce ageing has been labelled the ‘defining social issue of the 21st century’ (Pitt-Catsouphes, 2007:1), as the consequences of such a phenomenon include heightened long-term pressure on national social security and pension systems further expeditied by insufficient replacement rates, as well as problems associated with experience and knowledge loss across organisations. The overarching implications for national, and indeed, global economic and social well-being have led to the realisation that ‘older workers’ are required to remain in the labour market for longer (ILO, 1999; DELSA, 2006; Schultz and Adams, 2007; CARDI, 2010). One crucial and seemingly unrelentant barrier in meeting this requirement is the negative attitudes that ‘appear’ (Johnson, 2007:1) to exist in many organisations toward these ‘older workers’. Despite recent and burgeoning research, however, who is actually considered an ‘older worker’ has remained elusive (Pitt-Catsouphes and Smyer, 2005; Cleveland and Lim, 2007; Peeters and van Emmerick, 2008), while empirical and theoretical work on the attitudes that exist toward these ‘older workers’ has been in ‘need of attention’ (Schultz and Adams, 2007:307). Particularly, poor operationalisation of the tripartite structure of ageist attitudes across research studies is evident (Chiu *et al.*, 2001; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007), as is a lack of systematic empirical evidence (Schultz and Adams, 2007; Posthuma and Campion, 2009). This is especially the case in Ireland, where there is a considerable dearth of empirical evidence on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ (CARDI, 2010). The ways in which ‘older workers’ are viewed in organisations have therefore remained somewhat a ‘grey area’ in the field of industrial gerontology.

It was set within this context that the purpose of this thesis had its genesis, seeking to address these empirical, conceptual and theoretical shortcomings by way of measuring and analysing organisational decision-makers’ attitudes toward
older workers’ in Ireland. The focus on decision-makers here is an important one, since these individuals are directly responsible for the provision of employment and development opportunities for all workers, including ‘older’ workers. Their attitudes are thus central to a better understanding of the issues surrounding an ageing workforce in Ireland: ‘older’ workers’ employment depends on organisational decision-maker willingness to hire, develop and retain them; they may be reluctant to do so if they have negative attitudes about ‘older workers’. As Schuman et al (1997:4) highlighted, it is a ‘naïve opinion’ to think that attitudes do not have some influence behaviour. An investigation of organisational decision-makers’ attitudes toward ‘older workers’ becomes particularly important, then, in the context of workforce ageing.

The intention of this final chapter is to draw the thesis to a close, and in doing so, attempts to synthesise its various elements: the rationale for this research and the subsequent research questions of the study are firstly revisited; thereafter, a brief synopsis of the methodology employed is outlined. This chapter then turns its attention toward the contributions of the core findings to the field of industrial gerontology, while, at the same time, acknowledging their limitations. Finally, implications of these findings for policy and practice, along with possible fruitful future directions for the advancement of this particular research, and more widely, for the advancement of the field are offered, bringing the thesis to its conclusion.

6.2 Research Rationale, Research Questions and Methodological Approach Revisited

The impetus for this research originated from an appreciation of the extent to which global populations are rapidly ageing, prompting thought to the impact of such phenomena on social life, and particularly, organisational life. As ‘baby boomers’ (the large cohort born in the post-war baby boom era, between 1946 and 1964) reach their sixties and seventies, global labour markets will lose highly experienced workers to retirement. This ‘greying’ of the workforce presents
unique challenges to the efficient functioning of organisations, and, ultimately, economies and societies. These issues have resulted in a recent global policy orientation toward encouraging ‘older worker’ to remain in the labour market. This is seen as one potential way of fronting the challenges associated with workforce ageing (OECD, 2005; DELSA, 2006). Cognisant of this, and despite increasingly protective employment legislation, ageism in the workplace is now acknowledged as a serious problem (Lieber, 2007; AARP, 2010; CARDI, 2010; Equality Authority, 2010). It represents a significant barrier to employment opportunities for ‘older workers’ across the labour market. A better understanding of ageist attitudes at work thus becomes enormously important as the workforce ages.

With this in mind, this research gravitated towards an analysis of the ways in which ‘older workers’ are viewed in Irish organisations more specifically, where, set against a background of considerable economic constraints, population trends indicate that the workforce in Ireland is rapidly ageing. Like most other countries in the developed world then, Ireland pursues an increase in the labour force participation of ‘older workers’. Anecdotal evidence, however, points towards the existence of ageism in the Irish workplace. The number of age discrimination cases brought before the employment equality legislature in recent years is growing (Equality Authority, 2010). In these cases, workers perceive that they have been unfairly treated in organisations because they are ‘older’. Empirical evidence on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ extant across organisations in Ireland, however, is at best, scarce. Particularly, we have no familiarity with the attitudes that exist among organisational decision-makers (CARDI, 2010). This is surprising since these individuals fundamentally act as the gate-keepers to employment opportunities in organisations, where Posthuma and Campion’s (2009:174) recommended that ‘future research should identify the human resources decision-making contexts in which age bias is likely to occur’. Without an understanding of the attitudes of those who make decisions about employment in organisations, policy and practice aimed at stimulating the labour market participation of ‘older workers’ is essentially restricted, both at national and organisational levels.
In consideration of these issues, the research agenda was therefore set to investigate organisational decision-makers’ attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland. Interestingly, at the outset, in charting the available evidence on these types of attitudes, it firstly became apparent that there is substantial disagreement about how to define an ‘older worker’ (cf. Sterns and Doverspike, 1989; Cleveland and Shore, 1992; Pitt-Catsoupes and Smyer, 2005; Kooij et al, 2008; Pitt-Catsoupes et al, 2010). Attempting to affect some clarity on the definition of an ‘older worker’, in the Irish context at least, the first research question posed by the study was *who do organisational decision-makers in Ireland consider older workers to be?* Here, the emphasis was first on, discovering at what specific age a worker is considered ‘older’, and secondly on, whether the gender of a worker has any bearing on this ‘older worker’ age, as has been suggested by some previous work (Itzen and Phillipson 1993,1994; Eurolink, 2001). Finally, it was necessary to explore the reasons behind the decision-makers’ respective choices of this ‘older worker’ age, as it is an area far less understood in the literature (Pitt-Catsoupes and Smyer, 2005; Cleveland and Lim, 2007; Pitt-Catsoupes et al, 2010).

