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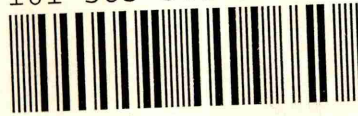
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From Managerial Career
to
Portfolio Career:
Making sense of the transition

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the —
requirements of Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 1998

Collaborating Organisation:
New Ways to Work

ABSTRACT

This study is rooted in the question about the changing nature of career. The notion of career tends to be conflated with rising up through an organisational or occupational hierarchy. It is widely assumed that the traditional form cannot be sustained in today's downsized, delayered and flexible organisations and attention switches to alternative forms and ways of understanding career. One prediction is that more people will look to developing a mixed pattern of employment, self employment and other activities which do not depend on full time contractual employment with any one employer. This is the notion of the portfolio career popularised by Charles Handy (1989, 1994). Kanter (1989) suggests that such individual moves add up to a macro transition in career forms. However, while there is much debate about changing career, there is a dearth of qualitative studies which seek to explore the issue from the view-point of situated individuals. In particular, there is little empirical evidence available about individuals who make their career outside of exclusive organisational employment. Drawing inductively on in depth interviews with 25 ex-NHS managers now operating various portfolio arrangements, the study set out to explore how individuals are making sense of this transition.

This research contributes a qualitative, interpretative study of individual transitions from a managerial position, which may well have embodied the principles of the traditional career, to portfolio work. While focusing on individual interpretation, the study recognises that career is about both its objective features and individual's subjective interpretation of them. Barley's (1989) model of the role of career in the structuring process which draws on Giddens' structuration theory is used as the theoretical base for the study. Hence the particular contribution of the study is in providing a contextualised account of sense making about a personal career transition thought to mirror wider change in career within an explicit recognition of the link between individual action and social structures.

The study contributes empirical data about organisational exit which was prompted in this case by a dynamic interaction of push and pull factors. It explores understanding of the concept, parameters and experience of portfolio working focusing, in particular on issues of training and development, social networks and revised views of career outside of employment.

The theoretical contribution primarily focuses around a model of the transition which places it within the structuring process. The transition is theorised as less of a disjunctive move than as a shading from one context to another, as individuals bring forward to portfolio work many of the material and discursive practices of their managerial career. Several interpretative schemes are identified as relevant to the sense making process, not least the notion that individuals can maintain more personal integrity outside organisational employment. There is less evidence of a desire for instrumental relationships with organisations than the career literature might suggest and more evidence of constraints on development and growth outside of employment. The effects of the actions and perceptions of other people in individual's interpretations of their new career is highlighted. A major theme of the study is continuity within the change as individuals seek to maintain a congruence between the objective features of their new career and how they make sense of the notion of career.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCES ARISING FROM THIS THESIS

Book Chapters

"From public sector workers to portfolio workers: Pioneers of new careers?" in C. Mabey, D. Skinner and T. Clark (eds.), *Experiencing Human Resource Management,* Sage. London.1998.

Refereed Academic Journals

"Opting for a portfolio career" to be published in Personnel Review, December 1998

Refereed Academic Journals: currently under review:

"The transition from organisational employment to portfolio working: perceptions of 'boundarylessness'" (with Dr. Laurie Cohen) for *Work, Employment and Society*

Conferences - National

Strategic Human Resource Management Conference
Nottingham, UK   Dec.1995
"Careers and the portfolio worker"

HRM: The Inside Story. Open University, UK
"Portfolio workers: Pioneers of new working practices"   April 1996

Sheffield Business School Post Graduate Conference
"Liberation or marginalisation?: Making sense of the portfolio career"   Dec. 1997

Conferences - International
Academy of Human Resource Development, Minneapolis, USA   Feb. 1996
"Developing atypical workers"

Academy of Management Meeting, Careers Division: Shared Interest Track
"Don't you fence me in, I can do that myself:
perceptions of boundarylessness and the portfolio career"   Aug.1998

The results of this thesis are the opinions of the author. In the early days of the research the collaborating organisation - New Ways to Work - provided assistance in the form of suggested references and other research material and acted as a valuable sounding board for ideas. Other material used in the discussion has been attributed to works cited in the references.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Career change is at the centre of this study. The focus is on the transition of managers out of organisational employment into portfolio work (Handy, 1989; 1994). Portfolio work is understood as packages of work arrangements for the plying and selling of an individual's skills in a variety of contexts. The interest in this individual career transition is in its resonance with wider debates about the changing nature of career (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996a). Such individual career moves are thought to be indicative and illustrative of macro transitions in career forms (Kanter, 1989a). The demise of the traditional, hierarchical career is widely predicted, as is its replacement by a proliferation of more fluid and individual career choices. However, despite a flourishing literature about changing careers (e.g. Arthur and Rousseau, 1996a; Golzen and Garner, 1990; Handy, 1994; Bridges, 1995) there is a dearth of empirical studies about how such career changes are experienced by individuals (Bailyn, 1989; Ornstein and Isabella, 1993).

This chapter will introduce the debates about the demise of the traditional career and the growth of other career forms, specifically portfolio working. In doing so, it will reflect on the changing ways in which career is being constructed. The relevance of this particular study will be discussed along with my personal interest in it. The overall aims of this study will then be outlined. To conclude there will be a summary of the chapters in the thesis.

1.1. THE DEMISE OF THE TRADITIONAL CAREER

Career is commonly associated with large bureaucratic organisations (Gowler and Legge, 1989; Inkson, 1995) and an expectation of rising through an internal labour market, from humble beginnings to more senior positions (Pahl, 1995). This view of career (variously described as bureaucratic, traditional, corpocratic, managerial) is by now deeply embedded in our 20th century Western consciousness (Gowler and Legge, 1989) and thought to be something organisationally based, planned, orderly and progressive, enacted rationally by the career holder and underpinned by exchange between individual and organisation (Inkson 1995; Evetts, 1992).

Kanter (1989b) in an influential review of changing career patterns, describes this bureaucratic (she calls it corpocratic) career as being led by the logic of advancement:

"The bureaucratic career pattern involves a sequence of positions in a formally defined hierarchy of positions. "Growth" is equated with promotion to a position of a higher rank that brings with it higher benefits, "progress" means advancement within the hierarchy. Thus, a "career" consists of formal movements from job to job... changing titles, tasks and often work groups in the process... In the typical corpocratic career, all the elements of career opportunity -responsibilities, challenges, influence, formal training and development, compensation - are all closely tied to rank in an organisation... Indeed this... is the quintessential organisational career, for which employment by an organisation is a necessity for a managerial job ladder to have any meaning at all... The manager in a corpocracy thus accumulates "organizational capital" - knowledge of a particular company, its traditions, its politics- as a chief career asset" (Kanter 1989b: 305-306).

The demise of this type of career has been widely foretold (e.g. Holbeche, 1995; Bridges, 1995; Waterman, et al., 1994; Golzen and Garner, 1990; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996a) and attributed to increasing competitive pressure and environmental turbulence which threaten the organisational structures that sustained the bureaucratic career. Bureaucracy itself is being challenged as the most appropriate organising logic for the times (Hecksher and Donnellon, 1994). Its supposed rigidities, boundaries and demarcations are seen as too inflexible for the turbulent environment of the 1990s and beyond. Nothing less than the transformation of work itself is sought (Bridges, 1995). Organisations are restructured; hierarchies are flattened; jobs are repackaged and overall job numbers are reduced, so career advancement, and even job security, become less achievable aspirations.

While there is some evidence to support such assertions, (which will be discussed in chapter 2), it is nonetheless ambiguous and founded on a modest empirical base. Despite this, and despite the existence of some dissenting evidence about the demise of the traditional career (Guest and MacKenzie Davey, 1996) and warning voices about implications (Pahl, 1995; Hutton, 1995), there is a remarkable consensus in the

literature and in the media about this apparent trend. In parallel a new view of career has begun to emerge.

1.2. THE RISE OF "NEW CAREERS"

Career theorists have long recognised the existence of career forms other than the normatively hierarchical (Driver, 1982; Schein, 1978) yet they have remained largely unexplored or even derided until recently (Marshall, 1989). As the traditional career is threatened, so attention has turned to other career forms but, what is more, the foundations of that career, which have been the centre of career theory for so long, are now subject to widespread criticism. Careers based on bureaucratic hierarchies are discredited as stultifying individual initiative and creativity and promoting an unhealthy dependence on organisations for the conduct of one's working life (Golzen and Garner, 1990; Waterman et al 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996a).

Security for an individual, it is suggested (Kanter, 1989b; Bridges, 1995, Mirvis and Hall, 1996), should be anchored, not in a particular organisation, but in one's own portable skills and employability. Hence, people are encouraged to weaken their ties with organisations. Instead of a relationship built on mutual commitment and continuity, a more transactional relationship is advocated which is based on short-term, monetizable, demarcated exchanges (Rousseau, 1996). The career should become something managed by the individual not the organisation. Kanter predicts a demise of the corpocratic career, as outlined above, and in its place a flourishing of career forms more associated with professional and entrepreneurial work. As Golzen and Garner suggest (1990: 3), "in a career sense we are all self employed now." These ideas will be subject to scrutiny in chapter 3.

Against this background, new ways to describe career forms have emerged which attempt to capture the idea of individual's career self management and lack of dependence on a single organisation. Handy's notion of the portfolio career is a significant example.

1.2.1. Portfolio careers
Handy is certain that there is an identifiable trend to less organisationally bound working patterns:

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"more and more individuals are behaving as professionals always have, charging fees not wages. They find they are "going portfolio" or "going plural." "Going portfolio" ...means exchanging full-time employment for independence. The portfolio is a collection of different bits and pieces of work for different clients. The word "job" now means a client" (1994:175).

Handy introduced this concept in 1989 in his discussion about the "Age of Unreason" - the new future of discontinuous and uncertain change. In that context, he argued, people's working lives could be less about a job with one organisation than about a portfolio of arrangements that he termed wage work; fee work; homework; gift work (like community work done for free) and study work. His point is that as organisations change and job security becomes more tenuous, individuals will need to look for other ways to define and reinvent work. He recognises that this way of working is not at all strange to those who have always or mostly worked outside organisations and he gives as examples: "small farmers, craftsmen and skilled artisans... small shopkeepers and publicans, lorry drivers and taxi drivers, artists" (1989: 167), and so on. Rather, he directs his remarks to "the career executive of the big organization because it is his or her way of life which will change most radically in the "Age of Unreason" (1989:166). It is individuals who have previously worked in managerial, career oriented roles in large organisations who are the subjects of this study.

Handy does not attempt definitions, nor does he consider how the portfolio work he describes differs from self employment or freelance work or consultancy or other more familiar concepts. In some ways that is the strength of the concept, that it can embrace a variety of work arrangements but is not necessarily delimited by any one of them. In chapter 4, I discuss in more detail how I will use the term; suffice to say here that I use it to encompass the transition out of a corporate career and into a working world which is made up of a variety of types of work or a variety of organisations in which one works, centred around the theme of selling and plying one's skills.

1.2.2. Changing perceptions of career

Although this concept of portfolio working is neither clearly specified nor empirically grounded, it has become incorporated into ways of thinking and talking about careers

(Ball, 1996). One view of portfolio careers is of a "lonely and sometimes impotent world" (Sonnenberg, 1997:466) which one enters more by circumstance than by choice (Pahl, 1995). Others are more positive: for example, Comfort (1997), who turned to portfolio work when he lost his job, talks about his own early experiences when he struggled to explain to friends what he did, and felt he was viewed as a "doubtful dilettante:"

"Then I discovered Handy... and his amazing book "The Age of Unreason", in which he coined the phrase that was to legitimise my rag bag of roles: "The Portfolio Career." Suddenly, I was OK, a real person again. I was able to hold my head up with pride, quote Handy with complete assurance and not a little bravura and say: 'I'm a Portfolio Person, actually'" (1997:5).

Ways of talking about careers are thus acknowledged to be implicated in the construction of careers and career identities and are central to this study which focuses on how individuals are making sense of a career transition in the midst of wider social debate about changing work and careers.

V. S. Naipaul, remembering his time as a freelance worker with the BBC in the 1950s, elegantly illustrates how forms of working have acquired new meanings, in this case, freelance work:

"...the BBC had set aside a room for people like me, 'freelancers' - to me then not a word suggesting freedom and valour, but suggesting only people on the fringe of a mighty enterprise, a depressed and suppliant class: I would have given anything to be staff" (1984:15).

Naipaul suggests that there has been a dramatic shift in how freelance work (which I have already identified as related to portfolio work) is viewed. The extent to which the "mighty enterprise" is indeed being challenged is open to debate, yet his words echo themes in the literature on changing career patterns which attribute a valiant dimension and enhanced personal freedom to the decision to leave organisational employment and point to a changed relationship between individuals and organisations.

What is more, the new career debate chimes with other contemporary discourses about flexibility in organisational form (Clegg, 1990) and in employment patterns (Pollert, 1991); about enterprise and entrepreneurialism (du Gay, 1996a) and about the changing nature of society (e.g. Hage, 1996; Bell, 1973) and its economic base (e.g. Piore and Sabel, 1994; Lash and Urry, 1987). Whereas the move out of employment may previously have been regarded as an individual idiosyncrasy in a career story, - or indeed derided as falling off the career ladder (Marshall, 1989) - it now appears to reflect the zeitgeist.

I have a personal as well as academic interest in this debate. About 18 months before embarking on the Ph.D., I voluntarily left a senior managerial job within a public sector organisation in order to pursue a variety of other options and hence could be regarded as portfolio worker. Although I had no such conversion to the works of Handy as Comfort (1997) describes, (indeed to my mind, Handy raises far more questions than he answers), I recognise what Comfort (1997) is saying about the wider zeitgeist being mobilised to legitimise individual action. From my vantage point in portfolio work, I recognise many of the benefits that authors describe but I am also placed to be sceptical about some of the claims being made.

It is potentially a huge personal transition to take a path out of a bureaucratic form of employment into the much more volatile and uncertain world of career "self employment." To reappraise one's career expectations can be a profound experience for individuals. The traditional, linear career, with its visible symbols of progress like advancing salaries and more elevated job titles, has provided socially understood badges of social success and an aspirational path (Pahl, 1995). What one takes to be success in this career is thus socially ratified. With a move outside it, how is one to claim success and know that that claim has a wider recognition? A challenge to the existence and social acceptance of the traditional career path could lead eventually to a wider social acceptance of the plethora of ways in which people actually live out their working lives (Bailyn, 1993; Gallos, 1989). However, in the meantime, there may well be, as some authors suggest (Hutton, 1995; Pahl, 1995; Howard, 1996), a period of endemic insecurity and anxiety as old career certainties crumble and new routes emerge.

For those involved at the sharp end of emerging career paths there may be anxiety about finance, status, securing work as well as deeper questions about personal and work identity. After all how does one judge success in a "portfolio" career? It may be that is it the grimmer realities of forging in a career in entrepreneurial mode will provide fun for the few (Hirsh 1994) and a great deal of sapping anxiety for most.

These are the types of ideas I explore in this study, seeking to understand how situated actors experience and make sense of this transition in their own career world.

1.3. THE RESEARCH STUDY

There is growing debate about new career forms and a new way of talking about career, yet there is a dearth of empirical, qualitative studies which seek to understand how individuals experience changing careers. While there are valuable qualitative studies about career (Young and Collin, 1992) and some empirical evidence about changing careers within organisations (e.g. Amin, 1996) there are very few studies of individual experience of careers outside of, or tangential to, organisations, linked to the debate on changing careers and changing organisations, save for a limited amount of literature on the careers of sole (or small) trader self employed people (Granger et al., 1995).

This study thus aims to provide a valuable resource in the emerging debate. It is a response to calls to study what Bailyn (1989:480) calls "leading edge exemplars" of changing careers. Studying those who might embody new career forms is a way of extending our knowledge about what it means to have a career and how a changing sense of career might impel people to certain actions.

This study aims to find out how it feels to leave an organisation and strike out alone. Why would anyone make this choice and having done so, how is it experienced? The focus will be on those for whom the traditional career with its linear progress in a secure internal labour market was potentially the most salient so the research participants will be ex-managers from the public sector which has long sustained hierarchical career paths and demarcated jobs.

The concept of career will be central to the study. As a social construction career provides a means of linking the actions of individual and organisations with the wider and changing social structure. Careers are about both the moves an individual makes and also what sense they make of those moves. Career story telling will be invited and examined. The study will consider how participants have viewed their career to date, how the move out of organisations into portfolio work is understood and the implications they see for their future career.

Hence the main aims of this study are:

1. to contribute theoretically and empirically to what is known about portfolio working and the types of working arrangements it encompasses;

2. to contribute empirical data to the study of changing career by focused research on people experiencing a putative contemporary career change;

3. to theorise the transition out of organisational employment and into portfolio working;

4. to explore changing interpretations of career in this context.

The research is based on interviews with 25 ex managers of the NHS who have left the organisation and embarked on working arrangements which could be understood as portfolio careers.

1.4. OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

A consideration of career change draws on a wide range of literature (Arthur et al., 1989) incorporating not only the body of career theory and closely associated literature but also insights from, among others, sociology, psychology, human resource management, organisational theory, organisational behaviour, linguistics, politics and economics. As the career transition under study is thought to be indicative of wider social trends, I have been concerned to ensure that the study is adequately contextualised as well as focused appropriately.

Chapter 2 will examine the context for the study and for the individual's career transition by an exploration of changes in the world of work. It will first locate these

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changes within wider societal trends and move on to examine selectively the debates on changing organisations. It will concentrate firstly on changes in bureaucracies, especially in the public sector, given participants' previous careers in the NHS and secondly, on the growth in small businesses and enterprising organisational forms as their new context may well be built on self employment. Moving on, labour market changes pertinent to managerial careers will be discussed and in conclusion the chapter will look at ways of approaching these putative changes recognising dominant discourse and dissenting views.

Chapter 3 will come closer to the individual and focus on the notion of the career. A means of theorising career that acknowledges the explicit link between changing social structures and human action will be explored and used to consider links between individual career moves and changing career forms. The chapter will then move on to look more explicitly at the specific decisions involved in this career transition - to leave an organisation and to then to opt for some form of independence from contractual employment. Finally, the implications of developing the career outside of organisational employment will be considered through an examination of the psychological contract and the debate on the new competencies required in less organisationally anchored careers.

Chapter 4 will reflect on the issues raised in the previous two chapters which affect the approach to methodology, particularly the insights offered by Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) as applied to career (Barley, 1989) which offers a vehicle to understand the links between structure and action. The role of career scripts for action and career discourse will be explored.

Chapter 5 describes how and why the research process was undertaken considering the reasons for methodological choice as well as the detailed process of data collection and analysis. Chapter 5 also introduces the research participants.
Chapters 6-10 are the analysis chapters which are presented in three parts. Part One focuses on the period before the transition to portfolio working and includes chapters 6 and 7 which look at previous career and reasons for making the transition respectively. Part Two explores the experience of portfolio working. Chapter 8 looks at their portfolios in some detail and chapter 9 considers their experience in terms of

development, networks and approach to career. Finally Part Three consists of chapter 10 which considers how participants have made sense of this transition, their changing perceptions of career and implications for future actions.

Chapter 11 discusses the findings and the specific theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis to understanding of career, portfolio working, career transitions and related literature. It reflects on the study and points to avenues for further research.

CHAPTER 2: THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF WORK AND ORGANISATION

The chapter starts in 2.1 with a general discussion on the major debates about the transformation of work. 2.2 looks at the issues of changing organisations. As the individuals in this study could be seen as making a move out of large bureaucratic organisations and into a more enterprising working world, this section will focus, in particular, on the debates about bureaucracy and enterprise. 2.3 shifts attention to labour market issues looking at the evidence to suggest moves out of organisational employment and into more flexible work arrangements, particularly concentrating on managerial labour markets. Finally 2.4 asks if the putative transformation of work is threat or opportunity.

2. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to set the scene in which the career transition from organisational employment to portfolio work takes place. Collin (1997) argues that career researchers should take a contextualist view (Pepper, 1942) of the environment within which people's careers unfold recognising their dynamic and mutually shaping interaction. In doing so she acknowledges that this can lead the researcher to "sheer off" of in all sorts of directions following multiple possible connections and associations, with a risk that it could go on and on (1997:442). Her warning speaks to me as I embark on this contextual chapter. As with Collin, the view of the environment that I adopt in this thesis (which is more fully explained in chapter 4) does not conceptualise it as a set of features "out there," pressing down with deterministic weight on the actions of individuals - although it may indeed feel like that at times - but rather recognises a dynamic and co-constitutive interaction of people and social structures (Giddens, 1991; Weick, 1995). But what are to be the boundaries I draw and the salient features I identify within a complex, interrelated and dynamic context of economic, social and organisational change?

As there are such huge and diverse debates about the changing nature of organisations, work, society and self that are potentially relevant to this study I have made certain decisions about which aspects of my odyssey through the literatures to include here.

First of all, the centre of this study is individuals' perceptions of their career transition and while it is important to acknowledge debates on the material and discursive context of changing organisations within which this transition takes place, this chapter in no way claims to be an exhaustive overview of the literature on the nature and implications of changing organisational forms.

Secondly, this study is about white collar workers - managers- linked to the public sector. Therefore, the study focuses on research and developments most directly related to their experience and pays less attention to discussion about changes in work more applicable to manufacturing or to blue collar workers. The participants have potentially entered the self employment sector so attention will be paid to that domain.

Many ideas are raised here which will be carried over for more discussion in chapter 3 on the career itself. Similarly, the debates covered here raise issues relevant to the methodological approach of the study. They will be noted in this chapter but examined in more detail in chapter 4.

2.1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHANGING WORK AND WORKPLACES

Section 2.1 begins by a general discussion of the theoretical debates on the transformation of work and introduces the themes of change and continuity. The debates on post industrialism, post Fordism and post modernism are briefly introduced and critiqued.