One of the major Irish research agencies, the Centre for Ageing Research in Ireland (CARDI), highlighted an urgent need to address attitudes towards ‘older workers’ in Ireland (CARDI, 2010). In the absence of available evidence, the second research question posed by this study was *what are the prevailing attitudes of organisational decision-makers in Ireland toward older workers?* This question sought to empirically address the extant stereotypical, prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes of organisational decision-makers toward ‘older workers’ in Ireland. Here, stereotypes, prejudicial feelings, and discriminatory predispositions are reflective of the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of both the attitude concept (Kite and Wagner, 2005) and the ageism concept (Iversen et al, 2009). This question’s purpose was therefore to examine the multi-dimensional nature of attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Previous studies have placed a considerable emphasis uni-dimensional analyses of attitudes toward older workers in the form of stereotypes (c.f. Bird and Fischer, 1986; Lyon and Pollard, 1987; Hassell and Perrewé, 1995, Posthuma and Campion, 2009). Surprisingly few investigations have examined discriminatory
predispositions (Chiu et al., 2001), with little attempt to address prejudice (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007). This question sought to address these issues.

In the search for explanations of ageist attitudes, it is clear that researchers have begun to develop models of ageist attitudes that provide some evidence regarding the determinants of these attitudes in the work setting. The role of individual and organisational factors in explaining both definitions of ‘older workers’, as well as in explaining the attitudes that exist toward them, however, have barely been explored. Informing national and organisational policy and practice with respect to the employment of ‘older workers’ is arguably dependent on an understanding of the influences on ageist attitudes at work. At the same time, seeking an understanding of the individual and organisational influences on these attitudes also represents a critical juncture in developing greater theoretical understanding within the field. This is especially true as theory-driven findings are ‘only recently beginning to emerge’ (McCann and Giles, 2007). Hence, the third research question was identified as what specific individual and organisational level variables influence who organisational decision-makers consider older workers to be? Accordingly, the fourth research question was identified as what specific individual and organisational level variables influence organisational decision-makers attitudes toward older workers?

Integrated with these research questions is the contemporary focus within the ageism literature on pursuing new paradigms of understanding about ageist attitudes (Nelson, 2005; Schultz and Adams, 2007). Recent advances in Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987, 1997) have begun to provide more specific analyses of the ways in which observations and expectations of group behaviour effect differences in individuals’ attitudes toward these social groups. This theoretical perspective has the potential to enhance our understanding about how decision-makers in organisations develop attitudes toward the ‘older worker’ group through examining their observations and expectations of ‘older worker’ behaviour (Kite and Wagner, 2005). Particularly, Role Theory was used in the research questions to imply observations and expectations about the roles workers are perceived to occupy allow them to be defined as ‘older’ and lead to attitudes about these ‘older’ workers. It was also used to outline the pattern of
interaction with ‘older workers’ by investigating the influence of workforce age demographics on both decision-maker definitions of, and attitudes toward, ‘older workers’.

Having established the research questions, and having identified the extant knowledge base relevant to the study, a framework for the study was constructed. This allowed for a number of hypotheses to be proposed, and for decisions to be made about what methodological tools would be employed in order to collect the type of data required to answer the research questions. A cross-sectional, largely quantitative approach, was considered to be the most workable and effective design in line with ‘methodological fit’ (Edmonson and McManus, 2007). Survey data was collected from a sample of 1200 organisational decision-makers drawn from small, medium and large organisations across all industry sectors in Ireland, yielding a response rate of 20.3 percent (n=243). This instrument relied on closed questions with a number of open-ended questions interspersed throughout. The data gathered from this survey provides an account of the ways in which key decision-makers in organisations view ‘older workers’. Indeed, where only provisional explanations have existed about who the ‘older workers’ are in organisations, this empirical method provided some rich clarification. The evidence collected also provides new insights into the often theorised, but somewhat poorly operationalised, multi-dimensional concept of ageist attitudes in the workplace, as well as the factors that appear to influence these attitudes. The findings demonstrated, then, what Edmonson and McManus (2007:115) describe as ‘methodological fit’, such that logical pairings between methods and the state of theory development in a given field advance knowledge, while also enhancing the relevance of research findings. The remainder of this chapter is therefore dedicated to a discussion of the contributions of the core findings in this thesis, their implications for policy and practice, and possible areas for future research.
6.3 Core Findings and Contributions of the Research

In the search for a better understanding of the ways in which ‘older workers’ are viewed in organisations, particularly in Ireland, this thesis attempted to map uncharted terrain in the field of ageing and work. The evidence unearthed as a result of this effort points to a number of interesting findings.