2.1.1. THE TRANSFORMATION OF WORK

The notion that work and career have experienced a transformation is central to this study. That there have been important changes - even transformation- over the last twenty years or so is not disputed.[1] It is the nature, scale, pace, dynamics and underlying rationale of such changes which are open to debate. The general drift of change is captured in the all-encompassing notion of "flexibility" in organisational shape and structure and in individual's working patterns. Movements in this direction are seen in opposition to the more rigid, vertically integrated and structured organisations, characterised as bureaucratic and the standardised, life long and full time employment patterns they fostered (Hewitt, 1993).

The significance of such changes for individuals - at least those in managerial and professional jobs - is often seen in terms of the threat to the progressive careers such organisational forms sustained. The implications are material in terms of the conditions, remuneration and milieu of an individual's working life. More abstract, but no less pertinent, questions are also raised about the individual's sense of self and identity in face of changes to their work and occupation. Work and occupation have long been seen as a primary basis of social organisation in industrialism and as a primary constituent of self identity (Beck, 1992). Of course, it was not ever so, as work has come to have a different meaning in industrialism than it carried in pre-industrial times, when it was variously viewed as a scourge or punishment (Casey, 1995). Its convergence with virtue, underpinned by economic rationality, set in place within the

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[1]Debate tends to centre around the recent deployment of new technologies and the globalising influences on markets and economies most evident in the 1980s and 1990s. However, within the context of the industrial age, it is quite possible to trace relevant changes in workplaces back to the 1950s when analysts began to take note of the effects of automation (Casey, 1995).

dominant Protestant work ethic (Weber, 1967) and codified in the division of labour (Durkheim, 1933) set the scene for an identification of self with the type of work one does. As Beck comments:

"Strange, to equate the person with the occupation he or she has. In society, where life is strung along the thread of occupation, the latter does indeed contain certain key information: income, status, linguistic abilities, possible interests, social contacts and so on" (1992:140).

Hence the threat to occupational identity and the cues it presents about a person's standing in society are recognised to be keenly felt (Mirvis and Hall, 1996). Furthermore changes in workplaces are theorised to bring about a blurring of the spheres of home and work (Fletcher and Bailyn, 1996). Beck describes work and wage labour as an "axis of living in the industrial age" (1992:139). The other axis is family, and together, they form "the bipolar co-ordinate system in which life in this epoch is situated." Those two spheres have become delineated and separated within the system of standardised working. As that frays, in terms of working patterns, those boundaries become more fluid. While that may well betoken certain benefits, it is also potentially a site of dislocation and confusion for individuals, long schooled in the old divide, who, by their own actions have (unwittingly perhaps) both created and reproduced it (Giddens, 1984). Beck (1992), like many other commentators, sees the new world implied in this flexibilisation coming into view against the old, and hence, there is no way to clearly foretell the rules and principles that will develop for work in the putative post industrial world (Noon and Blyton, 1997). As we shall see more clearly in the next chapter this scarcely diminishes the current fervour for future gazing, and even the prescriptions for success in the new world which follows. Having broadly set the scene about the issues of transformation in the world of work, I will move on now to look at some of the theoretical perspectives for understanding it.

2.1.2. THE EXTENT OF PERIOD CHANGE

Post "is the key word of our times" says Beck (1992: 9). "Everything is 'post'." If it is not post, then it is the end (Fukuyama, 1989). As several authors (Casey, 1995; Kumar, 1995; Giddens, 1994; Pahl, 1995) have noted the imminent fin de siècle appears to be concentrating minds on ends and beginnings. As Giddens says it appears to have "such a

power of reification that it holds us in its thrall" (1994:56). The theme of fundamental change runs through much debate in the socio-economic and cultural arena about organisations and work. We are invited to acknowledge that old boundaries and implicit rules have been overturned in a new world, not yet fully understood, but heralded in by the forces of globalisation of markets, economies and communication (Dunning, 1993; Robertson, 1992) and facilitated by advances in information technology (Zuboff, 1988; Bell, 1973). In such a context, the grip of periodising ontologies appears strong. The family of theories (Thompson, 1994:187) of post industrialism \ post Fordism and post modernism\ modernity (regularly reviewed together, for example, in Legge, 1995; Kumar, 1995; Thompson and McHugh, 1995) can be mobilised as explanatory factors for, what are commonly agreed to be, far reaching changes in the "material and discursive practices of work" (Casey, 1995:12).

2.1.2.1. Post industrialism

Post industrialism can be used narrowly in conflation with the information society (Bell, 1973; Naisbitt, 1984; Castells, 1989) or in a more all embracing sense to capture the changes implied in that concept as well in post Fordism (Piore and Sabel, 1984; Hall and Jacques, 1989) and quite generally within moves towards flexibility in all its forms in organisational life (Kumar, 1992; Legge, 1995; Casey, 1995). In this wider sense, it implies a breach with the industrial age which preceded it, as exemplified in a shift from manufacturing to service, from bureaucracy to looser organisational forms and the contention that information is the key to unlocking the potential benefits. Those workers with access to highly technical and theoretical knowledge will find themselves as a new workplace elite (Drucker 1993; Reich, 1991), able to transport their internalised assets across and between organisational boundaries. Those boundaries themselves will become more fluid as information technologies allow for the disintegration of vertical models of control. Organisations can decentralise, disaggregate and make alliances in such a manner that it becomes possible to talk of "organising" as an ongoing process rather than as a bounded noun indicating a clearly demarcated company or firm (Morgan, 1986; Gergen, 1992).

2.1.2.2. Post Fordism

In a similar vein the notion of post Fordism (Piore and Sabel, 1984; Wood, 1989) can suggest a burgeoning role for the small enterprise in a context of large scale economic

restructuring. The argument, in essence, proceeds that we have already witnessed the "first industrial divide in the era described as Fordism ("a delightfully vague concept" Savage et al., 1992:59) which was characterised by mass production of standard goods for mass markets, often requiring only semi or unskilled labour rigidly organised in some production line process (Piore and Sabel, 1984). The effects of globalisation of markets and economies (1992; Dunning, 1993; Robertson, 1992), the explosion in the uses of information technology (Zuboff, 1988) allied to changing consumer expectations (du Gay, 1996a) render such a model of production inappropriate. Allying these trends to the recessions of the 1970s, it is theorised that we enter the "second industrial divide" of "flexible specialisation" which is characterised by smaller units and niche markets which require new means of production and accumulation. Within this model, work is increasingly outsourced outside the firm to smaller units (Piore and Sabel, 1984). More flexible use of labour, to be discussed below, is implicated. Concomitant changes are linked to the need to flatten organisational hierarchies and move away from a command and control style of management to one based on communication and commitment. The links to post industrialism are apparent, just as they are to the even more nebulous and difficult debates around postmodernism\ postmodernity.

2.1.2.3. Post modernism

As Beck says "with *post*-modernism things begin to get blurred" (1992: 9). There is no need to rehearse all the arguments about that debate here (see Kumar, 1995; Harvey, 1989) but suffice to say that as ontology or epistemology (Cooper and Burrell, 1988; Parker, 1992; Hassard, 1993) the debate points to a certain diffusion, fragmentation and individualism in social life, associated with, but not exhausted by the changes inherent in the putative post industrial, post Fordist world. Indeed the relative lack of attention to workplace issues as opposed to matters of culture and consumption has been noted (du Gay, 1996a; Casey, 1995). The major resonance of these (heterogeneous) debates for this study revolves around approaches to self and identity in a less certain world. This theme is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.3., but I think it is useful to give a flavour of the debate at this point. du Gay makes the point that identity only becomes an issue under conditions which challenge it. Hence, the constructed nature of "ostensibly stable, unified and "natural" economic identities" (1996a:3) has become apparent with organisational and work change. We come to see these identities as contingent and

constituted only in relation to that which they are not. Bauman (1996) sums up what he regards as the differences between a modern and postmodern approach to identity:

"if the modern 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the postmodern 'problem of identity" is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open" (Bauman 1996:18).

Implicit is the notion of individualism expressed through personal choices within a proliferation of lifestyles and consumption patterns and in the ongoing project to develop and actualise the self (du Gay, 1996). It is suggested then that large scale social groupings like class come to be less meaningful to the individual who is more likely to gravitate to more localised groupings or to developing social movements based around such issues as ethnicity or sexuality or environment (Hall and du Gay, 1996).

Despite the complexity of these debates there is a marked convergence of themes (Casey, 1995; Kumar, 1995) linking changes in production and organisation associated with advanced information technologies and consumption patterns to changes in culture and lifestyle with an overarching question mark about the legitimisation of knowledge and ways of seeing (Lyotard, 1984). Against this background, the individual's move out of organisational employment and the traditional career can be seen as, at once, both impelled by the organisational change implied in the "post" world and also, as prompted more personally by an awareness of the zeitgeist of choice, flexibility and freedom.

Drawing on the work of Harvey (1989); Lyotard, (1984) and Best and Kellner (1991) among others, Legge offers the following summary of the "post" debates. The movement is:

"away from the logic of mass production towards that of individualised consumption; ... away from bureaucratic rationality and its associated emphasis on hierarchy, centralisation and specialisation towards the "proliferation and free play of discursive rationalities " (Reed, 1992:229) and associated entrepreneurial, decentralised, self regulating, flexible networks and the dissolution of boundaries; away from planning towards strategy; away from time-space fragmentation towards time space

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compression; away from the absolute and standardised towards the relative and eclectic" (1995: 145).

2.1.3. CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

However, the notion of such movements constituting discontinuous change is hotly disputed (Pollert, 1991). The post Fordists, for example, may display a "rupturist bent" (Burrell, 1992: 173) in examining the evidence on the economic restructuring of flexible specialisation. But, as Burrell points out, there is an alternative "evolutionary" view of the same evidence articulated by *neo* Fordists ("a nebulous, imprecise term" Burrell, 1992: 173) such as Aglietta (1982) who downplay the emerging importance of small scale enterprise. They attribute it largely to the adaptation of large firms during a period of change as exemplified through a more extensive use of sub contracting and outsourcing (Burrows and Curran, 1991).

That we have entered into any new era of production and accumulation is disputed by those who point to the unchanging base of capitalism, despite some acknowledged modifications to its surface appearance (Giddens, 1987) and the existence of theories about the emergence of a new stage of capitalism (Lash and Urry, 1987). As Beck, for example, suggests, what rupture does occur between the tenets of industrialism and the emerging flexibilised, pluralized workplace does so *"*under an unchanged logic of profit-oriented rationalisation" (1992:149). "Plus ça change" is at the heart of much critique (Hyman, 1991) but, while concurring with the need to proceed with some caution in assessing the level of change, Kumar notes problems in a tendency to "harp too much on... continuity and to refuse to acknowledge that new things are afoot" (1995: 64). In many ways it is the prefix "post" which is the problem, as so much energy is taken up with attempting to prove or not the basis of the periodising ontologies. Parker (1994) concurs with authors as diverse as Giddens (1990), Habermas (1987) and Jameson (1992), that it is premature to call a close on modernity and all that that implies. He believes that such notions as capitalism and industrialism still have analytical power and it is extremely premature to assume that the insights of Durkheim, Weber and Marx have had their day.

2.1.3.1. A period of late or reflexive modernity?

In navigating a personal route through these debates, I find useful the position taken by commentators like Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) who claim that it is not useful to suggest that modern societies have moved into a new disjunctive postmodern phase, but do so without negating the scope and scale of changes that seem apparent. Rather, from similar perspectives, they argue that we can conceive of this time as a period of high or reflexive modernity characterised by developments which do indeed pose transformational challenges for institutions and individuals. As such, their perspectives require "a delicate balancing between the contradictions of continuity and rupture within modernity" (Beck, 1992:9). It is debatable whether we are yet in a position to stand back and proclaim on the extent and nature of change (Bauman, 1992). What we can and must do is reflect upon them in a project of reflexive modernisation. A dominant characteristic of this period, for both authors, is the notion of "reflexivity"- the capacity of individuals and institutions to reflect on and back on themselves. Beck concentrates at a societal level and in so doing introduces the interesting notion of "risk." Changes in the work sphere are passing on to individuals, in their daily lives, material risks (with psychological consequences) previously borne by the organisation. Giddens' perspectives are also central to this thesis as he emphasises the consequences of reflexive modernity for individuals in the reflexive construction of their self identity through a period of change and emerging anxieties. His views will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

Whatever viewpoint is adopted, there is little doubt that these debates have resonance beyond the academic domain. Discourses about organisational change, flexibility at work, changing careers, the enterprise culture, and lifestyle and consumption are "out there", as it were, in the public domain (du Gay, 1996a), shaping and reflecting the lives of individuals. Hence it is important to study both the material and discursive changes in work (Casey, 1995) seeing them not as separate from one another nor as the one concealing the truth of the other but as mutually constitutive (du Gay, 1996a; Casey, 1995). The next two sections focus in on what is known and what is said about changes in organisations and patterns of work which relate to the transition out of managerial work in a large hierarchical organisation into portfolio work.

2.2. CHANGING ORGANISATIONS: BUREAUCRACY AND ENTERPRISE

This section considers organisational change by examining the themes of bureaucracy and enterprise particularly as related to the public sector.

2.2.1. INTRODUCTION

The direction of change in organisational shape and structure is widely held to be from the vertical, rigid, bounded and integrated to the horizontal, flexible, blurred and disaggregated. Thompson and McHugh summarise neatly:

"The language is dominated by the Fs: fast flat and flexible organisations; and Ds: decentralisation, disaggregation, disorganisation and delayering. It all adds up to a widely held belief that the days of bureaucracy are over" (1995: 165).

Central to these debates are bureaucracy and enterprise most usually constructed as polar opposites (du Gay, 1996b). The career transition under scrutiny in this study has been regarded, by some, as a move from a life led under the bureaucratic principle to one freed by the entrepreneurial (Golzen and Garner, 1990; Kanter, 1989b). Hence it is useful, as a context for the study, to briefly examine organisational trends away from bureaucracy and towards enterprise.

2.2.2. BUREAUCRACY

Bureaucracy has been the dominant organisational form of the twentieth century and hence the periods of modernity, industrialism and Fordism as discussed above. Its pre-eminence was attributed by Weber to its "purely technical superiority over any other form of organisation" (1947:337). The defining characteristics of ideal /typical bureaucracy as identified by Weber have formed the bedrock for subsequent critique. Thompson and McHugh (1995) helpfully group them in two broad headings:

The employment relationship. In bureaucratic forms the office - the job- is a vocation, typically full time and occupied by appointed, suitably qualified, trained and experienced officers. Office and officer are separated - the job is not the property of the individual. Indeed the individual can expect to move through a hierarchy of jobs within a defined career structure, supported by a system of fixed wage and other benefits. The strong internal labour market offers prospective reward to the new junior entrant. As such bureaucracy is central to the traditional career model.

Work structures and relations. A bureaucracy is characterised by a specialised division of labour enshrined in a hierarchical chain of command with formally established, defined, impersonal (and written) rules, rights and responsibilities at each level, subject to common modes of control which are intended to overcome partiality and inequity in the actions and decision making of officials.

Bureaucracy is underpinned by a belief in rationality and the applicability of precise rules and mechanisms of accountability. It is offered as a model for the efficient organisation of government and large scale enterprise and has been upheld as a "model of carefulness, precision and effective administration" (Giddens 1989:227).

2.2.2.1. Critique of bureaucracy

Although the contingent nature of bureaucracy was noted in early research (Burns and Stalker, 1969), in the last fifteen years or so searching and at times strident critique (Peters, 1987)[1] has emerged. Criticism is widespread about its alleged negative emergent characteristics on both moral and practical grounds.

Practically, the regulated and rule bound organisational form is judged too rigid to cope with swift decision making and the changes in product and services required by the realities of a turbulent external environment (Bennis, 1973; Burns and Stalker 1969; Osborne and Gaebbler, 1992). Indeed bureaucracy has been construed as a barrier to adaptation and change by its very nature. Furthermore, its alleged merits were undermined by evidence that it did not guard against partiality as its rules proved manipulable (Gouldner, 1954). Much of the critique though takes place on a moral terrain.

Morally, it is held to stultify the initiative and emotions of individuals binding them to the workings of an overly rational system which in no way prizes their creativity and individual enterprise (Kanter, 1989; Argyris 1964; Whyte, 1956; Osborne and Gaebbler, 1992). Linking in to the individualism theme of post modern discourse discussed above, bureaucracy can be seen as inimical to the project of individual self realisation (du Gay, 1996a).Weber himself is invoked as evidence in his widely discussed concerns about the iron cage of bureaucracy. [2]

2.2.2.2. Alternative organisational forms

All too often the critique of bureaucracy treats it as a terminally ill organisational form incapable of recovering from its flaws in any way that will render it useful in the late

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[1]Peters urged a public and passionate hatred of bureaucracy (1987:459).

[2] But du Gay (1996b) insists this is a highly selective reading of Weber.

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twentieth century (Hecksher, 1994). In its place is the notion of a radically different form of organisation, often debated at a high level of abstraction. Hence we are offered the vision of the post bureaucratic organisation (Hecksher and Donnellon, 1994); the post-entrepreneurial organisation (Kanter, 1989b); the post-modern organisation (Clegg, 1990); the virtual organisation (Nohria and Berkley, 1994); the self designing organisation (Weick and Berlinger, 1989); the federal organisation (Handy, 1989); the intelligent enterprise (Quinn, 1992). All the authors propose their model as developmentally more advanced forms of organisation. Yet empirical evidence for their existence is scarce. Hecksher (1994) acknowledges that "discussion of the post bureaucratic organisation is complicated by the fact that it doesn't exist" (1994:17). He extrapolates the notion from examples of organisations (primarily high tech and multi national) which seem to deliberately violate bureaucratic principles. However Clegg proposes the empirically grounded existence of postmodern organisations (in Japan, South East Asia and Sweden and the Third Italy). He defines the modernist organisation as one which can be thought of:

" *in terms of Weber's typification of bureaucratised, mechanistic structures of control as these were subsequently erected upon a fully rationalised base of divided and deskilled labour"* (1990:17).

By contrast, then, the post-modern organisation is constructed as flexible, based on niche markets, premised on technological choice and operated through de-differentiated, de-demarcated and multi-skilled jobs; employee relations are characterised by fragmentary relational forms such as sub contacting and networking (1990:181). The links to the Post Fordist debate are clear (Hassard, 1993). Thompson also points to the consistencies with the "more general portrait of a post modernist culture expressing paradox, indeterminacy, heterogeneity and disorganisation" (1994:185).

Once again, the issue of rhetoric and reality is raised. Certainly the empirical base of such formulations can be questioned and some would agree that it is reminscent of a before and after "pop management approach" (Thompson, 1994: 186). For many it is premature yet to write the obituary for bureaucracy (du Gay, 1996b; Thompson, 1994). However, the convergence of themes in these debates about the transformation of work is noteworthy and adds up to a growing discursive consensus in much literature about changing organisations and careers and about the direction of those changes. This debate is pertinent to this study as it points to the changes that may have been visited on the bureaucracies the participants left and may still contract with on a different basis. The vision of organisations as looser, disaggregated arrangements speaks of a more enhanced role for the independent operator.

2.2.3. ENTERPRISE

Central to much debate on changing organisations is the implied move from bureaucratic to more enterprising organisational structures and methods of governance. An interesting angle on the attack on bureaucratic work forms is the elevation of the notion of enterprise as its binary opposite - as encapsulated in the elusive notion of the Enterprise Culture. du Gay (1996a) suggests that the Enterprise Culture can be seen as having two distinct but linked senses. The first is the notion of reconstructing a wide range of institutions and activities including those in the public sector (discussed below) along the lines of business enterprises. The second sense of the term refers to the kind of action or project which:

"exhibits "enterprising" qualities or characteristics on the part of individuals or groups. Lists of such characteristics usually include: boldness, vigour, self reliance, energy, and a willingness to take risks in the pursuit of goals. In the latter sense, an Enterprise culture is one in which these enterprising qualities are regarded as "human virtues" and promoted as such" (1991:45).

The pervasiveness of these notions in "new wave" management theories (Ezzamel, et al., 1994) such as the culture of the customer, the promotion of "excellence" at work and, most significantly for this study, the application of entrepreneurial principles in work, is noted (du Gay, 1996). Attention switches to the role of the individual in realising both their own and the organisation's aims. The message of the discourse, according to du Gay is "the free ride is over, you're on your own." From now on it is up to individuals to secure their own future through their own efforts. The individual becomes an "entrepreneur of the self" (Rose, 1990). The image of the "individualised, self actualising" workforce is seen as central to the "modern myth" about changing contemporary workplaces (Noon and Blyton, 1997:1) For some individuals such self actualisation will take place outside the organisation in self employment. Meanwhile, organisational success has come to be seen as "premised upon an engagement by the organisation of the self fulfilling impulses of all its individual employees" (1991:51). As work is a sphere where individuals can construct and confirm their identities, the "excellent" organisation will get the most out of employees by harnessing their needs for autonomy and creativity. Such notions have been heavily criticised, for example Willmott (1993) sees the corporate culture movement as a medium of nascent totalitarianism.

This notion of self -actualising impulses are central to the developing theory on new careers except, in this instance, they are seen to be harnessed for the benefit of the

individual rather than necessarily the employer. For example, Kanter (1989a) urges an entrepreneurial approach to developing one's career, contending that one can act, even within the organisation, as if in business for oneself (Bridges, 1995). The extent to which this might constitute emancipation for individuals (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992) or another form of chains is a moot point and the ideas raised about this issue thus far will be developed further in 3.4. However, returning now to the general debate about changing organisational forms, it is assumed that, to unleash these impulses in individuals, organisations must turn from formality to flexibility in design and approach. The bureaucratic way is the barrier.