Returning to where we first began, it was acknowledged that the field of industrial gerontology has been plagued by definitional quandaries concerning ‘older workers’. It has been difficult to really understand who we are referring to when we discuss ‘older workers’ in public policies, labour forecasts, and academic research. Indeed, throughout the course of the present research, the many conversations I had with colleagues, friends and family about this thesis often prompted the question, ‘but, how do you define an ‘older worker’?’. The answer to this question appears complex and multifaceted, as discovered by this study. Those charged with making decisions about employee recruitment, development and retention in organisations define workers as ‘older’ it seems, according to their own distinctive thoughts on age and ageing at work. Some consider workers in their thirties as ‘older’, while some believe workers only become ‘older’ in their eighties and nineties. A majority describe workers in their early fifties as ‘older’. These definitions of an ‘older worker’ encompass more than calendar age, however. Perceptions about workers’ behaviour, such as those preparing for retirement, and those at a particular career stage, lead decision-makers in organisations to term these workers as ‘older’. Interestingly, there are indications to suggest that across different industries, how workers are defined as ‘older’ can vary. The age composition of the workplace also plays an important role in influencing variations in the definition of an ‘older worker’. There is a pervasive sense, though, that differing definitions of an ‘older worker’ in this study have negative connotations. ‘Older worker’ appears to be a term synonymous with labour force exit; career stalling; physical unattractiveness; and even, ‘too old to work here’.
This negativity is brought into sharper focus when we reflect on the largely unfavourable attitudes held by organisational decision-makers toward ‘older workers’ in this study. We have known about dominant stereotypes of ‘older workers’ for some time. Much research shows that, while employers believe ‘older workers’ have certain positive attributes, negative stereotypes about ‘older workers’ persist. This study demonstrates, however, that decision-makers in organisations hold not only negative beliefs about the attributes of ‘older workers’, but they are emotionally and behaviourally inclined to be negative toward ‘older workers’. To the extent that ageist attitudes can influence decisions about employment in the work setting, the perceived negative treatment of ‘older workers’ in organisations clearly goes deeper, then, than negative beliefs. Decision-makers in this study seem reluctant to even employ ‘older workers’, and report an overall negative emotional attachment toward working alongside ‘older workers’. Where this multi-dimensional set of negative attitudes exists among key decision-makers in organisations, there is arguably a greater likelihood that ‘older workers’ will be discriminated against. The multiple dimensions of attitudes toward ‘older workers’ unearthed by this study possibly provides then, a better understanding of ‘what’s happening’ in organisations. The perceived prevalence of age discrimination at work may be better explained by considering stereotypical attitudes, taken together with prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes, toward ‘older workers’.

Beyond this, this thesis set out to investigate not only what types of negative attitudes exist in organisations, but also when these types of attitudes may be more likely to occur. Particularly, as the characteristics of individual organisations are expected to influence (in part, at least) the behaviour of people at work, it has been argued that organisational factors should have an impact on age bias. Though this issue has rarely been examined in research, it is an important issue, considering that many initiatives aimed at dismantling barriers to the employment of ‘older workers’ place an emphasis on equal opportunity in policy and practice at the organisational level. The results of this study show, however, that attitudes toward ‘older workers’ are largely uninfluenced by organisational factors, and appear to be much more individually based. This
finding then, suggests the need for re-thinking on addressing the existence of ageist attitudes in organisations by policy-makers, practitioners, and academics.

Arising from these findings, and as a consequence of the nature and direction of the research, I believe that this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge in a number of respects:

- **Empirical Contribution** At a global level, because previous studies have taken place ‘bounded by the limits of 20th century’ employment settings, this study offers new empirical data on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in the 21st century. The workplace is undergoing considerable change at present, given the recent global economic shocks, as well as the onset of rapid workforce ageing. This study therefore represents a response to the call for additional empirical work on ageist attitudes set within this new employment context. It shows how multi-dimensional attitudes toward ‘older workers’ really are, going deeper than perceptions of chronological age and ageist stereotypes. This study also represents a departure from previous empirical work which has mainly been conducted in a North American, an Australian, and to some extent, a British context, by providing new data in an Irish context. We now know that those who make decisions about the recruitment, development and retention of all workers in organisations in Ireland hold largely negative attitudes toward ‘older workers’. By this, the findings lend support to the perceived ‘widespread ageism’ in Ireland. As a consequence, the findings may serve to inform public policy-making at national level in Ireland, and in Europe, with respect to tackling this ageism in order to support the continued employment of ‘older workers’. Irish organisations, too, for the first time now, have empirical evidence regarding current attitudes toward ‘older workers’. The data reported in this study may therefore assist organisations in confronting the dominance of age discrimination at work, especially as the data adds to the very limited knowledge on the specific factors that may influence ageism at work.
Conceptual Contribution The findings of this study suggest the need for a re-conceptualisation of the term ‘older worker’. The ‘Older Worker Spectrum’ model presented in Chapter Five offers this re-conceptualisation. This model explicates a better understanding of the term ‘older worker’ constructed from the findings of this study. It shows that chronological definitions of an ‘older worker’ range from 30 to 90 years of age, where workforce age demographics, and, to some extent, industry sector, appear to play a particularly important role in the variance. On average, however, decision-makers define a worker as an ‘older worker’ between 52 and 53 years of age. This is a younger age than previously indicated in the literature. The model also shows that decision-makers are found to define ‘older workers’ in terms of perceived retirement age, career age, workplace age; life-stage age; industry age; physical age, and, in some cases, a perceived gender age. While some of these perceptual measures of age in the work setting have been identified in previous research, this study unearths the chronological ages that are associated with these perceptual measures. It also discovers two new perspectives in measuring age identity at work: industry age, and gender age.

Theoretical Contribution In the search for a better, theoretically driven, understanding of individual differences in ageist attitudes at work, this study proposed that Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987, 1997) might offer greater explanatory power than previous theoretical models in this respect. The Social Role perspective, which purports that attitudes toward ‘older workers’ are derived from expectations and observations of ‘older worker’ behaviour has some merit. This study shows how decision-makers in organisations define workers as ‘older’ according to the roles that they are perceived to occupy and the behaviour that is associated with these roles. Interaction with ‘older workers’, however, appears to have no significant influence on stereotypical, prejudicial or discriminatory attitudes toward ‘older workers’, suggesting the need for extended inquiry into the predominantly individual nature of ageist attitudes.
Methodological Contribution Finally, a considerable amount of time was taken in addressing the issue of how to measure the concept of the ‘older worker’, and how to measure attitudes toward ‘older workers’ to reflect the concept of ageism, or ageist attitudes. The culmination of this effort characterises the final contribution of this thesis in offering a new, reliable, survey instrument with which to measure the multi-dimensional nature of decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in organisations. The key strength of this instrument is that it differentiates between the cognitive (stereotypes), the affective (prejudice), and behavioural (behavioural intentions/discriminatory attitudes) dimensions of ageist attitudes, while also allowing for the respondents’ own definition as to who they consider ‘older workers’ to be and why. Previous empirical methods commonly used are at odds with the concept of ageism because of their limited focus on the measurement of stereotypes, as well as pre-definitions of the ‘older worker’ age. Moreover, given the sampling frame identified using EU NACE industry codes, this instrument lends itself easily to replication studies in Europe. It can also be utilised in many cross-cultural settings to uncover fertile comparative data. It is anticipated that this instrument could also be extended and built upon by ageing and work researchers for use in similar investigations, which will be important given the dearth of reliable and validated psychometric measures currently available on attitudes toward older workers, particularly regarding the behavioural (Chiu et al, 2001) and the affective dimensions (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007) of ageist attitudes.

Combined, these contributions map a new picture of decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in organisations, presented in Figure 6.1 below.
Figure 6.1 Decision-Maker Attitudes toward ‘Older Workers’

Mapping the Contribution
6.4 Research Limitations

While forming a number of critical contributions to the knowledge base, this thesis, as with all research studies, is not without its limitations, which are now addressed.

First, the cross-sectional nature of research designs can pose struggles for many researchers, and represents one limitation of this particular research: while cross-sectional data can demonstrate influences and associations between variables among large samples in a pragmatic manner, it cannot prove causality (Smart, 2003). For the causation (and other complexities) of ageist attitudes at work to be fully understood, longitudinal research is needed. Such an approach, however, requires many resources (for example: labour, time, and financial resources). This was neither feasible, nor necessarily appropriate in this study, where the research questions were positioned to unearth largely unfamiliar knowledge.

Second, while the use of instruments based on self-report data, such as in this study, have been used by organisational researchers for many decades, self-report bias, or the problem of social desirability, has been acknowledged as a limitation in this type of research. Survey items may stimulate the respondents’ need for social approval, and therefore prompt responses accordingly. This was of particular concern within the methodological design in this study, given the sensitive nature of age and age discrimination at work. In an effort to address this potential problem, this research took the ‘sensible’ approach (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986; Podsakoff et al, 2003): as much information as possible was provided to the respondent decision-makers on the purpose and use of this research, as well as the strictly confidential nature of the research data; furthermore, much care was taken in the scale ordering of the attitudinal items included in the survey, which were also multi-dimensional in nature. Although challenged by methodological limitations, the cross-sectional self-report procedure used in this study was considered the most appropriate for answering the research questions.
Third, where the affective component of attitudes, and more particularly, attitudes toward ‘older workers’, is the least consistently conceptualised and measured in the bias literature (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007), the measurement of the affective, or prejudicial, component of attitudes toward ‘older workers’ represents a limitation of this study. Much of the existing research on ageism has been criticised for assessing only the cognitive components of ageist attitudes, namely, stereotypes (Fraboni et al, 1990; Rupp et al, 2005; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007), where the affective components of ageist attitudes have been almost completely neglected. As a result, the affective measures used in this study had to be adapted from the existing, but limited, measures of attitudes toward ‘older people’ rather than ‘older workers’ (Fraboni et al, 1990; Rupp et al, 2005). These measures, however, appear similar in content to cognitive measures of ageist attitudes. While the reliability and factor analyses conducted in this study indicate that the ‘prejudicial feelings toward older workers’ measure used in this research is indeed valid and reliable, future research is required to develop a more comprehensive measure of affective attitudes toward ‘older workers’. This is especially important, given that efforts to piece apart affect from cognition and behaviour are only now beginning to be discussed (Rupp et al, 2005; Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007).