2.2.3.1. The enterprise discourse

The dominance of the enterprise discourse- the "bundle of assumptions, beliefs and values which made up the dominant notions of enterprise and the enterprise culture" (Burrows and Curran, 1991:10) - in recent times is widely acknowledged (du Gay, 1996a; Ritchie, 1991; Burrows and Curran, 1991; Cross and Payne, 1991; Stanworth and Stanworth, 1995). Burrows and Curran (1991) argue that the restructuring theories which account for a resurgence in the small business sector have to be read alongside it, as this discourse constitutes "the cultural motif of the present period" (1991:10).

As a discourse it does have rivals (du Gay and Salaman, 1992). An alternative reading would emphasise the stability, security, sense of community and position in life that is lost in moving from bureaucratic to enterprising organisation and point to the exploitation inherent in the enterprise culture (Cross and Payne, 1991; Ritchie, 1991; Noon and Blyton, 1997). du Gay's (1991) contends that neither is simply right or wrong, neither simply expresses or negates some form of underlying reality. But the discourses related to the emergence of the enterprise culture, embedded as they are (or were?) in the issues, hopes and fears of globalisation (du Gay and Salaman 1992; Robertson, 1992) and technology and more specifically in the Thatcherite Britain of the 1980s (Ritchie, 1991; Burrows and Curran, 1991) appear to function hegemonically.

However, Burrows and Curran (1991), even while recognising the dominance and pervasiveness of the enterprise culture discourse, urge caution. They believe that the discourse is only tangentially related to the emergence of more small scale economic activities and that it is only "a historically specific and contingent semiotic rationale for social and economic changes associated with restructuring in general" (1991:12). In other words its day will pass.

2.2.3 2. Enterprising governance

The pervasiveness of this particular discourse is evident in its application during the 1980s and 1990s to the issues of governance in the public sector. It is in this sphere that debate about the move from bureaucracy to other organisational forms is the most stark. Ferlie and Pettigrew (1996) suggest that the post 1945 nationalised corporations or Welfare State bureaucracies, can be seen as analogous to the Fordist corporation. Dent argues that the highly bureaucratic NHS is an exemplar of what the modernist project could achieve (1995: 880). Yet both sets of authors point to the emergence of new forms or organisation within it. Ferlie and Pettigrew discuss the apparent emergence of network forms within the NHS drawing on developing theory about networks as an alternative style of organising (Nohria and Eccles, 1992; Miles and Snow 1986). A network perspective can be understood in terms of the "unbundling" of large organisations and the reshaping of organisational form into "loosely coupled flotillas of smaller organisations" (Ferlie and Pettigrew, 1996:S82). They argue that recent initiatives within the NHS which emphasise co-operation between parts of the organisation and inter-agency links are predicated on this form. Dent (1995) goes further and questions if the NHS is a case of postmodernism pointing to the emergence of de-differentiated organisational forms and "newly negotiated cultures and aesthetics" (1995:894). Central to both studies is an exploration of the direction of changes in the NHS and the public sector generally.

During the 1980s and 1990s there have been a range of top down, government led management reforms within the NHS (Ashburner et al., 1996) (see Appendix One) and other parts of the public sector (Ranson and Stewart, 1994). Central to these attempts at restructuring and the establishment of new patterns of formal relations was a belief that the Public Sector was in need of rationalisation in order to improve its competitiveness and efficiency (Pollitt, 1993; Osborne and Gaebbler, 1992).

The internal market model is a manifestation of this restructuring In the NHS this took the form of a disaggregation of the service into purchasers - the Health Authorities and GP fund holders and providers - NHS trusts as well as some level of competition from the private and voluntary sector. Within other areas of the public sector issues like compulsory competitive tendering and market testing took hold (Flynn and Walsh, 1988; Painter, 1992; Hood, 1991). Such changes were legislatively embedded and were driven by a sophisticated and forceful implementation strategy (Ferlie et al., 1996). The disaggregation and fragmentation of single bodies which ensued was combined with a "contract" culture arising in relationships between departments as internal customers of each other and outsourced functions (Stewart and Walsh, 1992; Hood, 1995).

Enthusiasm for this policy direction centres around the freedom engendered to compete, empower and be creative (Osborne and Gaebbler, 1992). However, warnings abound about the application of business principles to the public sector (Utley and Hooper, 1993; du Gay, 1996; Jacobs, 1995). Legge suggests that the public sector was used by the government as "the test bed for its experimentation with free market principles"(1995:236). The "liberal art of separation" whereby pluralism, equity and justice are seen to reside in the separation of spheres - success in one setting is not convertible to another - is threatened (Walzer, 1994; Rorty, 1988). The application of the principles of competition and enterprise to the public sector can disturb symbolic orders, values and meaning systems. (Anthony, 1990). Such potential problems may be exacerbated when the market model is enacted within a culturally embedded (Granovetter, 1985) stereotype of what competition and enterprise must mean (Johnson and Molloy, 1995; Ferlie and Pettigrew, 1996). At the least the appropriate managerial style within the changing public sector is subject to debate (Pollitt, 1993; Ranson and Stewart, 1994; LGMB, 1992; McKevitt and Lawton, 1994). Questions have also been raised recently about declining standards of conduct of public workers (Plowden, 1994) and there is concern that the "public sector ethos" has been subverted and eroded by such organisational changes.

2.1.2.3. The public sector ethos?

The public sector ethos is premised on the assumption of widely held and shared cultural values and attitudes among staff in the public sector [3](O'Toole, 1993; Smith, 1991). Pratchett and Wingfield (1994) note an ideal \ typical construction of the public sector ethos to comprise five related features: accountability, bureaucratic behaviour, sense of community, motivation and loyalty: the meaning of which are all highly debatable in themselves but all called into question by the import of market principles. However the public sector ethos remains an elusive concept (Gabris and Simo, 1995) and some would argue that it is evolving rather than eroding (Pratchett and Wingfield, 1996).

Nevertheless it remains a salient concept for many public sector workers who express fear that values held dear may be undermined with the import of enterprise to bureaucracy (Talbot, 1994). On a more general note, Willmott (1993), in what he calls a polemic about corporate cultures, argues that, against the grain of culture change

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[3]Savage et al.'s (1992) study of lifestyle and consumption patterns shows a difference in the patterns of those who work within welfare and social service organisation including medical workers of all types and other middle class groups. The public sector group demonstrated more asceticism in consumption patterns. The authors argue that this could be seen as "simultaneously a product of deliberate choice (one rejecting competitive individualism and marketplace values while at the same time being a rationalisation of their comparatively low incomes" (1992:110). Without following this line of argument further it is interesting to note that it adds some weight to those studies which show that public sector workers construct themselves as different from those attracted to the private sector.

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theories, individuals may indeed distance themselves from corporate values in order to preserve and assert their self identity (1993:537). This may be all the more relevant when the change is in a direction that challenges individual's perceptions of the very nature of the organisation and their association with it (Weick, 1995).

2.2.4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this brief review of aspects of organisational change is to highlight both what is said to be happening to the organisations the research participants leave and to those they create, or contract with on a basis other than employment. I have considered the putative changes to bureaucracies, particularly public bureaucracies and the emergence of both enterprising organisational forms and enterprising approaches to individual self actualisation at work. Such issues are pertinent to a study of individuals leaving employment in large organisations to set up a work context outside of contractual employment with organisations.

This section provides a backdrop to further strands of this debate that I will address later in the study. Firstly, in Chapter 3.3 I discuss the evidence which suggests that organisational change and \ or the lure of enterprising ways as significant in decisions to leave organisational employment. The NHS's own research indicates that managers do cite organisational changes as a major reason for leaving (IHSM, 1994). Secondly, I move on in 3.4 to look at the new relationships which may be developing between these participants and (changing) organisations. At that point I consider the experience of contracting with organisations. In doing so, I comment on the ongoing social relations (Granovetter, 1985) that are theorised to develop between clients and contractors, which may give lie to the more market oriented instrumentality implied both in the move away from bureaucracy and the emergence of an enterprising culture.

2.3. FLEXIBLE AND CHANGING LABOUR MARKETS FOR MANAGERS?

This section moves on from the level of organisational change to changes at individual level, concentrating on managers. The discussion is located within the wider debate on flexibility in labour use as exemplified by the Flexible Firm model (Atkinson and Meager, 1986). Empirical evidence to suggest that managers are moving out of organisational employment into more "flexible" working arrangements is examined along with Savage et al.'s (1992) sociological model of the move from managerial work to professional work or self employment.

2.3.1. ARE MANAGERS MOVING OUT OF EMPLOYMENT?

It is something of a truism that managers have been disproportionately affected by the spate of organisational restructurings and downsizings of recent years. There is some available evidence which puts figures on the level of downsizing but it is primarily American and no comparable figures exist for the UK (Arnold, 1997; Woodall et al., 1995). There are strong indications that delayering and downsizing has been a significant feature of managerial life in recent years (Wheatley, 1992: 15-17; Institute of Management, 1992:2). Dopson and Stewart (1990), however, comment on the ambiguous sources of information on the decline in managerial numbers. They conclude that while evidence is sparse about much change in managerial labour markets that does not diminish predictions about managers' uncertain futures.

More pertinently, perhaps, managers remain widely concerned about job loss and insecurity (Wheatley, 1992; Worrall and Cooper, 1997) despite some indications that the threat of it is less than might appear (Kessler and Undy, 1996; IRS Employment Trends, 631,1997; Elliott, 1996; Smith, 1997; Amin et al., 1997). It is problematic to unpack this issue because while some managerial job loss is real enough, there has also been an increase (which is projected to continue) in the creation of managerial jobs (Skills and Enterprise Network, 1996; Institute for Employment Studies, 1994; Institute for Employment Research, (IER) 1994; Bevan et al., 1995). As Herriot and Pemberton (1995:6) put it, we have simultaneous blood letting and blood transfusion. A more generous attribution of the title of manager is implicated in clouding the picture. There is also a problem of definition in surveys about managerial job change. Self ascription is

used or survey members belong to a specific group like the British Institute of Management (Wheatley, 1992; Nicholson and West, 1988; Alban-Metcalfe and Nicholson, 1984) which probably slants some of the data towards those at a more senior level who strongly identify themselves as managers.

So, not only does the question have to be answered about the level of managerial labour market changes but the very definition of manager needs to be addressed. Management as function, type of activity, discourse, social process, symbolism or occupation has been much debated (Mintzberg, 1973; Linstead et al., 1996; Watson, 1994; du Gay et al., 1996; Whiteley, 1989).This study accepts that "manager" is a historically contingent and socially constructed notion (Grint, 1995; du Gay et al., 1996).

2.3.1.1. The internal labour market: in decline?

Much of the current debate about managerial careers centres on the apparent demise of the internal labour market (ILM) - "a series of interlinked progressively higher status and higher paying positions" (Tolbert, 1996:335). ILMs were theorised (Doeringer and Piore, 1971) to develop relative to an organisation's need for human asset specificity (Williamson, 1975). This refers to the extent to which skills required by, or unique to, a firm are not readily available in the external labour force. In such cases it may make sense for organisations to create internal labour markets in order to retain such people. Central to Weber's concept of bureaucracy is orderly progression through a hierarchy:

"the official is set for a "career" within the hierarchical order of public service. He expects to move from the lower, less important, less well paid to the higher positions" (1978:963).

However, the internal labour market can be divided into the organisational and the occupational (Doeringer and Piore, 1971) labour markets (Althauser and Kalleberg, 1981). The classic managerial career is about a route up the firm's internal labour market (FILM). By contrast groups will move in an occupational labour market, between employers, but within the same occupation. This long standing divide in sociology and career theory between the manager and the professional will be explored further below. It is the FILM which is assumed to be in decline.

2.3.1.2. Models of labour market change

The highly influential but much maligned (Pollert, 1991) Flexible Firm Model (Atkinson and Meager, 1986) proposed the exercise of numerical, financial and functional flexibility in labour markets to deal with the vagaries of supply and demand in a more turbulent, external environment.[4] The restructured labour market presumes a declining "core" who could expect a career within an internal labour market and a concomitant increase in "peripheral" forms of employment, many drawn on a temporary basis from an external labour market. There is significant doubt about the empirical veracity of such models (Pollert, 1991; Storey, 1995). Moreover, Savage et al. (1992) criticise both the model and subsequent critique for inadequate discussion of impact on managerial jobs. It remains an implicit assumption that they will be retained as core staff - albeit fewer of them. The authors argue that the model:

"seems to assume that all senior workers are functionally flexible and that companies increasingly rely on a key group of workers, who are insulated from the external labour market" (1992:62).

The model thus assumes a "consolidation of career prospects for some, but the marginalisation of others from the FILM (Halford and Savage, 1995:118). Halford and Savage's (1995) research in Local Government and Banking showed no marked decline in FILMs for managers and professional workers (e.g. the organisations use only internal re-deployment). They did not detect significant numbers of workers who previously worked inside ILMs now being forced to work outside them. On the contrary they saw the increase in temporary and part-time workers as primarily involving those who have always been excluded from, or disadvantaged within, ILMs.

What is interesting, however, notwithstanding the empirical doubt about the workings of ILMs, is the gathering belief among managers that they are a threatened species (Scase and Goffee, 1989; Hecksher, 1995; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). Indeed, what Halford and Savage (1995) found was that job ladders and career routes had not

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[4] Handy's (1989) shamrock model has a similar conceptual base. He offers the idea of the shamrock to suggest an alternative organisational model of labour use. One "leaf" would consist of the core workers - professional, manages, technicians who constitute the primary labour market. A second "leaf" would include those whose skills were needed by the organisations but which were not firm-specific - e.g. clerical, routine maintenance, less skilled manual staff. The third group are those the organisation employs as and when they are needed , like temporary staff, agency worker, self employed subcontractors.

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disappeared but had become more fragmented and heterogeneous so people were unsure what were now the "favoured" routes to take to get to the "top."

As Savage et al. (1992) point out, a different gloss can be applied. Citing specifically the work of Weick and Berlinger (1989) on self designing organisations, they point to a change in the managerial qualities which are valued within organisations. Loyalty and commitment, central to the bureaucratic career are less valued now within the discourse of organisational change as they are constructed as standing in the way of change. They also point to the post Fordist thesis and Clegg's (1990) notion of the post modern organisation which propose that hierarchy becomes less central to organisational functioning. Market mechanisms can supersede the "visible hand" of managerial hierarchies. Thus managers can be replaced by consultants or other sub contractors.

2.3.1.3. Managers on the move

Hence the picture of what is happening to managerial careers is confusing and made all the more so by the temptation to set up an opposition between the golden age of managerial careers in the past and the more volatile world of today. There is some evidence of previous stability in managerial patterns[5] but it is commonly overstated (Pahl, 1995). Empirical evidence from the 1980s about managerial job change seems to show that moves which involve major changes in status, employer or function were frequent (Nicholson and West 1988). However, it must be said that the same research suggested that such moves are uncommon in large bureaucracies.

Inkson and Coe (1993) tracing the job moves of 800 managers over the thirteen year period from 1980-1992 showed that managers were changing jobs more frequently and that sideways and downwards moves were on the increase (unlike upwards moves which were decreasing). Managers were changing jobs for different reasons: few indicate personal choice or career and personal development as their reason but increasingly report that the moves were imposed by the employer through

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[5]A survey of managerial career patterns undertaken in 1952 by the Acton Trust (which was probably the first systematic survey of managers in British industry) focused on the largest firms and had a remarkable response rate. It indicated the existence of a large group of managers and verified the significance for them of the organisational career based around an Internal Labour Market. 63% had worked at the same firm all their life or had joined it before age 24. The vast majority of organisations relied on internal promotions, filling 90% of managerial jobs that way. Furthermore, patronage seemed to be the way it was done with the organisation's managers or owners spotting promising material and sponsoring their rise through the company (Savage et al, 1992 50-51).

organisational restructuring. By contrast, other authors are convinced that there is a ground swell of personal desire for a more reasonable balance between home and work and that managers are making decisions based on accommodating their myriad of personal needs (Hewitt, 1993; Bailyn, 1993; Marshall, 1995; Amin et al., 1997).

2.3.2. MANAGERS AND "NON STANDARD" WORKING

2.3.2.1. Survey evidence reviewed

In terms of looking to what happens to managers (or indeed anyone) who leave employment, voluntarily or not, the picture is even more opaque. The term "non-standard" tends to be used (IRS, 635, 1997) as a catch all for a range of employment patterns and contracts which are also referred to in various studies as "flexible", or "atypical." Arrangements thus categorised could include, for example, zero hours or annual hours contracts or part time work (which could just as easily affect those at the core of the organisation) or temporary working and subcontracting. The minefield of the survey statistics has been noted (Casey, 1991, Legge, 1995). Taking the surveys together, Storey (1995) notes some increase in numerical contracting which can be traced to long standing practices and appears to be more opportunistic than strategic. He also notes that the exception is the public sector, where there has been distinct increases in the use of non standard labour. Storey implicates government policy as:

"part of a coherent strategy promoting the primacy of the free market, buttressed by a rhetoric advocating reduction in public expenditure, the introduction of "business principles" into the management of public sector services" (1995:40-41).

In general, studies show no marked evidence of employers strategically adopting flexible working practices (Hunter et al, 1993; Pollert, 1991). However, as Procter et al. (1995) point out, that rather depends on your view of strategy. Using an emergent view of strategy (Mintzberg, 1987) which sees patterns in streams of events, they suggest that the tendency is decidedly towards flexible labour use, even if employers do not specifically encode and plan it as such. Indeed most employers believe that their use of all types of flexible labour will increase in the future (CBI, 1994; Institute of Management and Manpower, 1995; Amin et al., 1997). The extent and implications of changing contractual relationships may have been underestimated (Purcell, 1996).

In the sections which follow I concentrate on two aspects of "non-standard" work-temporary work and self employment -which appear most pertinent to a study of people who eschewed (employment) contractual dependence on one employer.

2.3.2.1.1 Temporary work

According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS)(1997) temporary staff still represent a very small proportion of total employment:[6]7.1% of employees in Spring 1996, up from around 5.5% in the mid to late 1980s. Nearly half of them are on fixed term or task based contracts. Temporary working, in fact, has grown much faster than overall employment over the last few years (IRS, 635, 1997) but Casey et al. (1997) suggest that the fixed term contract is increasingly a public sector and professional phenomenon. Hence, while the survey does indicate that many temporary jobs are low paid, unstable and insecure, it also points to a large cohort of highly qualified professionals working on a temporary or fixed term basis. Of the people on fixed term contracts 45% indicated that they were in temporary jobs because they could not find a permanent job (see also von Hippel et al., 1997). The surveys thus provide hints rather than firm evidence that ex managers may be found in this domain.

2.3.2.1.2. Self employment

Drawing conclusions about the much vaunted growth in self employment is fraught with definitional and conceptual difficulties. Daly (1991) reviewing the LFS survey drew attention to the ambiguous category of self employment. The survey itself relies on self description and so the LFS concept of self employment can include labour only sub contractors, company directors and people who are also employed. However other studies adopt quite different definitions.[7] Categories have also been found to overlap within the surveys (Casey, 1991). For example, Casey found that less than half the women described as self employed in the LFS and the WIRS data to 1987 were *only* self employed: half were *also* part time and one in eight were part time and temporary.

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[6]Yet in the USA, the largest employer is now Manpower Inc., a temporary agency (Hall and Moss, 1998)

[7] The Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) definition includes all "those who in their main employment work on their own account, whether or not they have employees. As such these people would more usually be referred to as "freelance agents, associates, contract staff, individual sub contractors, self employed casuals, consultants or advisory staff" (IRS, 565: 6). The Employment and Labour Use Surveys (McGregor and Sproull, 1991) include people that an organisation might give work to who are not their employees but neither are they the employees of any other organisation.

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Following Scase and Goffee's (1980) typology of self employment types,[8] it has become common to talk of a continuum of self employment types "ranging from the genuinely independent small business through to other forms virtually indistinguishable from employment" (Stanworth and Stanworth, 1995:222). The analytical value of the term is therefore (Rainbird, 1991, Bogenhold and Staber, 1991) questioned.

However, taking self employment to mean any position along the continuums noted by Scase and Goffee (1980) and Hakim (1989), it seems that the 1980s were a period of rapid growth in self employment. (Savage et al. 1982, Bogenhold and Staber, 1991). Self employment accounts for much of the rise in 'non-standard working' according to the LFS (1981-1988). For example between 1981 and 1989 the number of people self employed grew by 57 per cent, from just over 2 million to nearly 3 1\2 million (Daly 1991:109). After a small dip in the early 1990s the trend is again up and projected to continue (Skills and Enterprise Network 1995).

A noteworthy statistic is that 97% of businesses employ less than 20 people, in fact 72.3% of businesses are sole traders with no employees. Despite this we know little about the self employed without employees (Stanworth et al., 1995). It may be assumed that people heeding the advice to set up as freelance, independent contractors are most likely to be small or sole traders and it is hoped that this study will contribute further to understanding of this group. In fact, there has been an increase noted in the field of management consultancy, both as employed and self-employed activity. Unfortunately data to substantiate strong suspicions that the majority are self employed small or sole traders (Clark, 1995; Schlegelmilch et al., 1992) is not available[9].

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[8]They suggest the existence of four types of self employed: 1. the self employed who work for themselves and employ no labour 2. small employers who employ a few staff and work alongside them as well managing the business 3. owner controllers who do not work alongside their employees but who are wholly responsible for managing the business. 4. owner directors who control the business via formal management hierarchies. (Scase and Goffee, 1980)

[9]Figures from the Business Statistics Office (1985, 1992) suggests that the industry expanded by over 200%. However there are various problems with interpreting this data. Information from company records is unreliable for sole traders who are under no obligation to publish accounts. A similar problem exists with VAT returns. Similarly Industry bodies are also a source of data. The Annual Reports of the Management consultancy association shows a dramatic increase in the aggregate fees of members over the last thirty years. But this association is skewed towards the larger and more long established consultancies (Clark, 1995: 22).