Finally, the findings of this study are based on a sample of organisational decision-makers in Ireland that cannot claim to be fully representative of all perceptions and attitudes of ‘older workers’ that exist in these organisations. The size of the sample, while sufficient, cannot be seen as representative of a whole society, either. The findings, therefore, need to be treated carefully. Nonetheless, the data gathered in this study represent much-needed new knowledge on ageist attitudes at work, and can serve as a foundation for further exploration of attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in European and more global contexts.
6.5 Implications for Public Policy

The review of the literature, coupled with the empirical data gathered highlight a number of public policy areas which should be addressed by national governments and governmental agencies. It is clear from the findings that negative attitudes exist in many organisations toward ‘older workers’. This is at odds with recent public policy which is positioned toward increasing the labour force participation of ‘older workers’. Policy-makers therefore need to redress current initiatives aimed at this increase.

First, the findings demonstrate that workers are actually considered ‘older’ at younger ages than the social and legal age cut-offs of 55 years (cf. DELSA, 2006; AARP, 2010) and 65 years (cf. OECD, 2005) that are used to define ‘older workers’ in many ageing policies. These policies, therefore, may not reflect the actual situation in the workplace. Policy-makers need to account for differing views found in this study about ‘older workers’ and their age across the workplace, and across industries, and direct their ageing policies in this way. Targeting initiatives at service and manufacturing orientated industries separately with respect to the employment of ‘older workers’ might be particularly useful.

Second, the creation of age-diverse steering-type committees on ‘older workers’ is recommended, and would be useful for informing these types of policies, such committees should comprise both decision-makers and employees across all industries for holistic input, especially given the variation in attitudes toward ‘older workers’ shown in this study.

Third, considerable evidence in this study suggests that, while some decision-makers are willing to retain ‘older workers’ in employment, it appears that they are less willing to hire ‘older workers’. This may be especially pertinent where some decision-makers view ‘older workers’ as those preparing to retire, or as those whose career is somewhat ‘exhausted’. These findings suggest that ‘older workers’ who are unemployed may find it difficult to gain re-entry into the labour market. Set within a context of rising unemployment, certainly in Ireland,
this issue must be addressed. Policy-makers will need to find better ways to inform organisations on the challenges associated with workforce ageing, and design better job seeking and re-employment programmes for ‘older workers’, and, indeed, all workers as they age.

6.6 Implications for Managers

It is clear from the findings in this study that managers charged with facilitating age diversity in organisations face challenges. For the most part, initiatives aimed at managing age diversity tend to focus on dismantling perceived organisational barriers that may inhibit or otherwise detract from inclusiveness and positive accord. These initiatives take place at the organisational level and most often encompass the creation of an organisational policy on managing diversity. Age is just one element of such a diversity policy. If, as the findings here suggest, attitudes towards older workers are latent, and largely uninfluenced by organisational variables, then the problem of overcoming ageist beliefs, prejudice and, indeed, discriminatory behaviour is inherently more complex and problematic than might first appear. It is imperative, however, that this does not deter organisations from facing this issue. The existence of ageist attitudes should not be left unchecked because if they are, then the potential is that ageism could become more prevalent and affect more workers as they age.

There is a need for employers and managers to be attentive to the organisational climate that exists in their workplace in relation to ‘older workers’. The creation of ‘age aware’ policies, practices and training that challenge latent attitudes and prevent them from affecting behaviours toward older workers is recommended. This is especially important considering that the presence of equality policies does not appear to influence more positive attitudes toward ‘older workers’. It may be that these policies will have to be specifically constructed with the age demographics of each organisation in mind. Instructional interventions regarding the interpretation of group behaviours in this way have been shown to reduce
prejudice and help to avoid stereotypical generalisations of groups (Paluck and Green, 2009).

Furthermore, where the age of decision-makers was significant in predicting attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in this study, it appears that younger decision-makers in various decision-making roles tend to hold more negative attitudes. Men also appear to hold more negative attitudes than women in this respect. It has to be communicated in practice that in an ageing society, the need to optimise the entire pool of workers has never been more critical, and neither has challenging ageist attitudes. The creation of age-diverse work teams may be useful in this regard, as well as mentoring schemes comprising both older and younger employees.