Hence, the aggregated survey data is not sufficiently finely graded to enable researchers to trace the paths taken from previous labour market position into "non-standard" work. Several authors (Savage et al. 1992; Bridges, 1995: Kanter, 1989; Golzen and Garner, 1990) though, are able to extrapolate from this survey data and the anecdotal evidence (Palmer, 1995; Caulkin, 1995), a trend indicating that managers are moving out of the ILM and into the more volatile external labour market of the so-called periphery. It is similarly widely assumed, as will be discussed in the next chapter, that they are moving into a more professional (occupational) or entrepreneurial way of working.

2.3.2.2. The move to professional or self employed labour markets

While this debate is central to emerging career theory about career paths, it is also the site of much discussion within sociology which questions the effect of changing work practices on the middle classes (Goldthorpe, 1987[10]; Savage et al., 1992; Butler et al. 1995). The structuring of class is not the concern of this study, although class based issues may arise as salient to research participants. However, it is useful to draw an eclectic range of insights into the study. One particularly pertinent study is that of Savage et al. (1992) who theorise changes in managerial careers. They point to the convergence, not just between managers and professionals (or organisational and occupational careers (Tolbert (1996)), but between both and the self employed.

2.3.2.2.1. Defining "professional"

Before introducing their model, definitions need to be addressed. I have already noted the definitional difficulties of manager and self employed. It is no less so with professional, which might refer to a specific, highly prestigious and diverse range of the occupations like doctors and lawyers or it can refer to " a limited number of occupations which have particular institutional and ideological traits more or less in common " (Freidson 1994: 107). As Freidson goes on to remark, the term has become "hopelessly corrupted" and there is no way out of the resultant confusion except to recognise that it is differentially applied in different texts. Hence, as with manager and self employed "professional" is both a historically contingent and socially constructed notion.

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[10]Goldthorpe theorises the continuing existence of what he calls a service class of managers, professionals and administrative workers who are united by the "common service relationship" with employers. He disputes that labour market changes which may prompt managers to leave organisations alters the notion of such a unified class, arguing that these managers continue to have a similar relationship with employers who offer them work on a contractual basis.

However, certain themes emerge in the literature regularly enough to demand some attention. For professionals, the issues are about status, restricted entry, specialised skills, exclusionary labour market shelter and control. Savage et al. summarise how the two concepts of manager and professional tend to be used:

"at the more abstract level it can be seen as the concrete embodiment of a conflict between two opposing social imperatives: the impersonal, routinising world of conformity to bureaucracy on the one hand; and the creative, dynamic role of "knowledge" which depends on professional "autonomy on the other" (1992: 20).

The distinction lingers despite awareness that the two are not polar opposites: indeed many professionals work within bureaucracies (Larson, 1977).

2.3.2.2.2. An asset based view of middle class groupings

In their review of middle class formation Savage et al. (1992) propose a view which centres on the assets that various groupings have in their favour (and how they can be used as axes of exploitation). Drawing on the work of both Wright (1978) and Bourdieu (1984), they suggest that middle classes emerged based on causal entities of cultural, organisational and property assets, correlating to professionals, managers and petite bourgeoisie. Causality is not the issue in this study; I am more interested in their views of the relationship between the three groups in the context of change, particularly the extent to which managers might find themselves drawing on assets previously associated with other groupings.

"Economic restructuring has involved a growing concern with product innovation, and capitalist firms which had previously relied on organisational hierarchies increasingly look to either self employed specialists or to professional specialists to carry out key tasks. As a result the pyramidical organisational hierarchy is disrupted and the power of organisation assets alone to convey reward is severely questioned. Firms increasingly look to those with specific skills to perform particular jobs, rather than rely automatically on bureaucratic procedures" (Savage et al., 1992: 65-66).

The managerial class held, exercised and benefited from organisational assets, based on their positions within organisations. But such assets can neither be stored nor

transmitted and can be removed by the employing organisation. Savage et al. argue (1992) that managers emerged as weak and subordinate grouping as bureaucratic organisations developed, because their social significance was weakened by their continuing dependence on capitalist employers for position and advancement. In the putative post industrial or post bureaucratic world, their position looks ever more tenuous. Hence recent economic and organisational restructuring leaves the managerial middle classes more dependent and vulnerable than ever before.

By contrast, the professional middle classes who have always enjoyed more privileges and are able to trade certain skills and activities - what they call cultural assets. They are easy to store in the "habitus, or set of internalized dispositions which govern people's behaviour" (1992:16) and can be transmitted, for example, to one's children. Professionalism can, therefore, best be understood as an attempt to translate cultural assets into material rewards. Maintenance of an "independent cognitive base", which allows qualified groups of professional workers to retain their autonomy from any one particular employing organisation, also ensures the continued distinction of their skills. However, to realise the value of those cultural assets they have to be exercised within the labour market. Current labour markets with the alleged rise of the knowledge worker and the increasing use of sub contractors and people with specialist skill are favouring the professional.

The petite bourgeoisie, more marginal until relatively recent times, have the assets of property which are the easiest to store and transmit. They can thrive t in a restructured labour market with a new role as provider of specialist services to large companies.

Savage et al. (1992) propose that managers will attempt to turn their organisational assets into more valuable assets:

1. by moving firm;
2. by converting them to property assets e.g. managerial buyouts or by managers moving into self employment;
3. by converting them to cultural assets.

This is not to say that manager do not have skills or knowledge but that they are context dependent, unlike those of the professional which can be established and exercised outside any one organisational base. So, how can managers convert these managerial assets to professional or property assets? Savage et al. recognise, as discussed above, that the movement of managers into self employment "is by no means an established empirical fact" (1992:69), but they see enough evidence of increases in self employment to point strongly in that direction. However:

"We are not convinced that managers are becoming professionalised, if this is taken to mean that managerial workers are becoming more likely to have an independent cognitive base allowing them a degree of independence from their employer."

Their level of analysis precludes discussion of how or why these career shifts might be enacted at the level of the individual but it does provide a convenient means of introducing themes for the next chapter.

2.3.3. CONCLUSION

This section has highlighted the growing belief (but uncertain empirical evidence) that managerial careers are changing in the direction of a more professional and\ or entrepreneurial orientation, prompted by changes in labour markets and the erosion of value attached to the bureaucratic managerial role.

2.4. TRANSFORMATIONS IN WORK: TO BE WELCOMED?

This final section concludes chapter two by looking at the literature reviewed thus far and asking if the trends it implies are to be welcomed. It looks first at the evidence of epochal change, moving on to consider the axes of optimism and pessimism (Casey, 1995) about putative changes in work. The discursive element of the debate is acknowledged and space is given to the more sceptical voices. The section will conclude with the implications for the study of the literature reviewed in this chapter.

2.4.1. INTRODUCTION

The evidence about changing organisations and working patterns is indicative of a trend in the direction of more rather than less change, even if the available data does not satisfy those who are most concerned to find threads of continuity with the past (Pollert, 1991). Central to the literature about new careers, as will be discussed in the next chapter, is the advice to embrace such change and see it as an opportunity to escape from the strictures of the bureaucratic career. Much of this literature accepts a decisive break with the past.

2.4.1.1. A break with the past?

However, I do not believe that claims of epochal change have been substantiated in the debates considered so far. To my mind, the more useful analyses are those which acknowledge change but see the strands of continuity. Beck argues that, at least, we should recognise that as "fundamental categories, firm, career, wage labor", as previously understood, may not capture new "realities" of the current situation. He goes on to caution that by "looking through the spectacles of the industrial world we strain our eyes trying to make out the emerging labor reality"(1992:144). Noon and Blyton (1997) insist that there is not one new reality of work but several, depending on individual subjectivity. Nevertheless, they acknowledge the prevalence of common assumptions and characteristics of work in the late twentieth century, as discussed above.

Casey (1995) warns that, while we may be going through changes in the cultural meaning of work, the old ideas remain operative for many, despite some changing practices. This can prompt what Mirvis and Hall (1996:252) rather grandly call "psychic challenges" for individuals struggling to understand how to operate in a career world with aspects of the old and new still visible. Beck refers to a new world just coming into view against the still predominate past (1992:9).

While I find these analyses helpful in approaching this study, I am still left with some questions. Can we indeed assume that this is transition time and that is why it looks ragged (Mirvis and Hall, 1996) and hard to define? Or, might it be the case that we have come through a transition and are indeed living in a period characterised by uncertainty and ambiguity (Giddens, 1991)? Is it to be assumed that the old world (and how, anyway, is that to be defined?) will die and that the new (again open to debate) will inevitably strengthen or, might it all fall out rather differently than the theorists suggest? The study does not claim to be able answer these questions, but, in exploring how changes are experienced by one specific group, I want to acknowledge that there are a number of ways in which the changing and emerging world of work can be understood. Hence it is necessary to pay attention to both flux and stability; change and continuity.

2.4.1.2. Optimism and pessimism

Another line of debate is how individuals might approach these putative changes. Beck sees a potent mixture of "progress and immiseration" (1992:144) in the types of changes discussed. This is echoed by Casey (1995) who points to what she calls the axes of optimism and pessimism. She relates them to what she calls the typically modern conflicts between *gemeinschaft and gesellschaft*[1] and suggests that we are torn between individualism and community. Current debates on changing workplaces (as, for example with Hecksher and Donnellon's (1994) view of the post bureaucratic organisation and Rose's (1990) notion of the individual as an entrepreneur of the self within the enterprise culture) revolve around the individualist axis. Optimism about this type of development was well critiqued by Guest (1987) when he related Human resource managementto the American Dream. Casey criticises those theorists of a

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[1]Casey suggests that these tensions are most observable within American society, although are not confined to it. She attribute this to the strong discourse of American individualism and the pursuit of the American dream.

"pessimistic" bent (like Lasch, 1983) who tend to look back to a golden age of stable communities and personal identities within them. Yet she still discerns a strong discourse of community in places other than the workplace -in ethnic groupings for example or local communities. These ideas point ahead to a forthcoming debate on identity in Chapter 3 but do indicate that the workplace changes and effects on individuals are not to be too simply characterised (Gough et al.,1994).

2.4.2. THE DISCURSIVE DEBATE

I have already noted that the discourses of flexibility and enterprise are pervasive in the debate on changing work. As Pollert says:

"Flexibility as a concept has gained hegemony along with the contemporary preoccupation with the market. It has acquired the presence of a fetish" (1991:1).

Several authors do provide useful correctives to the prevailing discourses. Pollert (1991:5) asks crisply if the debate about flexibility at work constitutes description or prescription. Pahl (1995) and Beck (1992) both acknowledge the shocks and risks unleashed by a threat to the traditional working patterns and careers. Others question the extent to which the traditional career sustained by hierarchical organisations is, in fact, dead (Guest and MacKenzie Davey, 1996; Halford and Savage, 1995; Goldthorpe, 1990). Hutton (1995), in his lament about contemporary Britain, constructs flexibility at work as creating the 30-40-30 society:

- 30% the disadvantaged, unemployed, economically inactive or barely surviving on government training schemes;
- 40% the privileged, full timers or long term part timers or self employed successful for two years or more (although even this group can be split into the rich and poor);
- 30% the marginalised and the insecure defined by relation to the labour market. Here he includes part timers and temporary workers (who he suggests inhabit the "most brutish corner" of the labour market) as well as full time workers on insecure or fixed term contracts which "increasingly define many middle class jobs" (1995:107).

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It must be acknowledged that life on the periphery is no novelty for many working class people (Handy, 1989). The portfolio world of making a living from a series of jobs and jobs on the side is a long standing feature of life for those with less organisational career advantage (Bridges, 1995). There has been some merriment, in fact, in the media at the reaction of the middle classes to finding their more secure, career oriented world threatened (Moore, 1994; Elliott, 1996; Wheen, 1994). However, there are significant issues at stake, recognising, as Pahl (1995) does, that the traditional and progressive career has been a touchstone of what constitutes success in this society (for good or bad) and that this affects, not only people in those careers, but those aspiring to them. In the demise of that middle class career, Hutton (1995) sees signs that the country is losing its "constituency of contentment."

Rainbird (1991) questions the espoused feelings of increased autonomy of self employed people and asks whether it is not more the case that the autonomy is an illusion for those who remain dependent for most of their work on one large corporation. She suggest that that they are, in fact, "self-exploiting" and "disguised wage labour" (p.213).

But, is it fair to say that people who incorporate these discourses into the ways in which they make sense of their own situation (Weick, 1995) have in some way been duped or seduced and led to ignore an underlying reality about their situation? Chapter 4 will debate these theoretical issues in more detail, so suffice to say at this point, that what this study is interested in is how people interpret their own situation and how those interpretations spur them to action. I am intrigued as to what extent themes from the discourses of flexibility, enterprise and new careers are evident in their stories or whether or not they note also the interpretations espoused by theorists like Hutton and Rainbird.

2.4.3. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDY

What this study looks at is how individuals are making sense of the emerging career "realities" for them. I am interested in the extent to which they construct the change in their career circumstances as change or continuity and whether they expressly view it somehow in tune with the times. Perhaps it is not necessary to go any further with the

contextual enquiry and wait to see how much of this ambiguity is expressed by the participants in this research (Barley, 1989; Weick, 1995).

Pollert (1991) mounts a spirited attack on the notion of flexibility encoded in the flexible firm model and the thesis of post Fordism and flexible specialisation, yet she herself notes that there in a relative absence of qualitative experience in the debate. This study will add an in-depth look at how one group have, in fact, experienced and understood a move from the "core" in an internal labour market to the "periphery" of the external labour market (Atkinson and Meager, 1986).

This chapter has served both as a context for this study and as a means of drawing the contours of the environment within which the career transition under debate takes place. It has highlighted certain ideas about career choices and the impact on work relationships and personal identity which will be dealt with in Chapter 3. It has also introduced theoretical ideas about the relationship between changing social structures and people's action and the mediating effect of discourse. Chapter 4 will explore the use of these idea in the thesis in more detail.

CHAPTER 3: THE CAREER

This chapter focuses on the individual by reviewing the concept of the career. The available literature is vast, so to deal with this range the chapter will be in four parts.

3.1 This section will look critically at the general concept of career and the various theories and models by which it can be understood in the context of discussing the apparent emergence of new career forms.

3.2 This section will focus on the career transition with reference to the Nicholson model (1984, 1990) of work role transition and the theory which underpins it. This discussion will lead into a consideration of identity change as related to career change.

The remaining three sections will look at what is known about specific stages of the career transition focusing on the move from organisational to portfolio employment. I will use the model of courtship, marriage and separation of individual and organisation advocated by Ornstein and Isabella (1993) as a means of reviewing the literature.

3. 3 I intend to start with separation - the move out of the organisation- as the first transition of note for this study The literature which could shed some light on why people leave organisations will be explored.

3. 4 By courtship, Ornstein and Isabella (1993) mean the process of gaining employment with another organisation. I will adapt this phase to explore why people do not seek out alternative employment but rather opt for the independent approach implied in the concept of portfolio working.

3. 5 The "marriage" section will explore how people might deal with their ongoing career development in a new type of work situation and with a changed relationship with employers.

3.1. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF CAREER

This section begins by looking generally at the topic of careers, highlighting why it is studied; the scope of career theory and approaches to it. It moves on to explore changing definitions of careers. The career is viewed analytically as having an objective and subjective dimension often regarded as the individual and organisational level of analysis. Section 3.1.6 looks first at these levels separately and moves on to look at ways of combining them to appreciate their inextricable link. A model proposed by Barley (1989) is examined as an appropriate means of conceptualising the link between career structures and human action.

3.1. 1. INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING CAREER

I will begin the chapter with some general remarks about the study of careers
The first question that arises is what are the benefits of studying the career? The answer is generally (Collin and Watt, 1996; Herriot, 1992; Arthur et al., 1989) that a study of careers orients attention not only to the external features of working lives - the posts, the promotions and organisational and occupational career structures but also to how the individual perceives them and the dialectical relationship between the two. It attends to what Arthur et al. (1989) call the properties of emergence and relativity. Emergence is about people's perception and experience of time in their career in terms of events of the past, experience of the present and how the future is considered. As the career unfolds over time it also takes place within social space "some dimension of social significance" (Arthur et al., 1989:13); relativity refers to both to how people and organisations experience and make use of it. Hence the study of career can allow for a wide ranging examination of the intersection of individuals, organisations and social structures over time and space As such it can be useful vehicle in the study of social change.

3.1.1.1. Career theory

However, the limited capacity of much career theory to illuminate how careers are changing has been noted (Arthur, 1994; Collin and Young, 1986; Ornstein and Isabella, 1993) and related to tendencies to adopt either an over or under-socialised conception of the individual - associated with the sociological and psychological approaches to the

subject respectively. Much career theory also assumes the existence of a relatively stable organisational world.

It is important first to establish the parameters of "career theory." Arthur et al. (1989: 9) identify it as "the body of all generalizable attempts to explain career phenomena." Others are more sceptical that a coherent corpus of theory exists (Collin and Young, 1986) or suggest that what theory does exist lacks organising principles and does not benefit as much as it could from a diversity of perspectives (Ornstein and Isabella, 1993). Arguably the psychological domain is still predominant. Writing for guidance practitioners, Collin identifies what she calls "mainstream career theories" (1997:436): psychological works with a concomitant focus on the individual. She includes the works of Holland (1973) who considered how individual dispositional differences and personality types affected career decision making and job adaptation; Super (1953, 1990) who applied a developmental psychological perspective to individual career management by looking at the development of the self concept through career stages and Dawis (1984) who worked on trait factors and job adjustment.

I highlight these three authors, from her slightly longer list, as their work features heavily in the recent Handbook of Career Theory (Arthur et al., 1989). As Arthur et al. use the term career theory, it tends to be self- applied to the writings of a relatively limited number of predominantly American authors,[1] whose theorising is explicitly directed to issues affecting careers in organisations (Arthur et al., 1989: xv) although they recognise that the groundwork was laid by vocational psychologists like Super (1953, 1990) and sociologists like Hughes, whose work will be considered below.

By the mid 1980s, these theorists felt that their world was becoming rather too closed, concentrating more on theory testing than new theory building and since then, there has been a concern to invite in contributions from other fields. Psychology and sociology still predominate (Derr and Laurent, 1989) but some insights are offered from political science, from economics, anthropology, management studies and wider social science.

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[1]If we accept that a definable body of career theory exists then the contributors to the Arthur and Rousseau (1996) The Boundaryless Career and the Arthur et al. (1989) Handbook of Career theory (and the previous authors on whose work they draw) are those who would be regarded as comprising the major career theorists at present. The "Boundaryless career book emanated from an American Academy of Management conference symposium on boundaryless careers organised by the careers section of the Academy. The majority of authors writing in these book are connected to the Academy.

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Issues are raised, then, about the boundaries of career theory. The abiding relative lack of multi-disciplinary perspectives within the self-professed domain of career theory has been noted (Arthur et al., 1989), yet theory and research, very pertinent to a study of careers, emerges from within other disciplines which may not acknowledge the tag of career theory (e.g. Grey, 1994). In this study I have drawn on various bodies of literature: human resource management, organisational analysis, sociology, social psychology, labour process theory, governance among other disciplines, as well as theorists writing on careers.

None of the above comments are intended to suggest that this is an homogenous corpus of theory. Indeed Arthur et al. (1989), drawing on the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) among others, suggest that we can look at it in two dimensions:

1. in terms of the underlying epistemological stance which they describe as either social science orthodoxy or social science reform;

2. in terms of how it is applied, either in the functionalist sense of upholding the existing order or the critical sense of challenging the systems already in place.

This typology can usefully be extended to all theorising about careers. Arthur et al. (1989) argue that the underlying epistemological stance of much theorising about careers is "social science orthodoxy." The emphasis is on the distinctions between the variables which pertain to a study of careers, on empirical, testable evidence about them and is based above all on the presumption that the social world is analogous to the physical world. The approach is to examine independently the various factors in isolation from each other e.g. individual disposition and social background "believing each has a separate place in a given web of cause effect relationships" (1989:18).

They also note a reforming tradition in the theory in which certainty and quantifiable measures are not what is prized, rather, the emphasis is on the inter relatedness of the various factors, the elucidation of meaning and the shifting "web of knowledge which is not predetermined but must necessarily change as new insights are gained" (1989:18). The perspective is interactionist, interpretative and sees career "reality" as socially

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constructed. While it is represented in career thinking (e.g. Barley 1989; Gowler and Legge 1989) it is not dominant. Its insights are the most pertinent to this study.

Applying the theory, we can identify the "functionalist" use which is intent on supporting and seeking to improve those systems and structures which are already in place. The notion that career systems could be stultifying or involved in reproducing patterns of power and domination is not the concern of this approach which is dominant in the literature about organisational careers (e.g. Mayo, 1991; Rosenbaum, 1989).

Career theory can also be used as "criticism" (Arthur et al., 1989; Ornstein and Isabella 1993) which can challenge the existing order and calls into question long held assumptions about career. The approach which seeks to de-couple identity from job and career from work related positions is relevant here. Particularly pertinent to this study is a social science reform epistemology with application geared to change and challenge.

My own preference would be to use the term career theory as inclusively as possible but, in recognition of the dominance of the work of the limited number of "self-conscious" career theorists and the foundational work on which they draw, I will use the term "career theory" in the way that they do. But when referring more broadly to aggregated understanding of careers, I will talk about career literature or the study of careers.

3.1.2. DEFINING CAREERS

To attempt a definition is to lay open to scrutiny the underlying assumption about what a career is, to whom it belongs and how it can be developed. It is an ontological minefield that I enter with some caution.

"Career" is a word that is often used without recourse to definition in popular and academic media. We might use it to refer to a life time service in the hierarchical, organisational world of a bank or the public sector. We also could just as well talk about the career of a footballer or athlete which may span only a few years before he or she goes on to a different means of income generation. We might talk about a career of crime, even the career of organizational analysis (Willmott, 1990). But to use the term

in an academic sense, it is vital to establish its parameters. There are conflicting definitions available and career is "a very elastic construct, amenable to both positivistic and constructivist interpretations" (Collin and Watt, 1996: 392). Watts argues that that ambiguity is also a source of strength as "the term is sufficiently wedded to the work ethic to hold considerable potential for social control, yet also sufficiently flexible to allow room for alternative sources of meaning and self respect" (1981: 214). I will begin with the (up to now) dominant notion of career as a path up an organisational hierarchy- the traditional or bureaucratic career (Gowler and Legge, 1989; Inkson, 1995).

3.1.2.1. The "bureaucratic" career

Wilensky was a proponent of what might be described as a more traditional view related to the bureaucratic career outlined in Chapter 1:

"let us define a career in structural terms. A career is a succession of related jobs arranged in a hierarchy of prestige, through which persons move in an ordered, (more or less predictable) sequence" (1961:523).

This definition, arguably, captures an intuitive view of what a career really is, as reflected in public perception (Bird, 1996)[2] and academic commentary, for example:

"Careers flow from jobs...a job need not lead anywhere; it is just something a person gets paid for. Careers, on the other hand, are continuous behavioural episodes, leading to a path or ladder that ends, optimally, in some sort of career capstone experience" (Leach and Chakiris 1988:50).

Such definitions are exclusive in terms of who could claim to have a career. They also highlight the notions of orderly progress towards a higher goal. This reflects a widespread (although highly debatable) conjunction of the idea of career with advancement through an organisational or occupational hierarchy (Van Maanen and Barley, 1984; Inkson, 1995; Gowler and Legge, 1989; Tolbert, 1996; Arnold and

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[2]The intuitive distinction between careers and jobs is strong. The Prime Minister Tony Blair on a visit to a Sheffield Job Centre demonstrated that it has meaning for him:*"When my children grow up I don't want them to get a job, I want them to have a career"* (The Sheffield Star, 5th February, 1998 p.1).

Jackson, 1997). Such a career is based on employment within a vertically integrated organisation which actively manages career opportunities and where only hierarchical progress is accorded value.

The limited applicability, indeed mythical elements (Nicholson, 1996), of this view of career have been extensively noted (Tolbert, 1996; Kanter, 1989; Pahl, 1995, Thomas, 1989) and lampooned as "risibly antique"(Seaton, 1995). Yet it stubbornly persists as a widely socially recognised model of what actually constitutes a career. Its tenacity is all the more interesting when the long history of criticisms, indeed ridicule are noted. Whyte (1956) in his classic text on Organisation Man talks about those pursuing the bureaucratic career:

"these are the ones of our middle classes who have left home spiritually as well as physically to take their vows of organisational life , and it is they who are the mind and soul of our great self-perpetuating organisations" (1956:3).

It is this type of deal with employers which has been called a "Faustian bargain":

"which seemed to offer the job holder limitless wishes, while robbing him of his freedoms, his motivations and his creativity" (Golzen and Garner 1990:9).

The actions this career encodes are also seen as mitigating against a satisfactory balance of home and work life, particularly for women (Gallos, 1989; Bailyn, 1993).
Theorists have routinely offered several other models of what could constitute a career. I will illustrate here with Driver's (1982) model of career concepts. Frustrated as he was, even 15 years ago, about the task of defining career, Driver (1982) offered,as working hypotheses, four types of "career concepts" i.e. what underlies a person's thinking about his or her career.

The *linear* concept in which a field is chosen early in life and a plan for upward movement developed and executed. This upward movement may be in an organisation or within a relevant reference group like a professional association;

The *transitory* concept in which no set field or job is ever chosen but there is regular movement between jobs with little or no upward progress;

The *spiral* concept in which one develops in a chosen field for a time and then moves on to another field which may or not be related to the last one;

The *steady state* concept in which a job or field is selected early and the individual stays with it for life. There is no concept of movement except to higher income of professional skill (1982: 24-25).

While this has been an influential model within carer theory (Arthur et al., 1989) much more attention has been paid to the *linear* (and to a lesser extent the *steady state*) than to the others. However, as I will discuss below, the spiral and transitory paths have recently been revived as being appropriate patterns for careers in the putative post bureaucratic world (Weick and Berlinger, 1989). The other interesting point about Driver's model is that he makes no necessary connection between structural patterns of career concepts and a chosen field or occupation. To my mind this raises a question, rarely discussed, about whether the very fact of working within a bureaucracy can be seen as implying a "bureaucratic" upward and onward career, particularly if the individual's perception of that career is taken into account.

The point is that, while other types are known to exist, ideas about them just have not taken root in the same way as the more traditional views about linear careers. Marshall (1989), in a feminist revision of career theory, acknowledges that, theoretically, a range of career possibilities are mooted but that they remain tinged with failure if they do not conform to the prevailing norm of upward and onward. Thomas (1989) talking about the neglected topic of blue collar careers suggest wider definitions duck the issues and "hollow out the core concept." He insists that the "normative achievement oriented model" persists and "career" continues to describe the working lives of only a few.

3.1.2.1.1. Career as social construction

Gowler and Legge (1989) take an interpretative socio-linguistic approach to argue that that career is a social construction, embedded in and reproduced through, the language we use about it. Our notions of what makes a career are bound up with the rhetoric of

bureaucracy- the dominant organisational form of the twentieth century to date - with which it is (or has been) so closely associated. Thus, our view of career reflects the cultural assumptions about the ideal type of bureaucracy as an implicitly prescribed model for organisation (Tolbert, 1996) and the explicit link made between the success of bureaucracy and its employment structure (Weber, 1947). What is valued, or felt to be real, about a career is order, progress, achievement and organisational membership.

I will return to their ideas on this topic in greater detail later in the chapter but, at this stage, I simply want to acknowledge the notion that there is a powerful shared view of a career in our society which accords with Wilensky's limited definition. Pahl (1995:2) echoes this in his book about the crisis of anxiety and identity. He puts the collapse of the traditional notion of career at centre stage:

"Take away the career and much more risk and uncertainty surround the idea of success. Without clearly marked out and structured ladders, it becomes less easy to prepare for advancement or to be sure that what one individual takes to be advancement has wider social acceptability."

As the traditional model of career allowed for progress from humble beginnings up a career ladder, it provided an aspirational path, a touchstone of what constituted success in our society. As such, any threat to it may have profound societal consequences.

3.1.2.2. "New" careers

There is a new way of talking about organisations emerging, as discussed in chapter 2, which questions the continuing dominance of the bureaucratic way. With this comes a challenge to established concepts of career. To my mind, the most intriguing aspect of the current concern with changing career definitions is that other enlarged definitions have long been available within career theory:

"A career consists objectively of a series of statuses and clearly defined offices... subjectively a career is the moving perspective in which a person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions and things that happen to him. Careers in our society are very much thought of in terms of jobs... but

the career is by no means exhausted in a series of business and professional achievements" (Hughes 1937:413).

This definition, dating back as it does to the 1930s, captures much of the current thinking about careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). It urges us to see career as being about more than paid work, more than just about achievements and more than just the external features of a working life. Career is also about the sense an individual attaches to it. Arguably, in a period where the traditional career model of upward and onward movement is being threatened, the type of definition offered by Hughes and his colleagues is more likely to find acceptance than it has done in more recent times.

Some recent definitions do take a very inclusive approach to all aspects of the individual's life. Arthur et al. (1989: 8) offered the following definition of career which was adopted by all the authors in the Handbook of Career Theory:

"the evolving sequence of a person's work experience over time."

This has been altered more recently (Arthur and Rousseau 1996: 4) to the *"unfolding"* sequence to better capture the notion of unpredictability and lack of order which can characterise a working life. Arnold offers an expanded definition:

"the sequence of employment-related positions, roles, activities and experiences encountered by the person" (1997: 16).

He defends his definition on five counts: it treats career as personal; it acknowledges, as Hughes would, the subjective dimension; it retains a sense of sequence and the unfolding over time; it is not narrowly focused on work but recognises that activities and experiences in other domains can feed into employment and it is not confined to one occupation or to hierarchical progress. In sum, everyone who works, or seeks work has a career. Other recent theorists have similarly broad definitions with subtle differences. Collin and Watts give less emphasis to work and sequencing: career is simply:

"the individual's development in learning and work throughout life" (1996: 393).

However, they also reframe the distinction between the external events of a career and the individual experience of them as the different viewpoints of observer and career actor respectively. What is more both parties can both describe *and* interpret career events from their own point of view. They defend their definition on the grounds that it can encompass all these dimensions, insisting that it is not a "privatised" view of career.

Bird (1996) takes a position which focuses on learning, as does the definition above but is more categorical than Arthur et al. (1989) or Arnold (1997) about the centrality of work experience per se. Careers are:

"accumulations of information and knowledge embodied in skills, expertise and relationship networks that are acquired though an evolving sequence of work experiences over time" (1996: 150).

Bird defends his definition by reference to the intuitive view of career which would not accept a sequence of jobs as a career in the accepted sense: "work experiences do not a career make" (1996: 150). He claims that his definition shifts attention away from the actual work experiences to what an individual actually learned within them and thus it also acknowledges the subjective dimension of career. But he goes on to discuss the context specific nature of knowledge creation and in doing so makes more explicit than do the other definitions, the relationship between individual and organisation in career.

Hence, there are a number of ways on offer to redefine the concept of career, to move the definition away from a necessary link with a progressive rise through some hierarchy. I want to move on now from abstract discussion about definition to consider the emerging theory about changing career forms. I will then bring these two strands of the debate together by reflecting on how "career" will be used in this study.

3.1.3. CHANGING CAREER FORMS

Recent debate on careers shows a high level of consensus that careers are changing in a certain direction: away from the traditional, hierarchical, progressive and organisationally bound model to much looser forms based on individual skill and knowledge exercised over a broader canvass than a single job with a single employer.

In addition to the notion of the portfolio career, already discussed, are similar metaphors like the post corporate career (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997); the boundaryless career (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996); the protean career (Hall, 1976); the post entrepreneurial career (Kanter 1989).The term "new careers" has been used (Arnold and Jackson, 1997) as a short hand device to encapsulate these metaphors and the kind of career forms they describe, to be discussed below. I intend to use it in that way and as the notion of "newness" is not established I will retain the inverted commas.

The themes are common as outlined in Chapter 1: freed from the stultification of the bureacratic form, individuals will look to build a working life from the raw materials of their own accumulated skills, knowledge and experience (Bird, 1996) which must be constantly updated in order to ensure survival DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996). New relationships and psychological contracts with organisations will develop (Waterman et al., 1994; Herriot, 1992) although it is likely that individuals will return to their ex employer on a contract basis (Handy, 1994; Peiperl and Baruch, 1997; Kanter, 1989; Goldthorpe, 1990), as well as developing a wider client base.

3.1.3.1. Kanter's career forms

I will look first at Kanter's (1989b) model about the emergence of career forms as it encapsulates much of the debate and I will then move on to look in more detail at the concept of the "boundaryless" career which I see as including the portfolio career form under discussion. Kanter (1989b) offers a macro model which attempts to address the link between individual career transitions and the macro emergence of career forms. Her argument is that the bureaucratic tradition, as I outlined in Chapter 1, is on the wane, and so is the career form it supported. In its place, we are likely to see a flourishing of other career forms more appropriate to what she describes as the post-entrepreneurial world. As such it has strong echoes with the analysis of changing labour markets for managers discussed by Savage et al. in Chapter 2.3. [3]

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[3]Kanter's model also recalls longer standing perspectives. Gouldner (1957) distinguished between what he called the "cosmopolitans" who felt a primary allegiance to their occupation and the "locals" whose allegiance was with their organisation. Brown (1982) identified three career strategies: organisational (involving linear progress), occupational (moving between employers to better and better jobs within the same occupation) and entrepreneurial (setting up own account businesses).

3.1.3.1.1. The professional career

The logic of professional careers is concerned not with advancement as such but with:

"the possession of socially valued knowledge as the key determinant of occupational status and "reputation" the key resource to the individual. "Career growth" for professionals does not necessarily consist of moving from job to job, as it does for bureaucrats and "advancement" does not have the same meaning. Instead, those on professional career tracks may keep the same title and the same nominal "job" over a long period of time...Opportunity in the professional form, then, involves the chance to take on ever more demanding or challenging or important or rewarding assignments that involve greater exercise of the skills that define the professional's stock-in-trade... "Upward mobility" in the professional career involves the reputation for greater skill" (1989b: 309-310).

Portable skills, knowledge, reputation, project work, a weaker link to organisation and a stronger affiliation with one's craft define this career form. Even within an organisation the development of small team and project work may give more prominence to a career based on professional principles.

3.1.3.1.2. Entrepreneurial careers

The third pattern is what she describes as the classic entrepreneurial one. While this term may be more closely associated with running a small business or starting up new ventures, she contends that this is too narrow a definition of an entrepreneurial career and we can view it more widely as:

"one in which growth occurs through the creation of new value or new organisational capacity. If the key resource in a bureaucratic career is hierarchical position and the key resource in a professional career is knowledge and reputation, then the key resource in an entrepreneurial career is the capacity to create a product or service of value...Instead of moving UP, those in entrepreneurial careers see progress as the territory grows below them - and when they own a share of returns from the growth... Freedom, independence, and control over one's tasks (as the professional supposedly has) but also one's organisational surroundings are associated with the classic

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entrepreneurial career. But so is greater uncertainty about the future, about how the career will unfold" (1989b:313-314).

She recognises that organisational change may be creating a body of "reluctant entrepreneurs" (1989b: 317), but like it or not, many more people will find their careers shaped by the exercise and marketing of their own skills and knowledge, rather than unfolding within organisational boundaries.

Kanter does not take us into the trickier territories of how these transitions in career forms will happen in practice, nor the detailed implications for individuals. Neither does she fully engage with the far from resolved debates about what might constitute a professional (Freidson, 1994; Larson, 1977) or an entrepreneur (Carroll and Mosakowski, 1987; Katz, 1996). The ambiguous relationship between professionals (whether or not we want to use that term in its more exclusive sense) and organisations has long been noted (Van Maanen and Barley, 1984). The notion of a zero sum commitment attaching to profession or organisation has been disputed (Wallace, 1993). We know little about the motivations and career trajectories of entrepreneurs (Katz, 1994) and might want to question if an entrepreneurial approach is essential to small business activity (Arnold, 1997).

For all that, the essence of her ideas is compelling. She expressed some irritation (Kanter, 1989a) that the normative, organisationally based, hierarchical career dominated debate in the Handbook of Career Theory (Arthur et al., 1989) and thus provided a timely impetus to give credence to other career types. Her predictions are also widely echoed by others (Golzen and Garner, 1990; Bridges, 1995). Indeed, there is a refrain in the literature that, in a career sense we are all self-employed (Golzen and Garner 1990; Halal, 1997; Hakim, 1994). The notion of oneself as a business (Bridges, 1995) begins to take hold in the self-help literature (Bolles, 1997; Robbins, 1992) and in advice to employers (Waterman et al., 1994; Barner 1994). The links with the emerging discourse on enterprise discussed in chapter 2 is apparent both in terms of setting up a business and unleashing one's own enterprising potential.

The notion of defining and selling one's professional skills in a variety of contexts to employers is central to the portfolio career and to the boundaryless career which I will

discuss below. The occupational career form is set in opposition, in much "new career" literature, to the organisational (Tolbert, 1996) - despite evidence that many occupational careers take place within organisational hierarchies. What is not addressed in this theorising is the question of what is the portable occupation of an organisationally anchored person like a manager. Unlike Savage et al. (1992), Kanter sees some evidence of a professionalising of managers with the growth in specialist skills such as strategic planning, compensation and marketing. With those skills, they too, need no longer be tied to one employing organisation.

The project of advocating ideal \typical types of professional or entrepreneurial careers without significant empirical underpinning could be a step on the way to a new normative view about careers. Indeed, as I will discuss in section 3.5., there is a flourishing advice industry on how to survive in the "new career" world despite considerable uncertainty about its forms and boundaries. What Kanter (1989b) does provide, however, with her model is a potential tool for approaching the data about how people are making sense of their new career. Rather than taking the forms she describes as some kind of "empirical" fact and attempting to map people's new career world to them, it may prove more helpful analytically to think of them (just like the bureaucratic career itself) as discursive formations in which people consider, make sense of and enact their careers (Weick, 1995).

3.1.3.2. The boundaryless career

A convenient way to consider the broader literature emerging on careers is the image of the boundaryless career, which was introduced in Chapter 1. (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Put simply, boundaryless careers are " the opposite of "organisational careers" - careers conceived to unfold in a single employment setting" (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996:5). Mirvis and Hall capture the general consensus about this career form:

"The boundaryless career... will be marked by a variety of tasks, that may or may not be bundled easily into a job, periodic redefinition of one's profession and fits and starts over the course of a career" (1994:366).

Within the general meaning of boundaryless career Arthur and Rousseau identify six "specific meanings or emphases" (1996:6).

1. careers like those in Silicon Valley, characterised by moving to and from several different firms;

2. careers (they cite academia or carpentry) where validation and marketability comes primarily externally;

3. careers like those of estate agents which are "sustained by extra-organisational networks or information;"

4. where inter -organisation boundaries have broken down, specifically the hierarchies and advancement principles;

5. where a person rejects existing career opportunities for personal or family reasons;

6. according to the interpretation of the career actor "who may perceive a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints.

I would add to this a seventh to capture the situation where a person has been ejected from organisational careers for reason of redundancy or other situations at work unacceptable to them. It is perhaps symptomatic of the relentlessly upbeat approach of much of this literature that the notion of a forced entry to boundaryless career world is overlooked.

There are several issues which arise from these examples, not least the nagging suspicion that many are, in fact, compatible with the bureaucratic principle - academic life certainly has its career hierarchies and those like estate agency are not precluded from hierarchy by virtue of extra-organisational networks. While it is interesting to extend the remit of what might constitute a boundaryless career, this literature makes inadequate analytical distinctions between these forms. It would seem to me that there could be very significant differences between them in terms of, for example, organisational embeddedness, security of tenure and reputation.

Categories 4, 5, 6 and my category 7 would appear to be the most significant in this study, although issues raised in the other categories, for example marketability and

networks, may well prove relevant. I have no difficulty in incorporating Handy's notion of a portfolio career within those categories, centring as it does on making a career from aspects of one's skill base in independence from any one employer.

The optimism about this apparently new approach to careers which pervades Arthur and Rousseau's (1996) text (with few exceptions) seems to be based more on hope than experience or empirical study. Indeed there are attractive dimensions to it. Firstly, the boundaryless career concept invites us to consider that career can occur both within and beyond the boundaries of an organisation. This points ahead to the forthcoming discussion which asks "whose career is it anyway?" Does an individual's career belong to the organisation in which it is (or was) carried out or does it transcend that relationship and belong to the individual. Secondly, it permits an acknowledgement that the boundaries of work, and non-work, paid and non-paid work are (or certainly can be) permeable. Thirdly, identity, in this conceptualisation of career, can be de-coupled from the job and sustained by all the various activities of an individual fulfilling roles as worker, citizen , family member etc. Finally, it answers calls (Marshall, 1989; Bailyn, 1993; Thomas, 1989) for a wider, more flexible, more embracing idea of what constitutes a career. It may thus be welcomed by those who have criticised the bureaucratic career for the strictures it imposed on work and home life. The concept of career offered is a more elastic one which can deal with a variety of experiences developing over time and in an enlarged "career space," encompassing life beyond the organisation with the individuals in the driving seat, planning and nurturing the developing career. This approach appears to belong to a more "reforming" (Arthur et al., 1989) tendency in career literature which takes a more holistic approach to home and work life and recognises the interplay between individual, organisation and existing social structure.

However, the debate on boundaryless careers is generally conducted at a macro level with insufficient attention to how it might be experienced by individuals and the role individuals themselves might play in their own changing circumstances. There is little significant empirical evidence, except in specific circumstances like Silicon Valley (Saxenian, 1996) and the film industry (Jones and DeFillippi, 1996) to substantiate claims of the emergence of boundaryless careers forms. Yet a set of normative assumptions about what they will be like and what kind of people can best navigate

them has already emerged. (e.g. Kanter, 1989b; Bird, 1996; Waterman et al., 1994; Barner, 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Hirsch and Shanley argue:

"But even as we look forward to a boundaryless world that has not yet unfolded, its report card seems to have arrived, with an impressive chorus of almost uniformly high evaluations. Indeed, when Chapter 1 of this volume characterises the boundaryless world as a welcome opportunity to supplant the evils of bureaucracy and the "Orwellian Legacy"[4] they leave behind, the normative overtones are clear" (1996:219).

This is a rare example of caution in this literature, although Mirvis and Hall think that this is transition time:

"Indeed, it still looks ragged: people are working long and hard and, in many cases, scared. Transitions from home to work, from assignment to assignment, and from company to company, voluntary or other wise seem abrupt, frenzied and fractious" (1996: 238).

Here is an echo of the point made in chapter 2.4, that if the situation seem difficult now it is only because we are in the uncomfortable situation of moving from one world to another. It may well be the case that new career forms and ways of thinking about careers are emerging but it is by no means the case that all the old forms have given way. I share Nicholson's (1996) frustration with what he calls paradigm thinking about careers arguing that the "old" and the "new" as constructed in much career literature are founded on mythical elements. The assumption that the "new" will eventually and inevitably replace the old has to be countered as there is no inevitability of where current trends will lead. That is dependent, at least partly, on how individuals interpret their new career circumstances and how those interpretations spur them to act (Barley, 1989). As Nicholson (1996) argues, even if the system does change overnight people do not. Indeed with the apparent growth in managerial and professional jobs allied to the number explosion in Higher Education it may be, paradoxically, that the notion of the

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[4]Willmott (1993:523) also discusses Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* in the context of contemporary work but he sees more "nascent totalitarianism" in the assumptions and prescriptions underlying the concept of corporate culture, than in bureaucratic organisational forms.

traditional hierarchical career is becoming salient for ever more people (Arnold and Jackson, 1997) just as its demise is foretold.