Both an age and gender balanced composition of recruitment and selection panels and committees are also recommended. The findings of this study give support to the principles of social identity theory. With both an age and gender balance on decision-making panels, the possibility for bias against older applicants, and older female applicants, may be reduced. Furthermore, the work of Bauer and Baltes (2002) and Baltes, Bauer and Frensch (2007) has suggested ‘structured recall intervention’ as a possible means of reducing the incidence of bias and negative stereotyping in hiring and promotion decisions. In the structured recall intervention method, decision-makers are required to rate candidates according to a recall of specific and/or observed candidate behaviour. The purpose of this type of rating method is to reduce the decision-makers’ reliance on their personal overall judgement of the candidate, and instead force them to use specific observations of candidate behaviour to make their hiring or promotion decisions (Bauer and Baltes, 2002; Baltes, Bauer and Frensch, 2007). This method has been found to successfully reduce bias in decision-maker ratings (Baltes, Bauer and Frensch, 2007), and is therefore recommended as a management tool to reduce bias against ‘older workers’ in recruitment, selection, development, and promotion decisions in the workplace.
Organisations also need to understand the differing perspectives associated with ‘older workers’. If ‘older workers’ are viewed as those nearing retirement, organisations may ignore important strategies for retaining ‘older workers’ in employment. Likewise, if it is the case that ‘older workers’ are nearing the end of their career, then organisations may ignore training and career development opportunities for ‘older workers’. Maybe it is the case that ‘older workers’, however, wish to reduce their working hours. The introduction of the assessment of work plans, and life-span working intentions into performance appraisals and staff meetings is recommended. Flexible working policies have been introduced in some organisations as a response to the ageing workforce in recent years, but perhaps organisations could engage in meetings with all workers regarding their employment intentions as they age. This, of course, would require openness to flexibility in the organisation, but may enhance a better understanding of the needs of ‘older workers’ on the part of decision-makers. With a better understanding of ‘older workers’ and their employment intentions and abilities, attitudes toward ‘older workers’ may also be challenged, or indeed, changed.

6.7 Future Research Directions

If you want a happy ending, that depends, of course, on where you stop your story...

Orson Welles

From both an academic and a practical perspective, research on attitudes toward ‘older workers’ will only be valued and strengthened if it helps to solve the real-life problems associated with workforce ageing in the long-term. In order to accomplish this, we need to use the new findings unearthed by this study to advance our understanding of the phenomena in future research studies. Thus how researchers and practitioners now focus their efforts is important. As such, this thesis identifies possible fruitful areas for the future development of this study:

First, one of the limitations of the present research is its cross sectional design, and while appropriate and illuminative in the context of this research, a lack of
Longitudinal research means that attitudes toward ‘older workers’ over time have not been addressed in their full complexity. This is particularly true in terms of the individual and organisational variables that appear to influence ageist attitudes explored in this study. Their causal nature can only be assessed with a longitudinal design. The findings of this study, therefore, could be advanced with a longitudinal design, investigating decision-maker attitudes toward ‘older workers’ over time, and across countries. This would require many resources, but would be invaluable in advancing research and theory in this area, particularly where other aspects of gerontological research are adopting longitudinal approaches (cf. The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing; The Survey of Health and Retirement in Europe). The survey instrument designed as part of this research could be used in this type of research design across Europe and in other countries. Future investigations in a cross-cultural respect could address the imbalance between local and global concerns on workforce ageing, and may expand theory to be universally applicable, with global relevance.

Second, future research should jointly consider the definition of an ‘older worker’ and the multidimensional attitudes that exist toward these ‘older workers’ in empirical studies. The findings in this study indicate that it is difficult to separate one from the other, taken together, the findings illuminate a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which ‘older workers’ are viewed in organisations. Particularly, the affective dimension of ageist attitudes requires further inquiry in terms of measurement and scale development. It is recommended that future research extends upon the ‘prejudicial feelings’ scale used in this study, in order to develop more scale items that can measure affect toward ‘older workers’.

Third, industry specific research is also needed, given the potential for ‘older workers’ to be perceived differently across industries, as was shown in this study.

Fourth, from a theoretical perspective, there is a need to further address the impact of organisational factors on age bias, as available evidence both from this study and previous research is ‘mixed’, and individual factors appear to play a particularly crucial role. Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) is certainly useful in
explaining the differing perspectives in defining ‘older workers’, but Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Finkelstein et al, 1995), Career Timetables (Lawrence, 1998) and Relational Demography (Tsui et al, 2005) also appear to be useful in understanding attitudes toward ‘older workers’. Perhaps an amalgam of all four theories could be built upon in the search for a better understanding of attitudes toward ‘older workers’.

Finally, some evidence exists in this study to suggest the potential for ‘gendered ageism’, where women may be considered ‘older’ at younger ages than men. The work specific age bias literature will need to start investigating this issue, and its possible antecedents and consequences more systematically, because, as importantly highlighted by one decision-maker in this study, ‘sexism and ageism, where it may not be stated, still exists’.

6.8 Conclusion

Changes in global demographics demonstrate an overall ageing of the workforce population where societies and organisations are facing significant difficulties in successfully facilitating an ‘older’ workforce. However, our understanding of the age variable in the workplace remains partial at best; such that we are not yet fully conversant with dominant attitudes towards ‘older workers’, or can even agree on who we consider ‘older workers’ to be. This thesis sought to shed some light on these issues by investigating current organisational decision-maker attitudes toward those perceived as ‘older workers’ in organisations, and what particular conflux of factors might influence these attitudes. From the findings, it appears that successfully facilitating an ‘older workforce’ will indeed be a challenge.