The prediction business is dangerous and is all the more so when the outcomes are widely judged to be both inevitable and beneficial. Hirsch and Shanley argue that, in fact, that there will be variable effects. The boundaryless career could be experienced as "beneficial or hostile" depending on an individuals particular resources "the extent of their investment in those resources, and the degree to which their capabilities are valued by the firm in its new strategic situation" (1996: 222). Thus, change will hit hardest:

"Employees with significant sunk career investments that are rendered obsolete by changes in business conditions and practices. For these individuals, the boundaryless career is not an opportunity, but is the occasion for scrambling to keep a bad situation from getting worse and to salvage something from prior career investments. Focusing on boundaryless careers in terms of opportunity, empowerment, freedom and the dynamism of entrepreneurs glosses over the serious and difficult career problems the new organisational era poses for long term career employees" (1996: 224).

What is more:

"Eliminating boundaries will not render individuals free, but instead may increase the external constraints on individual actions and their unpredictability" (1996:224).

Mirvis and Hall (1996) argue that individuals are unsure what career scripts to follow for the pursuit of a boundaryless career and how to confront the problems of personal and work identity which can flow from this career form transition - their notion of "psychic challenges" for any individual living outside the established career norm. Undoubtedly, there are psychic challenges for all of us in our careers regardless of their shape. However, I think the point is well made, that those who are following something other than socially known and ratified career paths with a long history of association with the bureaucratic form, may well themselves confused and bewildered about how to proceed. To follow this point any further now would be stray into a wider discussion to come about the link between individual actions and changing social structures.

3.1.4. DEFINITIONS: SUMMARISED

So, what are we to make of this project to define and redefine career? Is it necessary to choose one definition and go with it and if so, should that be the all embracing type or the more circumscribed like Bird's (1996)? A couple of sceptical questions arise about the very point of redefining career. Who are the supposed beneficiaries? Is there a legitmising attempt here to downplay the potential personal devastation caused by the spate of organisational downsizings and restructuring? If organisations can no longer provide a career in the traditional sense, then is it functional for certain groupings to redefine career and pass the buck for it to the individual?

To recognise, as many authors have, that previous definitions have been exclusive, is fair enough as far as it goes, but it must be asked what benefit a change of definition attaches to those previously excluded. If the benefit is to be more than a warm glow at being allowed to call one's working life, whatever form it takes, a career, then this redefining will need to have some material effect. Collin and Watts (1996) hope that a review of the meaning of career will reveal underlying assumptions and enable those in the guidance industry to change their practice. There are some signs of this more inclusive view in government policy on lifelong learning (Longworth and Davies, 1996) and organisations have experimented with modes of career management (Jackson et al., 1996). Yet, for very many people, career in the more traditional sense continues to have meaning (Kessler and Undy 1996; Wheatley, 1992), often to the frustration of the authors (Holbeche, 1997). It also continues to have relevance for much organisational career management (Guest and MacKenzie Davey, 1996; Mayo, 1991). du Gay (1996a) reviews the legacy of Hughes and the other Chicago sociologists in his discussion about changing identity - an issue which will be explored in 3.2. He acknowledges that a recognition of all working lives as careers and as identity bestowing situations has the advantage of giving lie to the deterministic limitations suggested by more objectivist sociology. However, he wonders if the levelling effect is an ambiguous achievement because it also works to eradicate difference. Hence, important questions about "power relations and "structural" inequality are lost from view" (1996a:33).

To my mind, what is most interesting to explore are some of the ramifications of a theoretical rewriting of a socially constructed concept with culturally embedded and

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rhetorically reinforced meaning (Gowler and Legge, 1989). I am uneasy about how we can unpack all the social history involved in the original idea of career (Pahl, 1995). It seems to me to be like saying that the institution of marriage can now embrace all sorts of co-habiting arrangements. We might welcome that for our own personal reasons. For example, we might choose to live with our partner but still feel married in every sense except the strictly legal. However, there is a tension between how we might feel and certain of the material "facts" of life, like income tax and social security to say nothing of some public opinion which still assumes marriage to be a legal bond between one man and one woman. If more and more people do choose to live together despite these factors, then not only might attitudes change, but so might policy and practice on issues like tax. What is at issue here is the link between social structures and human agency which will be explored later in this chapter and more comprehensively in Chapter 4. The review of career to this point suggests to me that I can respect an enlarged definition of what career might mean to an individual but I do not think that the socially ratified meanings of the traditional view of career can be too easily or too swiftly set aside. They may continue to have deep and abiding relevance for individuals and the organisations with which they are involved. This study will contribute to the debate on changing concepts of career by exploring how individuals themselves are approaching and experiencing re-defined careers given their own changing career circumstances.

In this review of career definitions I have highlighted the gap between those definitions which privilege the structural dimension and those which focus on the individual experience. I have also recognised problems with attempting to redefine career when people may continue to experience, as an objective reality to them, the structures of the old career model. I will move on now into the theoretical debate about the ways of envisioning careers as being inextricably about both what people do (human agency) and about the social structures they encounter, reproduce and create.

3.1.5. THE CAREER:OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE

An appropriate starting point is with the oft expressed complaint about career theory, that it privileges either an individual or an organisational analysis, or to put it another way that it concentrates on the objective (external) features of the career at the expense

of what meaning individuals attach to them (the subjective or internal career) or vice versa- often seen as the divide between sociological and psychological approaches:

"While psychologists say" people make careers", sociologists claim "careers make people" and the career literature shows a dearth of cross referencing between these two frames of reference" (Derr and Laurent, 1989:454).

This critique rather overstates the case if we take career theory in its broadest sense to refer to all writings which might shed some light on the issue. Nevertheless, the remark has some salience and does point up those dichotomies in the literature Weick and Berlinger argue:

"in the absence of such external markers, the objective career dissolves and in its place the subjective career becomes externalised and treated as a framework for career growth" (1989: 321).

In this section I will review the literature which tends to emanate from within one or the other domain and move on to look at means of linking them. As huge literatures are implicated here I will deal very selectively highlighting only those most relevant to the particular career transition under study.

3.1.5.1. The objective career

Herriot (19921) asks "Who owns your career? It might be that you think you do, but then, he asks, how come organisations talk about *their* career management system or *their* human resources. The question is germane as it points to an approach prevalent, not only in career literature, but in Human Resource Management (HRM) literature, that career is a manageable factor within the organisation. (Mayo, 1991).

The implicit assumption in such an approach is that "career" has structural properties (Herriot, 1992). That structure might refer to an organisation's internal labour markets and its career ladders (or career climbing frames where vertical progress is not the only valued move (Gunz, 1989)). This view of career sees it as invested in the organisation, already there and available to organisational members (or at least some of them) and operating regardless of their individual needs or differences. The assumption is that the

organisation can control the career actions of (malleable (Willmott, 1994)) individuals (Townley, 1984; Bell and Staw, 1989).

To focus on the objective career is to give priority to the process of organisational renewal through people flow. The analysis can start at the macro economic level, looking at markets, organisational forms and internal labour markets and the intersection of them (Williamson, 1975; Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Barney and Lawrence, 1989; Sonnenfeld and Peiperl, 1989). Typical areas for study are turnover patterns (Mobley, et al., 1979); organisational demographics (Pfeffer, 1985); manpower planning (Hirsh, 1991); human capital theory (Becker, 1964).

The people flow that results from organisational career management can be expressed in patterned and formalised career systems which can confront individuals as real and concrete (Evetts, 1992). Indeed, such objective careers can be institutionalised and nationally regulated within certain occupations and in organisations they can be graphically represented on a hierarchy chart. As Evetts (1992) suggests this career focus is about the "process of renewal, of the organisation reproducing itself that has nothing to do with people as individuals" (1992: 6).

However, such career systems will have manifestations in certain HRM practices related to issues such as entry, training, performance appraisal, exit. Recognising the massive literature on each of these topics alone, never mind the debates on HRM itself, it would be unreasonable to say that they have nothing to do with people as individuals. There is a lively debate within HRM about the application and relationship of its "soft" model founded on a developmental humanist approach and the hard model of a utilitarian, instrumentalist approach (Storey, 1991; Legge, 1995). In both models the inherent tensions and ambiguities with regard to balancing personal empowerment and learning and the desire for some standardised control; between commitment and flexibility; team working and individualism - all issues which could impact on careers - have been noted (Legge, 1995; Blyton and Morris, 1992). There is a general lack of studies looking specifically at organisation's career management systems within the framework of those models (Guest and MacKenzie Davey, 1996). The managerialist approach of much HRM has been criticised, in general terms (Legge, 1995; Mabey et al., 1998) and specifically in approach to careers (Herriot and Pemberton, 1996). In fact,

we know little enough at all about the qualitative experience of HRM (including career) practices within organisations (Mabey et al., 1998).

The literature focusing on the objective career also tends to assume rational underpinning of individual and organisational action, despite evidence about issues of politics and power within organisational career systems (Rosenbaum, 1989; Townley 1994). Normative views of what is and is not an acceptable way to package together a career abound in this literature. However, if Weick and Berlinger (1989) are right, the objective career as observable, concrete form expressed in rungs on ladders is going to become much less important and the impetus is going to move from organisational career management to individual career management. The focus of organisational level of analysis might then be expected to shift to the means by which organisations act to enhance the employability of staff (e.g. Amin, 1996) and indeed all those who contract with them (Walton, 1996).

3.1.5.2. The subjective career

To focus on the subjective career can mean to concentrate on the individual's personalities, traits, dispositions and their impact on career or on their meaning systems.

A concern with the individual is arguably the foundation of career theory (Betz et al., 1989). The early research concentrated on stable and enduring personality, traits and dispositions and their implications for vocational choice (Holland 1973; Super 1963). Matching models were developing at the beginning of the century through the work of Parsons (1909) who provided a means of measuring individual differences and postulating the importance of these differences to career outcomes. Other influential work was by Super (1963) which went further by theorising that career choice required a process of implementing the self concept. Several criticisms have been raised about this trait approach to careers: it is more static than dynamic (Betz et al., 1989); continuity is over prized (Nicholson and West, 1989) and it underplays social processes; it sees personality as fixed and determining (Eysenck, 1953) rather than as involved in ongoing construction (Potter and Wetherall, 1987:101). [5]

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[5]There are, of course, alternative readings of these theories. Super (1990) for example argues that he did incorporate opportunity structure and people's view of the environment into his notion of the self concept.

3.1.5.2.1. Life stage and career

Career theorising about the individual has also drawn heavily (Golzen and Garner 1990, Hall 1976, Gallos, 1989; Cytrynbaum and Crites, 1989; London, 1993) on the work of life stage analysts in the school of human development psychology, most notably (Levinson, et al., 1978). This work pointed to predictable individual tasks and behaviours at particular career stages and in the case of Levinson at specific biological ages. The orderly, time-bounded stages (Cytrynbaum and Crites, 1989) are cited as a timetable for us to identify if our careers are on course relative to those of our peers. As an example:

"individuals in their early career years are active, exploring career possibilities and trying various work roles. By their mid twenties they are most concerned with establishing themselves in their selected area. Once established, advancement becomes the prime concern" (London and Stumpf 1982:6).

Such normative assumptions about life and career progress underlie much career literature. In fact research has shown that people do internalise career timetables and judge themselves against them (Lawrence, 1984). The life stage literature has been criticised on many counts. Firstly, the original research was done with men and the limited relevance to the lives of women has been discussed (Gilligan, 1982; Gallos, 1989; Powell and Mainiero, 1992). Secondly it was done in a period of organisational stability (at least by comparison to the present time) and hence may simply be historically specific (Dalton, 1989). Thirdly, there have been limited studies of the application of these ideas to the world of work. Fourthly, the notion of the individual implicit in these models is a "discrete, bounded, relatively stable self" (Collin and Watts, 1996:386). It may be more appropriate to regard the self not as a "hard core or as a unified monad self" (Casey, 1995:23) but as an ongoing project of development. Ways of viewing the self, fundamental to one's approach to career (Edwards and Payne, 1997) are discussed in 3.2 and subject to more analysis in Chapter 4 when I introduce Giddens' (1991) and Weick's (1995) concept of self as narrative.

Finally, the life stage theories do not acknowledge that age, while it might be a biological fact, is also socially defined - as Gunz puts it "you are as old as other people make you feel" (1989:239). Such insights have not curtailed the plethora of studies

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about the relation of age and career stage (Ely and Buch, 1995; Ornstein et al., 1997) which tend to be explicitly linked to a social science orthodoxy approach (Arthur et al., 1989) attempting to provide more detailed information on individuals in order for organisations to better manage their careers. To my mind, the case for an age-related approach has been undermined by the criticisms above and I would concur with Arnold (1997) that age is probably a less relevant factor now in understanding careers than what he calls "non-normative" life events like redundancy (Vondracek and Schulenberg, 1992). So, while I will not specifically set out to explore the impact of age, I recognise that it may emerge as salient to the research participants.

3.1.5.2.2. Career anchors and logics

Another branch of the subjective career literature seeks to identify logic underpinning individual careers. The best known example of this is Schein's (1978) theory about individual career anchors. His longitudinal research on career histories and the logic underlying them started with 44 graduates from a masters programme in the Sloan School of Management dating back to the 1960s and since then similar research has been carried out more widely. His claim is that individuals have one and only one of a number of anchors. From his work in the 1970s he identified five: autonomy and independence; security \stability; technical\ functional competence; general managerial competence ; entrepreneurial creativity. Later research has added three more: service or dedication to a cause; pure challenge and lifestyle (Schein, 1996).

People's attachment to that anchor becomes stronger through life and provides some sort of continuity in a career which may on the surface seem punctuated by changes. His proposition, in the case of the people in this study, would effectively suggest that the move out of a managerial world into a more independent sector, perhaps in an entrepreneurial capacity or for lifestyle reasons, constitutes not a change of anchor but an activation of one that was always there. As Arnold (1997) points out, while this might be an interesting proposition with its emphasis on stability through change it is probably not one that can be proved one way or the other.

Similar work has been done by Derr (1986) on subjective career logic as evidenced by the research participants' (European executives) view of success. From that he derived five internal success maps: getting ahead (upward mobility); getting secure (company

loyalty); getting free (autonomy), getting high (excitement of work) and getting balanced (finding an equilibrium of home and work). Unlike Schein, he allows for the possibility of more than one map but identifies dominant orientations. Some interesting data emerged not least the predominance of the getting balanced map. Allowing for other interpretations he nevertheless goes on to speculate that people are concealing their true orientations from employers because getting balanced is not a valued logic in the career world. So, when and if, an opportunity arises to put this getting balanced orientation into place, people will take it. Once again this type of insight may have some benefit in considering how people tell their career story. Might it be the case that what could seem like a major change in their work circumstances is interpreted by them as the chance they have been waiting for all along. However, all the above approaches, focusing as they do only on the individual in isolation, from circumstances have to be treated with caution. The organisation and the social world are largely absent from the debate as conducted at individual level (Gunz, 1989; Evetts, 1992; Collin and Watts, 1996).

3.1.5.2.3. Individual interpretation of career

I feel that the most useful contribution of the literature which takes the individual as the primary unit of analysis, is the recognition of the subjective dimension of careers, the career actors' own interpretation, of what is happening in their own career world. The subjective (or internal career) is thus opened up as a legitimate topic for study. (Barley 1989). Subjective careers can usefully be seen as individuals definitions of their own histories.[6] They are accounts which enable individuals to "align themselves with the events of their biographies" (Barley 1989). The stories told are thus coherent and make sense to contemporaries although they may well change as individuals move through the twists and turns of their own working life, reconstructing the past to come to terms with the present and future. A prime example of this approach is Nicholson and West's (1988) study about transitions in managerial careers where managers were encouraged to tell the story of their careers and what career moves meant to them.

Another useful example is work on career plateaux assumed by objective measures to be a negative state with certain outcomes related to satisfaction and performance.

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[6]In fact Nicholson and West (1989) suggest we use the word work history for the objective events and reserve career for the tale individuals tell about it.

However research on perceptual dimensions found that subjective views of being plateaued accounted for significantly more variance in the outcomes measured such as satisfaction, career planning and company identification than did the objective - based research (Chao 1990; Tremblay et al., 1992).

The subjective approach is not dominant in career literature. Ornstein and Isabella (1993) call for more studies that "get behind the scene of the action" and help to illuminate our understanding of careers by finding out what people actually do and want in their careers. Barley castigates organisational and managerial theory for being "conspicuously silent on the topic of what people do and how they do it" (1996: 49). This study explicitly takes an interpretative view of individuals careers but it does within a framework which links the individual and the social as outlined next.

3.1.6. LINKING THE OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE CAREER

There are significant problems with taking an either \ or approach. To take a structural view of the external career is to negate the myriad of characteristics, dispositions, needs, wants and past histories that each individual might bring on to the career scene. It is to elevate rationality and normative models at the expense of plural perspectives and the diversity of approaches and outcomes individuals may value. It is also to under-estimate "the chance, luck and serendipity" that characterises many (most?) careers (Evetts, 1992). The external career approach reifies the career, assuming it to pre-exist and then confront individual as real and constraining. (Evetts, 1992). This attitude to careers then can assume them to be identifiable things, existing outside the individual who might be navigating a way through and thus becomes amenable to organisational management (Townley 1994).

If we add to this the tendency to see career as a prescribed set of journeys to some terminal point which characterise approaches to external careers (for example Rosenbaum, 1989), then "it inclines one to view the journey as an attribute of the traveller rather than the compulsive nature of the terrain" (Nicholson and West,

1989:181) and to judge the traveller accordingly.[7] Yet the approaches which focus on the traveller alone are no more satisfactory. (Evetts, 1992; Gunz 1989) because all too often they are based on an under-socialised and over-determined view of the individual.

It is commonly accepted now in career theory that both perspectives must be addressed (e.g. Arthur and Kram, 1989; Derr and Laurent, 1989; DeFillippi and Arthur 1996; Herriot and Pemberton, 1996; Fish and Wood, 1993; Guterman, 1991; Orpen, 1994).

But I want to look more theoretically at the essential interconnectedness of the subjective and objective career. The ontological duality of careers, its "Janus" face, was noted by the Chicago School of Sociologists and several of those ideas have been developed since (Barley, 1989; Derr and Laurent, 1989; Evetts, 1992). The point is, as discussed above, that to study careers is to orient attention both to what might be observable about a career and to the meanings that are attached to career moves, along with how those meanings impel an individual to career action.

Careers can certainly be viewed structurally but that is not to deny that human agents have been active (even if not consciously) in creating and reproducing those structures.

"Individuals are renewing the organisation's management structure through already defined career routes and paths. Individuals are obliged to follow those routes if they wish to increase their chances of career success, that is if they wish to achieve promotion in their careers. But the actions of the career builder and the inter-relation of the system and action processes whereby structures become real and influence, and even determine, individual strategies remains unexamined" (Evetts, 1992:9).

Grey (1994), writing from a labour process perspective about how accountants view their careers, makes a similar observation. He explicitly states that he is not attempting to contribute to the literature on careers but I find his input into the debate to be very useful, particularly as he draws attention to other applicable perspectives. For example, he makes reference to the Foucauldian (Foucault, 1979) notion of the Panopticon to

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[7]Townley 1994:175 draws attention to a Foucauldian perspective on the exercise of power in organisational career management which enables individuals to be judged according to their position in relation to an end career point.

discuss the internalised self discipline required for an individual to do what they perceive as necessary to achieve career success. He also uses Rose's (1990) argument about how governmentality, in contemporary times, operates through subjects in such a way that the individual is construed as a self governing entity engaged in an ongoing project to shape themselves: the concept of the "entrepreneur of the self." The techniques of self management implicit in HRM along with the "culture" and "excellence" prescriptions (du Gay, 1996a) for organisational management are identified as sites for the production of this self. Grey himself does not make this link (although Fournier (1998) who also discusses the disciplinary project of career does make an explicit link with emerging career discourse of self development and entrepreneurial orientation) but echoes of the prescriptions in the "new careers" discourse to be entrepreneurial in the sense of making the most of oneself (Bridges, 1995; Kanter, 1989; Golzen and Garner, 1990) are evident.

Grey sees career as a regulating or organising principle providing both an end point and clues to the stages of the journey and hence it is a vehicle by which individuals can "become" (1994:481) i.e. a route to self actualisation. The apparent existence of the career structure provides a rationale for the long grind ahead and all aspects of self can be subjugated to it. It must be said that the notion of the individual as "willing slave to the system" (Pahl and Pahl, 1971) in their career is scarcely new (Whyte, 1956). But Grey (like Evetts, 1992) explicitly denies that career is merely an individual strategy: rather the structure that individuals perceive as confronting them is both predicated upon the assumption of individual aspirations and is a vessel for them. In this way, the self discipline of career is a precondition of the labour process. Collin and Watts make a similar point, recognising further that organisational (or occupational, which they do not discuss) attachment is a "pivot for personal identities and social networks" (1996:387).

What is at issue then is the structuring process: the individual's role in both creating and recreating those career structures which they then act towards as real and constraining (or indeed, enabling) (Giddens, 1984).

3.1.6.1. Role of language in the structuring process

Language is central to this structuring process as Gower and Legge contend:

"just as language is both constituted by human agency, yet at the same time is a medium of this agency, so people construct their careers through language, by assigning meanings to their actions and use those constructs to interpret and express the experiences that provide the stimulus for such constructs (1989: 439).

Language is not neutral but is implicated in the construction of meaning. They make this point while explicating the dominance of the bureaucratic model, tracing it to the dominance of bureaucracy itself as an organisational form. The durability is explained by the process in which individuals internalise, articulate and act upon the values and "correct" behaviours seen to underlie it. What constitutes a career then is both culturally bound and reinforced by rhetoric. [8]

But the meaning is not static, being constructed and reconstructed, through the actions and interactions of individuals. Gowler and Legge (1989) suggest, though, that the bureaucratic way is so embedded in our ways of seeing and talking about careers that it will be difficult to shift. Against that warning are the growing and overlapping discourses on enterprise, on flexibility at work, on new career forms which encode new ways of seeing work and careers. Arthur and Rousseau (1996b) explicitly spell out the new *lexicon* for considering careers in a project to redefine the meaning of all associated terms. However, the above points should not be taken to suggest that individuals will simply read the "text" and blindly follow (Newton, 1996).The issues raised briefly here will be elaborated in Chapter 4 which will explicate the view of language taken in this study.

3.1.6.2. Linking career structures and human action: The Barley (1989) model

These ideas about linking career structures and human actions in the context of established and emerging discourse are very usefully brought together in the work of Barley (1989). He reviews the legacy of the Chicago School of Sociologists - a branch of the wider school of Symbolic Interactionists - and attempts to relate their insights to

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[8] Gowler and Legge use "rhetoric" in this chapter to mean "the art of using language to persuade, influence or manipulate. They see it as the assertion of ideology which they take to mean "sets of ideas involved in the framing of our experience, of making sense of the world, expressed through language." In a later book (Legge, 1995) makes it clear that she see rhetoric as part of discourse. If discourse refers, at least partly, to the way in which things are discussed then rhetoric is one means of supporting it. Thus it has a more limited meaning than discourse. Examining one author's usage of these terms points to the general confusion that can occur when such potentially loaded terms are used differentially and \ or interchangeably.

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present day theorising about careers. He does so by marrying their interpretative perspective, which sees meaning embodied in the encounters of individuals, with Structuration theory as explicated by Giddens (1984). This theory seeks to overcome dualisms like structure and action (we could add the subjective and objective career in this context) by examining how individual actions and the social structure are linked. Giddens insists on their duality "social structures are both constituted by human agency and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution" (1976: 21).

It is fair to say that Barley does not engage with the more problematic dimensions of either school in introducing the model. I will do so in Chapter 4 but for now will follow Barley's description of the underlying theory behind it. In producing this diagram he is drawing on Giddens' (1984) view of structures as consisting of rules and resources which take the "form" of domination, signification and legitimation. Human action in terms of communication, the exercise of power and the application of sanctions is mediated through the expression of structure in the modalities of interpretative schemes, resources (allocative and authoritative) and norms. These modalities are basically elements of practical knowledge of how to act in a social world. Barley suggest they can be construed as a "a set of scripts that encode contextually appropriate behaviours and perceptions" (1989:53).

Institutional Realm[9]	*Signification*	*Domination*	*Legitimation*
	|	|	|	|
(Modalities)	*Interpretative schemes*	*Resources*	*Norms*
	|	|	|	|
Realm of Action	*Communication*	*Power*	*Sanction*
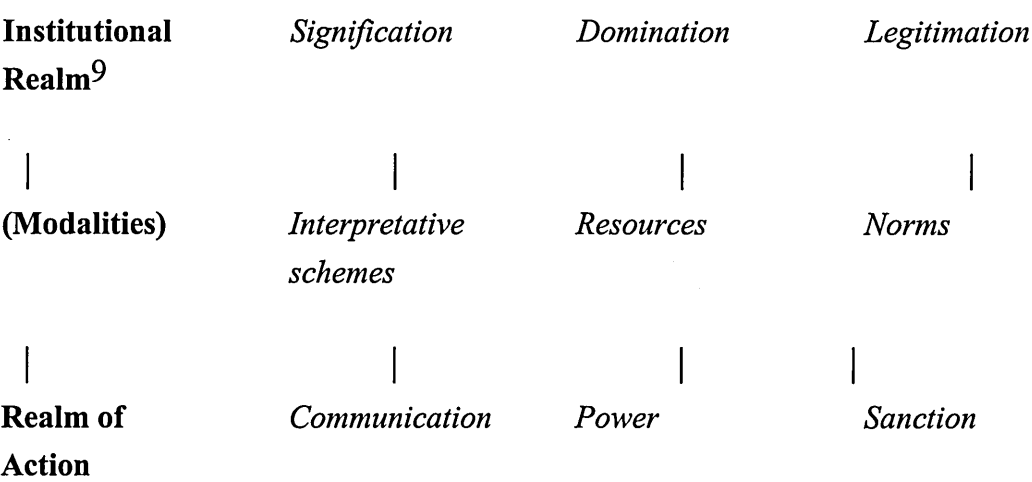
Figure 1. Giddens' model of structuration (Barley, 1989: 53)

Barley moves on to apply this to the linking of structure and action in careers.

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[9]Where Giddens uses "structure" Barley uses "institution" to maintain consistency with the usage of the Chicago School of sociologists

<div align="center">

INSTITUTION

↓   ↑

1. Encode   **4. Constitute**

CAREER SCRIPTS

(resources, interpretative schemes, norms)

↓   ↑

2. Fashion   **3. Enact**

INDIVIDUAL ACTION AND INTERACTION

</div>

Figure 2. Career's role in the structuring process: the Barley model (Barley (1989: 54)

3.1.6.2.1. The "institution" of the managerial career

The model takes institution to mean what Hughes described as a "social phenomenon in which the form of collective behaviour is relatively established and permanent" (Hughes 1971:6). For the purpose of examining the model, let us take the institution as the managerial career embedded in a bureaucratic organisational form.

The institutions of management and bureaucracy encode norms and career scripts, ways of behaving which offer to the career builder an interpretative scheme by which to fashion their way through their career as a manager. As social beings we are concerned to ensure some minimum consistency of our lives with those around us (Berger and Luckman 1967:117). We can accept our patterns of behaviour as "repeating a sequence that is given, in "the nature of things" or in (his) own "nature" (1967:117). We find a means of making sense of and enacting the situation we find ourselves in (Weick, 1995). So, we can accept and play out what appear to us to be given as the rules of the game.

However, we are all open to the interplay of psychological as well as social forces and we will all act a little differently in our interpretations of career scripts. This will have both intended and unintended consequences (Giddens, 1984) on the content of those

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scripts. But it is this patterned acting out of the scripts of being an organisational manager that actually constitute the institution. The institution has no independent existence outside of the actions of humans although it may well appear to each of us as an individual that it confronts us as prior to us and constraining (or enabling).

As an organisational manager, one could be seen as belonging to a loose collective of people, separated by time and space, who have made the pursuit of a managerial career personally meaningful to them, and in acting as they have done, they have contributed to the enduring view of what it is to have a managerial career.

An individual can have a career made from whatever raw materials they choose (assuming one adopts a broad definition of career) but there are certain "rules" attached to having a socially recognised career as a manager. If we choose to act outside those "rules" then we may not be recognised as such. The point is that an individual cannot forge a career path in isolation for "only when a path is socially recognised can an individual draw from that career a ratified identity" (Barley 1989:51). Otherwise the individual's working life is idiosyncratic, unconnected to and unrecognised by any wider social collective. So, by approaching the managerial career as real and patterned, individuals make it all the more so:

"at the same time as the career made the individual, the individual instantiated the social reality of the career and, by extension, the collective that underwrote its terms" (Barley, 1989:51).

As individuals and as members of some loose or tight social collective(s) we learn to tell a sanctioned story to account for the events of our lives (Weick, 1995) and draw on existing (and evolving) scripts to fashion our futures, within a historic and located context. As Pahl puts it, "time, place and social structure put limits on the scripts that are open for us to devise" (1995:151).

Following these arguments, then, careers role in structuration can be understood by seeing them as:

"temporally extended scripts that mediate between institutions and their interactions. Like all scripts careers should therefore offer actors interpretative schemes, resources and norms for fashioning a course through some social world" (Barley, 1989:53).

3.1.6.2.2 Using the model in the study

I believe that model has much to offer this study for several reasons which will be further developed in chapter 4.

1. Linking structure and agency. It offers a means of viewing the individual as active in the construction of their career, but nevertheless being able to recognise that people may experience the world as prior to them and act accordingly towards it. This model thus attends to the ontological duality of careers.

2. Accommodating change. Direct cause and effect linkages are rejected in this model as the arrows don't have to assume that change starts with the institution. Change could be evolutionary or in the form of a top down "environmental shock."

3. Effects of talk about career. The model highlights the mediating role of discourse and rhetoric as embodied in and articulated through career scripts and norms. This allows a means of examining the "talk" (Boden, 1994) about careers as the management of meaning. The application of norms in the model also allows a consideration of power and hegeomy.

4. Issue of identity. The model allows a focus on the realm of individual action and thus opens up to debate issues of career identity and the scripts, norms and resources an individual may draw on in an identity challenging situation like career change (Nicholson and West, 1989).

3.1.7. CONCLUSION

This section of chapter 3 has taken a wide look at the theoretical base for the study of careers, highlighting the eclectic nature of relevant literature; the changing definitions of careers; the putative emergence of new less rigid career forms; and finally a methodological approach to the study of careers which unites inextricably its objective and subjective sides. The following ideas discussed above will be incorporated into the study.

3.1.7.1. Definition of career

It is accepted that the concept of career can encompass every working life, but that that levelling in definition may not accord with the reality that people experience. Models for understanding careers such as those provided by Derr (1986) and Driver (1982) may prove useful in exploring the ways in which individuals account for their own career paths. The study will not set out to explore the impact of variables such as personality or age in any pre-determined sense but will be interested to consider to what extent individuals identify these issues as relevant to the career transition they have made. This study will seek to explore how people moving from organisational to portfolio employment redefine their notion of career and concomitant matters of identity and measures of success.

3.1.7.2. The "new career"

The notion of an old and new paradigm of careers is judged to be questionable but this is not to refute that changes are occurring in the ways in which individuals approach their careers. However, I do not believe that the case is yet persuasively made for the emergence of new career forms as such. Alternative models of career to the normatively bureaucratic have long been noted. What is of interest is their recent discursive promulgation which coincides with the changing organisational situations widely assumed to threaten the structures which sustained the traditional career. Empirical studies of any impact of new careers are scarce.

This empirical study will consider the extent to which participants feel that they are pioneers of a new career form or whether they see themselves as treading more well worn paths like that of self employed or professional people (acknowledging that those

forms are ambiguous in definition and imperfectly understood). Hence the study will contribute some valuable data about how changing careers are experienced by the people involved. Kanter's (1989) model seems to offer a useful device for approaching the broad trends that may be evident in their careers since leaving organisations.

I am not intending to prove whether or not an identifiable form which may be named the *portfolio career* has emerged. There is enough warning in the last chapter about the difficulties of establishing the parameters of self employment - on the face of it a much more established form of working. The concept of portfolio career has been expressed only vaguely by Handy and others and proceeds from no empirical base. Nevertheless, I am interested to explore the extent to which it is meaningful to these participants, how they define it and experience it. As discussed in Chapter 1, I have applied my own terms of reference to the concept - extrapolating from the literature about it. It is understood in this study to involve the move out of full time organisational employment into a way of working which is much less fixed and not dependent on one employer. Hence it could take the form of self employment with a variety of clients or it may involve some combination of employment and self employment. The literature on portfolio or any other form of "new careers" is alarmingly vague (considering its prescriptive bent) about what people actually do outside of organisational employment. So, while this study will stop short of drawing the parameters of this alleged career form it should contribute data about the working lives of those whose new career world does not adhere to the normatively hierarchical and organisationally bound.

3.1.7.3. Language as the management of meaning

Any notion of a gap between rhetoric and reality, however is problematic. If language both expresses and creates the meanings that people attach to their social worlds, then changing ways of talking about careers are part of the environment in which people make and make sense of career decisions. Hence this study will be alert to how the discourses of "new careers" and the associated discourses of enterprise and flexibility at work are mobilised in making sense of this career transition. However, there will be no simplistic assumption that individuals will blindly follow scripts.

3.1.7.4. Linking career structures and human action

The model provided by Barley will be adopted as a sensitising device in approaching the collection and analysis of the data. There is more to say about the use of this model but that can wait until chapter 4 which brings together all the methodological issues for the study.

3.2. CAREER TRANSITIONS

This section shifts the focus from general theoretical perspectives on careers to a study of the transition points within individual careers. The definition and significance of transitions is explored first. Nicholson's (1990) process model of career transitions is then introduced and its applicability to this study evaluated. The criticism of his model of transitions leads into a debate about retrospective sense making (Weick, 1995), acknowledging that situations can evoke motives for career moves. It then moves on to explore the centrality of the notion of career identity in work role transitions. The chapter then returns to look in more detail at how individuals may approach career transitions, recognising their role in the construction of identity. Specifically, the issue of career planning is explored within a more uncertain career and lifestyle context.

3.2.1. INTRODUCTION

Nicholson and West define career transitions broadly as "any major change in work role requirements or work context" (1989:182). Transitions are common to all career stories whether an individual is promoted, moves sideways or down, from one employer to another, out of work or back in, from paid to non paid, full-time to part-time. They are the punctuation marks in a career story (Nicholson and West 1989), indicating where some choice has been made within contextually specified limits, by an individual with their own psychological profile. The transition will have objective characteristics which can be seen and measured and will also have subjective meaning for the individual.

Career literature has traditionally been more preoccupied with continuity than change (e.g. Miller and Form, 1951; Super, 1957; Levinson, et al., 1978; Schein, 1978; Derr, 1986; Driver, 1982), despite evidence from certain studies (Nicholson and West, 1988) that "career patterns exhibit many possible forms, varying considerably in their manifestations of continuity and discontinuity" (Nicholson and West, 1989: 191). A transition perspective on careers focuses attention on those points where change occurs and hence provides some corrective to over-emphasis on continuity.

Careers can be said to unfold in stages which may be more or less radical and perceptible. The accompanying "status passages" when a shift is made (Strauss, 1977; Barley 1989) connote not only a changed work and social role but developing and shifting identities and sense of self. Transitions can invoke a change in how one presents oneself to others, how one is treated, who one interacts with and "the incorporation by the self of a social label to which others orient in interaction and by which actors announce themselves to the world" (Barley, 1989:51).

Nicholson and West (1989) suggest that careers can be studied as the link up between various transitions that an individual makes, recognising that any personal decision to make a career transition is played out within a social context which may constrain or enable. Hence transitions can be seen as "critical incidents in the nexus between self consciousness and social structure" (Nicholson and West 1989: 195). Thus the link with the Barley model which links career actions and social structures is established. Major work role transitions such as that out of organisational employment could be regarded as what Giddens (1991) calls *"fateful moments"* in an individual's life:

"transition points which have major implications, not just for the circumstances of an individual's future conduct but for self identity. For consequential decisions, once taken, will reshape the reflexive project of identity through the lifestyle consequences that ensue" (1991:43).

Transitions are points in an individual's life when identity may become an issue for them. By the same token du Gay (1996a) contends that, on a more collective scale, identity only becomes an issue when certainties appear to give way. Organisational changes and threats to careers and work in general, for example, have revealed the constructed nature of what had seemed to be stable and "natural" economic identities"(1996:3). Indeed identity as a concept has moved to centre stage in discussions about new careers (Mirvis and Hall, 1996; Hall et al., 1996). Giddens brings the two together arguing that, following a transition (and he uses the term more widely than just the work context) "the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive project of connecting personal and social change" (1991:33).

3.2.1. WORK ROLE TRANSITIONS: A PROCESS MODEL

There has been relatively limited empirical and theoretical study about work role transitions (Ornstein and Isabella, 1993). Acknowledging that, Nicholson (1984) produced a process model of what he calls the transition cycle which he subsequently updated (1990) to reflect the increasing uncertainty in the employment scene. Nevertheless it still assumes a transition from one employed role to another.

The cycle is seen as recursive (hence stage 1 is also stage 5), based on four phases which, although interdependent, are distinct enough to be seen as separate analytical entities. He suggests that there are tasks at each stage, problems and strategies for dealing with them. The following figure summarises his model:

Phase V \1
PREPARATION

tasks: developing helpful expectations, motives and feelings
problems: fearfulness, reluctance, unreadiness
strategies: realistic preview, advance contacts, self -appraisal

phase 4
STABILISATION

tasks: sustained trust, commitment
            and effectiveness making
problems: failure, fatalism
strategies: goal setting and appraisal
            for role evolution

phase 2
ENCOUNTER

tasks: confidence in coping
            enjoyment in sense
problems: shock, regret, rejection
strategies: social supports, safety,
            freedom to explore

phase 3
ADJUSTMENT

tasks: personal change, role development and relationship
            building
problems: misfitting, grieving
strategies: real work to do, early success, useful failure through feedback
            and mutual control

Figure 3.2.1. The Transition Cycle. Adapted from Nicholson 1990

Central to his model is the notion that what happens at one stage will have a powerful effect on the next. Preparedness for change can affect the encounter stage. The experience of that stage and how "acute, benign or demanding" (p. 88) one finds it will set the direction for the adjustment strategies. Whether the strategies are reactive or proactive will affect the extent of stabilisation and those stabilised patterns are a form of preparation for future change.

3.2.1.1. Examination of the process model

The cycle model, as it stands, appears to be a useful way of approaching the collection and analysis of data particularly in the absence of other work role transition models. It suggests questions about the level of preparation for the move and the extent to which participants were aware what they were moving to. Their experience of the early transition will be interesting to explore in order to consider if and how they feel they have adjusted to it; how they have now come to define and understand their role and implications for identity. The intersecting processes that the model implies, of disengagement and construction, open up to view the issue of personal and professional identity. Finally, the model suggests questions about how and why the individual is planning ahead and links future change to previous experience.

I do have strong reservations about the model however. Based as it is on an assumption that individuals move from one employed role to another, it may not be applicable to people moving to a role which is much less clearly defined than a job. The model also appears rather too de-contextualised as it takes little account of situational cues which might prompt career transitions. Individuals in this study are moving on to a role which, on the face of it, has unclear parameters. In the preparation and encounter stages, for example, the model highlights the interface between expectations and reality of the new role. Nicholson suggests that those making the transitions need a good map of the new territory, although organisations are bad at providing such assistance. [1] At least, though, a manager moving out of one organisational employment into another will encounter some fairly stable contextual factors, like the office, the staff, colleagues, perhaps a job description. Information may well be available about the new company in printed or

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[1]He also suggests that they need good weather and a bicycle (1990:93): the good weather symbolising psychological safety and support (widely regarded as problematic in the move to "new" careers); the bicycle symbolising the psychological freedom to explore and pathfind in the new environment (which rather presupposes that its territory is already mapped- again a problem with the transition under study).

anecdotal form. However those moving to a whole new context (which they may understand as portfolio working or as more familiar concepts like freelance or self employment) essentially have to *make* the new role.

3.2.2. WORK ROLE TRANSITION THEORY

Nicholson (1984, 1990) and Nicholson and West (1989) have articulated a more developed theory of work role transition which underpins the model. Various problems with their theory have been identified particularly the identification of two principal outcome dimensions of transition which are treated as linked but separate, and found to be orthogonal rather than alternative adjustment modes to work role transitions-

1. "major or minor alterations in identity to accommodate the demands of the new role";

2. role development- behaviours enacted to reshape the role and context to make them better fit personal qualities" (Nicholson, 1990: 86). Role development serves to preserve and enact valued aspects of identity.

To that end, three main independent variables are identified (only the last two of which feature heavily in the theory): organisational socialisation\ induction practices; individual characteristics; and role requirements. A set of predictions follow which in essence suggest that the outcomes of work role transitions are largely connected to the various combinations of these identified factors. However, only very limited support has been found for the theory (e.g. Ashforth and Saks, 1995; Munton and West, 1995 supported certain aspects of it only). A couple of questions in particular have been raised about it which are pertinent to this study.

3.2.2.1. Motives for work role transition

Firstly, the model is rather asocial, proceeding in a relatively linear way that assumes individuals motives for change precede the actions they take. Such an interpretation is explicitly disputed by Ashforth and Saks (1995) who subject the theory to scrutiny. Neither does it accord with the theoretical positions of Barley (1989) and other theorists who seek to explore how individuals make sense of change (Weick, 1995; Giddens, 1991).

A view of career transitions which privileges interpretation and links to the structuring process as does the Barley model outlined in Chapter 3.1 could see careers as prefiguring motives (Barley, 1989). Rather than assuming that needs and wants precede individual career moves we can theorise motives as being evoked by situational cues (Ashforth and Saks, 1995) and as collectively shared social constructions employed to tell a career story (Barley, 1989). As Weick argues:

"A crucial property of sense making is that human situations are progressively clarified, but this clarification often works in reverse. It is less often the case that an outcome fulfils some prior definition of the situation, and more often the case that an outcome develops that prior definition. As Garfinkel (1967:115) puts it, actors 'in the course of actions, discover the nature of the situation in which they are acting' " (1995:11).

Put simply, it can be the case that people act first, extracting cues from their social context and then make sense of the outcome.

3.2.2.2. Role and identity in the transition model

This point leads into the next concern about Nicholson's transition theory: the connection he posits between role and personal identity. Ashforth and Saks (1995) do not support his contention of separate role and personal development. Rather they argue for a symbolic interactionist perspective which would see the two as evolving interactively: "such that a new synthesis is achieved that is more than simply a compromise of static role demands and static self demands." They dispute the notion that work role adjustment implies some sort of "mechanistic alignment or negotiated truce between the self and the role" (1995:173).

This criticism is very pertinent to this study in which the role that individuals are moving on to is more ill-defined than most and less amenable to "role taking" (Mead, 1934).

3.2.3. CAREER IDENTITY

The issue of how identity is to be understood within this study needs to be further addressed. The relationship between a person's identity and their paid work has been central to the theorising of work and organisations through this century. As du Gay (1996a) argues, the notion of work as a crucial source of meaning in people's lives is raised in Marxist and managerialist texts alike: considering the role of work in the actualisation of or alienation from one's identity. In a sense both types of text can be seen as framed within the discourse of alienation as both share a concern with the proper role of paid work in individual's lives. "New careers", as discussed above, are offered as a way to reunite individuals with their true creative, enterprising, independent self (Golzen and Garner, 1990; Barner, 1994; Peters, 1987) which has been subordinated to career building within the bureaucratic organisation (Whyte, 1956). Once outside bureaucratic employment, so the argument goes, individuals will be freed from certain chains and able to claim and develop identity through independent and self directed work. Within "new careers" literature, it is proposed that the divide between personal and work identity, enshrined in traditional career oriented work will become more blurred.