With respect to this challenge, this thesis provides timely new empirical evidence on the multi-dimensional nature of ageist attitudes at work, and advances debate on the complexity of understanding attitudes toward ‘older workers’ in organisations. The findings here must be seen as an important step, particularly in Ireland, toward a better understanding of workforce ageing as it begins to
‘define’ the 21st century. It is hoped that these findings will inform both national and organisational policy and practice toward improving the employment prospects of not only ‘older workers’, but all workers, as they age.
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Appendix A  Research Instrument
Older Employees in the Irish Workplace

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a PhD researcher in the Kemmy Business School at the University of Limerick. I am inviting you to participate in a study of attitudes toward older employees in Ireland. Attached is a questionnaire that explores the opinions of decision makers in organisations toward older employees.

While I recognise that age is a sensitive issue at work, I am not looking for evidence of discrimination in a company. I simply want to know what you think about older employees. Honest answers would be greatly appreciated. I do not need to know who you are, and no one will know whether you participated in this study. Your responses will not be identified with you personally, nor will anyone else be able to determine which company you work for. **You and your company remain completely anonymous.**

It will only take you 5-8 minutes to complete this questionnaire, but your answers will help our research for a very long time. If you have any questions or concerns about completing this questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact me at jean.mccarthy@ul.ie or on 087-2343306.

You, of course, have the right to refuse to participate, or to withdraw at any time.

If you would like to receive a report on the results of this study, you have the option to provide an email address at the end of the survey.

Yours Faithfully,

Jean McCarthy
This questionnaire is designed to be confidential and anonymous. Your honest input would be greatly appreciated and will be invaluable in informing our research. There are three sections (A, B, and C) to the questionnaire; it will take approximately 5-8 mins to fill it out.

**Section A. Personal Details**
The following questions are about you and your involvement in decision making in your company. Please tick the box beside the answer that applies to you. Please answer all questions.

**A1. Gender:**
- □ Female
- □ Male

**A2. Age Range:**
- □ Under 20
- □ 20–25
- □ 26–30
- □ 31-35
- □ 36-40
- □ 41-45
- □ 46-50
- □ 51-55
- □ 56-60
- □ 61-65
- □ 66-70
- □ 70+

**A3. Job Title:**
- □ CEO/President/VP
- □ Managing Director/Director
- □ Owner-Manager
- □ General Manager
- □ Plant Manager
- □ Functional Manager
- □ Line Manager/Supervisor
- □ HR Director
- □ HR Manager
- □ Other

If ‘other’ please specify

**A4. How many years have you been working for your present employer/organisation?** (Please state the number of years) _______ years

**A5. How many years have you been working in your current position?** (Please state the number of years) _______ years

**A6. Which of the following do you make decisions about (or are involved in making decisions about) in your organisation?** (Please select ALL the answers that apply to you)

- □ Staffing and Workforce Planning/Succession Planning
- □ Recruitment of Employees *(e.g. job design, advertising, or short listing etc.)*
- □ Selection of Employees *(e.g. interviewing, or assessments etc.)*
- □ Training and Development of Employees *(e.g. needs analysis, delivery, evaluation, or continuing professional development etc.)*
- □ Performance Management of Employees *(e.g. performance appraisal, discipline, or grievance etc.)*
- □ Promotion of Employees
- □ Employee Rewards *(e.g. compensation and benefits, overtime, shift premiums, pensions, or benefit in kind etc.)*
- □ Redundancy *(e.g. selection criteria, redundancy packages, or consultation with unions/employer representatives etc.)*
- □ None of the Above
**Section B. Company Information**
The following questions are about the type of organisation that you work for. Please tick the box beside the answer that applies to your organisation. Please answer all questions.

**B1. Approximately how many employees are in your organisation (in this location)?**
No. of Employees:__________________________

**B2. In which industry/sector is your organisation situated?**

- [ ] Manufacturing – Food and Beverages, Non Metallic Minerals, Paper, Publishing and Printing, Textiles, Clothing and Footwear
- [ ] Manufacturing – Machinery, Engineering, Computer, Electrical and Medical Equipment
- [ ] Manufacturing – Chemical and Pharmaceuticals
- [ ] Construction
- [ ] Retail and Wholesale Trade
- [ ] Hotels, Restaurants and Public Houses
- [ ] Services – Information and Communication Technology
- [ ] Services – Financial and Business
- [ ] Transport and Utilities
- [ ] Health and Social Work
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Other (please specify) ______________________________________________________

**B3. Does your organisation have an equality/diversity policy that you are aware of?**
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Don’t Know
Section C. Statements about Older Employees
This is the last section. On the next page is a list of statements about older employees. We would like you to tell us what your attitude is to each statement by circling one of the numbers from 1-6:

- Please circle the column that best describes your disagreement or agreement with the following statements
- There are no correct answers; the best answers are those that honestly reflect your feelings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)</th>
<th>2 = Disagree (D)</th>
<th>3 = Disagree more than Agree (D&gt;A)</th>
<th>4 = Agree more than Disagree (A&gt;D)</th>
<th>5 = Agree (A)</th>
<th>6 = Strongly Agree (SA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Section C. Statements about Older Employees</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D&gt;A</th>
<th>A&gt;D</th>
<th>A</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Older employees are more dependable than younger employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Older employees do not want jobs with increased responsibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Older employees take longer in getting over an illness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Older employees usually turn out work of higher quality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Older employees are not interested in learning new skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Older employees are more creative than younger employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>An older employee would quit their job if they could afford to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Older employees are better supervisors than younger employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Older employees should be made redundant before younger workers if the company reduces headcount</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Older employees have as much ability to learn new methods as younger employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Older employees dislike to work under younger supervisors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I would encourage early retirement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Older employees cannot keep up to speed in this industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Older employees are most loyal to the company</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Older employees have more accidents on the job than younger employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Older employees are a poor investment when it comes to training</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Work performance declines with age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>If two employees had similar skills, I’d pick the older employee to work with me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Older employees should step aside (take a less demanding job) to give younger employees career advancement opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I would like to recruit more older staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Older employees are more experienced and should therefore occupy more senior positions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Older employees have limited skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Older employees are easier to work with than younger employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Older employees cost more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Older employees have little ambition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Older employees are better mentors than younger workers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Older employees co-operate more on the job than younger employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Older employees are harder to train for jobs than younger employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Older employees are paid too much for the amount of work they do</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Older employees are just as interested in career advancement as younger employees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Older employees are resistant to change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Older employees do not respond well to criticism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Older employees are an invaluable source of knowledge in a company</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Older employees have better people skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Older employees experience difficulties with technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C46. At what specific age do you think an employee is an ‘older employee’?
Please state age in years _______ years old

C47. Why do you think this?
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

C48. Approximately what proportion of employees in your place of work are this age and over?
Please state an estimated percentage
_________________________ % approximately

C49. Do you think the age when an employee is an ‘older employee’ is different for men and women?
☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Don’t Know

C50. If yes, please state a specific age (in years) when a male is an ‘older employee’, and when a female is an ‘older employee’
Male: __________ years old
Female: __________ years old

C51. Why do you think there is a difference in this age for men and women?
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact Jean McCarthy (University of Limerick) at jean.mccarthy@ul.ie or on 087-2343306.

Please feel free to add any other comments
If you would like to receive a report on the results of this survey, please enter an email address below:
Appendix B  Distribution of Variables
B1. Dependent Variables

1. Perceived Age of the ‘Older Worker’

Descriptives:
Mean=52.69, Median=55, SD=7.900
Q-Q plot and box plot displays relatively normal distribution with some outliers

2. Work Effectiveness Stereotype Scale

Descriptives:
Mean=3.69, Median=3.75, SD .0876, N=240
QQ plot and box plot display normal distribution
3. *Distribution of Work Adaptability Stereotype Scale*

Descriptives:
Mean=4.16, Median=4.12, SD=0.672

Q-Q plot normal and box-plot display relatively normal distribution

4. *Distribution of Reaction to Criticism Stereotype Scale*

Descriptives:
Mean=3.53, median=3.33 SD=0.928

Q-Q plot displays normal distribution
5. Distribution of Interpersonal Skills Stereotype Scale

Descriptives:

Mean=3.79, median=4.00 SD=0.906
Q-Q plot displays normal distribution
Box-plot displays relatively normal distribution

6. Distribution of Employment of Older Workers Stereotype Scale

Descriptives

Mean=4.09, median=4.07, SD=0.444
Q-Q plot displays relatively normal distribution
Box displays normal distribution
7. Distribution of Feelings about Older Workers Prejudice Scale

Descriptives:
Mean=3.26, Median=3.25, SD=0.849
Q-Q plot and box plot displays normal distribution

8. Distribution of Behavioural Intentions in the Recruitment of Older Workers Discrimination Scale

Descriptives:
Mean=3.26, Median=3.33, SD=0.801
Q-Q plot displays normal distribution
Box plot display relatively normal distribution
9. Distribution of Behavioural Intentions toward the Retention of Older Workers Discrimination Scale

Descriptives
Mean=4.54, Median=4.75
Q-Q plot displays normal distribution
B2. Independent Variables

1. *Distribution of Position Tenure*

Descriptives:
Mean=5.93, Median=4.00, SD=5.162
Non-normally distributed

1.2 *Distribution of Position Tenure Transformed using Lg10*

Descriptives:
Mean=.629, Median=.6021, SD=.3647
Q-Q plot and box plot display normal distribution
2. Distribution of Organisation Tenure

Descriptives:
Mean=11.35, Median=7.50, SD=10.461
Non-normally distributed

2.1 Distribution of Organisation Tenure Transformed using SQRT

Descriptives:
Mean=3.03, Median=2.73, SD=1.47
Q-Q plot and box plot display normal distribution
3. Distribution of Perceived % of ‘Older Workers’ employed in the Organisation

Descriptives:
Mean=18.85, Median=14.58, SD=20.021
Box plot displays relatively normal distribution

3.1 Distribution of Perceived % of ‘Older Workers’ employed in the Organisation Transformed using SQRT

Descriptives:
Mean=3.607, Median=3.807, SD=4.207
Q-Q plot and box plot displays normal distribution