3.2.3.1. Definitions of identity

The first issue to deal with is definitions. Self and identity tend to be used interchangeably and at times unproblematically in many texts (Casey, 1995). However, as Deaux (1992) points out, "self" tends to be used in discourses which emphasise individual traits and processes and "identity" is more used in reference to social categories or groups. In the "self" approaches, self \ identity would be seen as a thing more than as a process and work is a forum in which to exercise and develop that identity. Those static and decontextualised approaches to career theory identified in Chapter 3 which focus on the individual as the unit of analysis would fall into this category.

The "identity" approaches as defined by Deaux might include theories such as Social Identity theory which had the explicit aim of re-socialising the subject (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). In this case, the issue of group and identity is seen as more salient and attention focuses on those situations in which group identification is mobilised- both the

fleeting and circumstantial and the more enduring like gender or colour. This type of model for theorising individual identities has been criticised as limited and static, making little provision for individual interpretations of what group membership might mean and in what situations. In this study, it is not obvious to which groups, if any, individuals will orient for identity bestowing interaction (Barley, 1989).

Casey describes a divide between those theorists who see:

"the self as a structured cognitive system with a core of hard wired mechanisms and those who regard it more as a process of historic, cultural and institutional constitutive elements that are mediated through internal organismic processes" (1995:51).

While Nicholson does not belong to the first group, neither does he take a sufficiently interactive view of self for his theory to be compatible with Barley's (1989) model and what underpins it - Symbolic Interactionism and Structuration Theory. The following brief review will look at the views of the Symbolic Interactionists, integral to the Barley model and move on acknowledge those views which Casey (1995) describes as being the post modernising of Symbolic Interactionism concluding with the views of self, recently theorised by Giddens (1991).

3.2.3.2. Symbolic Interactionists' view of identity

Central to the Symbolic Interactionist view is the notion that, if a person changes work role, this can be understood as involving a shift in both how they present themselves to others and how others react to them, and in the people they interact with (Barley, 1989). If the roles they move on to are seen as predetermined, then a person taking a new role merely learns the new rules and acts accordingly - role taking. But while a new role might mean a new game to learn, new, reasonably enduring, encoded scripts, vocabularies and patterns of behaviour to acquire, these are not set in stone but are constantly being negotiated and acted on by the people involved in them. This is the process of role making (Mead, 1934). The point is that we construct our roles and our identities in interaction with others, orienting ourselves to some reference group who can provide us with:

"models of the career paths available, with cues for judging career progress, and with a terminology for staking down one's identity and making sense of one's role" (Barley 1989:51).

Roles thus emerge in an ongoing process of negotiation affected by significant others' self relevant evaluations. The Symbolic Interactionists' (of the Chicago School) views on identity (Barley, 1989; Casey, 1995) saw the self as emerging out of this process of social interaction. Identity is not fixed and stable but pivots on a process of naming:

"the attribution by others and the incorporation by self of a social label to which others orient in interaction and by which actors announce themselves to the world." (Barley 1989:51).

The work of Cooley (1902) in developing the idea of the looking glass self -the self of reflected appraisals- was influential in this theory of identity as were Mead's views on both the shared symbolism of language in creating meaning and on the existence of the "generalised other" who provides individuals with internalised regulation on role behaviour. Mead thought there were as many selves as there were social roles.

3.2.3.3. Postmodernism and identity

In the context of the changing nature of work and organisations the notions of role and identity, even as theorised in Symbolic Interactionism tradition, come to be seen as too static. Other theories of identity associated with post modernism and post structuralism have emerged which Casey (1995:64) describes as the postmodernising of Symbolic Interactionism. Identity comes to be viewed as something ever more fluid, shifting and changing and in a ongoing state of constitution and reconstitution (Gergen 1991; Gergen and Gergen, 1988) Gergen (1991) for example talks about the *"diffuse, fragmented, discontinuous, momentary, impulsive"* nature of self under shifting conditions.

As with the Symbolic Interactionists, self is seen as constructed in social interaction but over time and in relation rather than momentarily as Cooley and Goffman (1959) suggest. The metaphor which replaces the looking glass self is the "narrative self" (Gergen, 1991) in which the roles are loosened even further and individuals are engaged

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in a conscious (or "reflexive", Giddens, 1991) constitution and reconstitution of identity embedded in particular contexts. Individuals make sense of the events of their lives in shifting and diverse circumstances by constructing self narratives which are products of social exchange (Gergen and Gergen 1988:19). This type of idea is reflected also in the work of Weick (1995) who talks about story telling within sense making and Giddens (1991:5) who suggests that the reflexive project of the self "consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continually revised, biographical narratives." With a work role transition comes a "new present (which) gives the individual a new perspective on the past and the future" (Gecas and Mortimer, 1987:207). This refers us back to the notion that motives can come after action. What makes the present comprehensible is the manner is which the past is construed and reconstrued.

3.2.4.3.1. Identity and discourse

Authors from this viewpoint (e.g. Gergen and Gergen, 1988) acknowledge the centrality of discourse in their theories of identity which go beyond the Symbolic Interactionism view of shared symbolic meanings. Other theorists go further, following the post structuralist thinkers such as Derrida and Foucault in framing identity as discourse bound to the extent that there can be no idea of self outside language and representation. Hall argues for a view that "accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation" (1996:4).

Identities are thus constructed within discourse arising from the "narrativization of the self" (p.4). Like several other authors (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992; Weick, 1995; Noon and Blyton, 1997), I want to go no further down the deconstructionist road. It is noted that such theories may not intuitively make sense to individuals. As Silverstone (1994) argues such notions as the fragmented self are "resolutely rejected by ordinary folk going about their daily lives." A related point is made by Gough et al. (1994:22) that despite compelling arguments against the notion of any true self "at an intuitive level we seem to need one."

Casey (1995:3) reviews the developing postmodern theories and points a way out of a potential impasse:

"To agree with the postmodern critics that self is not a fixed and solid entity does not require an outright rejection of the concept. Rather, recognizing the self as a pattern or constellation of constituent events and processes...can still enable an understanding of the person who experiences, as we western moderns do, a sense of agency, inwardness and individuality."

She argues that a view of self can include both *identity making processes* which include the material and discursive practices of work and *outcome*s - those strategies that individuals will use within and against the constraints (and Giddens would also say the enablements) of social and cultural practices (1995: 4).

3.2.3.4. The reflexive self

3.2.4.4.1. Weick's view

Weick (1995) recognises that the self arises within interaction and is thus " a typified discursive construction" (Knorr-Cetina, 1981:10). That may be so, he argues, but it serves only to make the self more of a puzzle to the individual and thus it requires an ongoing project of sense making including a redefinition and contingent presentation of self. The establishment and maintenance of identity remains a central preoccupation of the individual (which is why Weick deals with it first in outlining his theory of sense making). He proposes the existence of three self derived needs:

1. for self enhancement - we want to feel good about ourselves;
2. for self efficacy- we want to perceive ourselves as competent and efficacious;
3. for self consistency- we want a sense of coherence and continuity.

Sense making derives from the individual's desire to meet those needs in interaction.

3.2.4.4.2. Giddens' view

Giddens' Structuration theory was criticised for an under-developed view of the self (Craib, 1992) but his more recent work sets out a similar view to Weick's (1995) about the reflexive, knowledgeable agent concerned to develop and present a coherent self

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narrative through change in a world which provides fewer environmental cues and hence less roles to "take."

The self identity constructed through the various transitions in a life can be both robust and fragile according to Giddens (1991): fragile because the story the individual tells is only one story among many that could be told and robust because a sense of self identity is "often securely enough held to weather major tensions or transitions in the social environment in which the person moves" (p.55). Hence for Giddens, self identity is not something that is given but something that is routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (1991:52).

For this study, the notion of a reflexive self, concerned to develop a coherent, sense - making narrative through change, seems acceptable. This is not to deny entirely the discursive formulation of self but to reassert the reflexive awareness of individuals who desire and pursue a sense of agency and authenticity. Hence, while not disputing that people can be "made up" to some extent within dominant discourses, (du Gay et al., 1996) it is a step too far to assert that the self exists only within and through discourse.

3.2.4. TRANSITIONS AND IDENTITY

Having spent some time considering identity at a theoretical level, I want to return now to the relationship between identity and transitions and move on to explore how to understand the notion of career planning in the light of the discussions above.

Transitions are moves within individuals lives which, within a shifting and fluid world, will involve them in ideational self constructions:

"*Career transitions can be viewed as social dramas in which social identity is reconstructed through interaction*" (Nicholson and West 1989:189).

Nicholson and West recognise that career stories can be viewed as "autobiographical fictions", the stories that people put together to maintain some sense of personal continuity through change. In that context any notions of control and continuity that the individual claims could be seen as "delusions."

This may be how it is seen by the observer (Collin and Watts, 1996). The individual has not so much enacted a planned career but been blown by the winds of change or at best exercised improvisational skill on the raw materials of uncertain opportunities. (Nicholson and West, 1989:191). It may look quite different from the point of view of the career actor. Barley argues that those charges that individual's accounts of their careers do not match objective realities miss the mark:

"What counts is whether such interpretations spur individuals to accept or reject the institutions their careers encode. For instance, to the degree that perceptions enable individuals to discount inequities, their very inaccuracy supports the inequities continuation. The adequacy of the detail of career accounts is therefore not nearly so important as how they articulate with the surrounding social order" (1989:56).

The significance of accounts of individual career transitions is precisely because they bring the relationship of the individual with the (changing) social order into clearer view. The change in the objective circumstances of an individual's working world entails new encounters, new collectives and the appropriation of a "vocabulary of motive" (Mills, 1940). Clearly individual differences are pertinent here. A role change to portfolio working could be regarded as desirable or not; as career development and the chance to exercise a wide range skills over a larger canvass or as being thrown on a scrap heap and forced to take what work one can (Hirsch and Shanley, 1996). The question is posed as to what extent individuals can agree on the valence of change (Ashforth and Saks 1995). This appears to raise interesting questions, central to this research, on the amount of agreement among individuals about the meaning of this change in their personal life and the extent to which it articulates changes in the surrounding social world.

3.2.4.1. Career planning

Such perspectives beg questions about the concept of career planning. Much individual centred career literature, harking back to the work of Parsons (1909), presupposes a rational, knowledgeable individual making planned choices in the pursuit of a career. Implicit is an awareness of self and of available opportunities and a view on the optimal match. Literature at the organisational level of analysis considers the organisation's career structure and planned moves of people flow through it, perhaps, but not

necessarily in conjunction with individual need (Sonnenfeld, 1989; Mayo, 1991). As discussed in section 3.1 there is, in fact, an inextricable link between the two levels of analysis as individuals act on and thus create and reproduce what appear to be pre-existing organisationally or occupationally structured career paths (Grey, 1994; Evetts, 1992).

A planned approach to careers is integral to those definitions- and to public perceptions - of career which privilege orderly progress to an end point. Hence a consciously planned approach to career is a culturally embedded notion. Studies tend to show that while individuals value the notion of career planning they do not always apply it in their own life (Holmes and Cartwright, 1993; Pringle and O'Gold, 1992). As Nicholson and West (1989) suggest objective evidence of planful approaches are not easy to find:

"there is less evidence for the existence of orderly patterns of choice and development towards well defined goals than there is for a model of careers as made up of changing responses to unfolding opportunities" (1989:190).

The latter point recalls the distinction made by Marshall (1989) when she compared the normative model of agentic, goal directed planning which seeks "control, certainty and predictability", and planning based in "communion" which is flexible and open to possibilities. In communion type planing individuals may well have "dreams but hold them lightly using them as visions of possibility rather than as aspirations that have to be realised" (1989: 287-288). The communion style has been identified by Weick (1996) as the approach to planning most pertinent to the exercise of a boundaryless career.

Harris and Watson (1995) also suggest that the notion of emergent strategy (Mintzberg, 1987) can be applied just as well to individuals as to organisations. A pattern may be detected (they do not say whether by career actor or observer) in the overall stream of decisions made and transitions experienced.

The views of Bauman on career and life planning and identity within postmodernism are worth exploring here, as he elegantly summarises the relative modern and post modern positions which relate loosely, as he describes them, to traditional and new

careers. He uses the analogy of the pilgrim to talk about identity work in modernity: always seeking, moving towards the future, giving a sense of purpose, avoiding being lost in the desert, spotting a place in the future and working oneself there: in other words the strategy of an individual pursuing the traditional career:

"The foremost strategy of life as pilgrimage, of life as identity building, was "saving for the future" but saving for the future made sense as a strategy only in so far as one could be sure that the future would reward the savings with interest and the bonus once accrued would not be withdrawn...Pilgrims had a stake in solidity of the world they walked; in a kind of world in which one can tell life as a continuous story, a "sense-making" story, such a story as makes each event the effect of the event before and the cause of the event after, each age a station on the road pointing towards fulfilment" (1996:23).

But, he suggests that the world is no longer hospitable to pilgrims. The identities of people and things have lost their solidity in the postmodern world of disposability and obsolescences. He proposes that in the life game now success comes in keeping each game short and thus the "new career" discourse of regular and less predictable career change is suggested:

"To keep the game short means to beware long term commitments. To refuse to be "fixed" one way or the other. Not to get tied in the first place. Not to wed one's life to one vocation only. Not to swear consistency and loyalty to anything and anybody" (1996: 24).

He goes on to suggest that forming a cohesive life strategy (in advance) is doomed to fail and the image of the pilgrim gives way to the "stroller, the vagabond, the tourist and the player"(1996:25). However, it may well be that the individual rejects any such notion of their lack of agency in dealing with their career.

Giddens is also concerned about the project of planning life strategies in what he refers to as the volatile world of late modernity. He likens life now to being aboard a careering juggernaut as opposed to being in careful control of a motor car (1990:53). However, this does not free the individual, who seeks a sense of agency from the project of

strategic life planning. This process is concerned with choice among a plethora of lifestyle options, hedged by a process of risk assessment and often with recourse to expert knowledge (therapists and advisers[2]). Hence Giddens would locate career planning (which he does not specifically address) within more pluralistic dimensions of consumption patterns (du Gay, 1996) and lifestyles. Career choice is about more than how the individual earns their living: it is central to how they people wish to construct and present themselves. Giddens argues:

"the notion of lifestyle is often thought to apply specifically to the area of consumption. It is true that the sphere of work is dominated by economic compulsion and that styles of behaviour in the workplace are less subject to the control of the individual than in non work contexts. But although these contrasts clearly exist, it would be wrong to suppose that lifestyle only relates to activities outside work...work is by no means separate from arenas of plural choices and choice of work and non work milieu forms a basic element of lifestyle orientations in the extremely complex modern division of labour" (1991:81-82).[3]

Of course, while it is arguable that it ever was thus, the point that Giddens and others make is that the loosening of traditional expectations (and the decline of the bureaucratic career is relevant here) opens up to individuals, or forces on them, choices and actions that they may previously have felt no compunction to consider. His comments are all the more pertinent to those who may make a choice to leave organisational life and go portfolio. Planning, then, is a means to prepare a course of future action mobilised in terms of the ongoing development of a reflexive narrative of the self.

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[2]The case is strongly made for an enhanced role for adult careers guidance services given the uncertainty of career trajectories (Collin and Watts, 1996; Jackson et al. 1996). Only the provision of careers guidance for school pupils is statutory. Although statutory provision is unlikely to be expanded, the trend is in the direction of more available careers counselling given the recent government policy on life long learning (Longworth and Davies, 1996) and the Dearing (1995) report into Higher Education.

[3]There has been much attention recently to the "post modern consumer" and postmodern culture, looking at the area of changing consumption patterns; their role in social differentiation and the "making up" of individual's identity within them (Savage, et al. 1992; Butler et al, 1995: Bourdieu, 1989; Bauman, 1987; Rose, 1994; Ward, 1994). du Gay (1996) and Casey (1995) both comment that the cultural debate has rather displaced concern about work and identity. du Gay, in particular seeks to unite them arguing that it is impossible to maintain division between work and non work identities and between the spheres of work and production.

3.2.5. SUMMARY

This section has reviewed what is known theoretically about work role transitions and introduced a process model (Nicholson, 1990) of transitions. The model is premised on a fairly static view of role and identity which does not seem appropriate given the shifting nature of work and the uncertain transition individuals in this study are making. Hence the model will not be applied in this research except in so far as it suggests questions for data collection.

The issue of career identity emerged, however, as a central concern in studying career transitions having reviewed the Symbolic Interactionist view which underpins Barley's model and having introduced Giddens' (1991) and Weick's (1995) notion of a reflexive knowledgeable agent wanting to feel a sense of agency and authenticity as they fashion a way through and enact the changing social world. This issue will be further debated in Chapter 4.

This study will focus on a specific career transition and in doing so should be able to illuminate how individuals are interpreting the current social world that is relevant to their personal move. It will also be able to explore the extent to which they think this is a social as well as personal transition. Hence this study will contribute a qualitative perspective both on how individuals account for the reasons behind a career transition not previously empirically investigated and how they have subsequently experienced it.

The next two sections move on to look at what is known about the before and after of this career transition out of organisational employment and into portfolio work.

3.3. LEAVING THE ORGANISATION

This chapter seeks to review the literature which might explain why individuals leave organisations. It looks at involuntary job loss and the continuum of reasons which are more or less voluntary for leaving organisations incorporating: psychological contract violation; a desire for a better balance of home and work and career development.

3.3.1. INTRODUCTION

The leaving stage is the most under-researched and theorised in career literature (Ornstein and Isabella, 1993; Ashforth and Saks 1995) and in transition theory specifically. The main concern of the literature is less with the process of disengagement from one role than with preparation for, and adaptation to, the new role. The extant models are predominantly economistic, concentrating on turnover as one specific outcome rather than as part of any overall pattern of growth and change. Qualitative accounts of turnover incidents are rare (Ornstein and Isabella, 1993): this is a pity as the behaviours that lead to exit from organisations are complex. The explanations for exit might lie in "organisational pathologies" (Sonnenfeld, 1989); in the normal turnover flow of a specific industry or in a myriad of inter-related organisational and individual reasons. In this brief review I identify regularly recurring themes in the literature looking first at involuntary exit - job loss- and moving on to reasons for leaving associated with (more or less) voluntary exit.

3.3.1. INVOLUNTARY JOB LOSS

Given the spate of downsizings, recent practitioner literature and academic literature on turnover has turned its focus to those who survive organisational job loss (Brockner et al., 1992). But our understanding of how job loss may be experienced by the "losers" of a unilateral withdrawal of an employment contract is less developed (Ornstein and Isabella, 1993). What we do know (Leanna and Feldman, 1992; Latack et al., 1995) is that job loss is stressful by whatever criteria researchers choose to examine. Levels of distress are linked to the significance of financial difficulty caused (Leanna and Feldman (1992); the amount of attachment to job and organisation prior to the lay off and the extent to which they attribute blame for it to themselves. (Prussia et al., 1993). Time out of work also appears to impact on people's coping strategies (Latack et al. 1995) and thus job loss can be seen as an event or as a state. Men and women appear to use

different coping strategies, with men reportedly problem focused on issues such as job search and women looking more to "symptom focused" activities such as seeking social support (Latack et al., 1995). At issue, generally, is that fact that a job fulfills a variety of social functions and experiences - it is implicated in personal status and identity, purposive activity with a sense of time structure, social networks, teamwork and camaraderie (Latack and Dozier, 1986; Latack et al., 1995). However, job loss can also be seen as an occasion for renewed career growth (Ely and Buch, 1997).

3.3.2. VOLUNTARY EXIT

Exit which is not prompted by the uni-lateral withdrawal of the employment contract can be seen as more or less voluntary. This section will consider violation of the psychological contract, balancing home and work and career development.

3.3.3.1. Violation of the psychological contract

Recent literature (Rousseau, 1996; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995) suggests that violations of the psychological contract:"the individual's beliefs, shaped by the organisation regarding the terms of an exchange contract between the individual and the organisation" (Rousseau, 1996:9) are implicated in organisational exit. However violation is a subjective experience (Rousseau, 1996). We know that perceptions of violation are widespread but they do not necessarily lead to exit (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994).

Other strategies for dealing with violations are described as getting out, getting safe and getting even. (Herriot and Pemberton ,1995) echoing the earlier work of Hirschman (1970) who proposed that *"exit" "loyalty" and "voice."* were all responses to dissatisfaction at work.

Rousseau (1996) suggests that exit following perceived violations is most likely when there has been a brief transactional contract (MacNeill, 1985); when other people are leaving; when the individual feels secure in the labour market and when attempts have bee made to remedy the situation and failed. From this, it would seem that Rousseau would not expect long standing employees of an organisation to leave following a perception of broken psychological contracts. This is interesting in view of the literature which suggests that is precisely the action people might take if they find they can no longer expect a traditional career (Handy, 1994: Bridges, 1995; Kanter, 1989). Furthermore, Rousseau takes a far from positive view of such exit (unlike the proponents of the boundaryless career) describing it as a "passive destructive response" (1996:135).

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I will return to the psychological contract in 3.4 when the new relationship between organisations and individuals is explored. It is fair to say at this stage, however, that research on psychological contract violation, and responses to it, still raises more questions than it answers (Sparrow, 1995).

3.3.3.2. Balancing home and work

Rousseau's negative view on organisational exit is also interesting in the light of this next reason for leaving which is about balancing home and work. Several authors have raised the normative expectations on women (and indeed men) to forge careers based on the traditional upward (male) model of career success (Marshall, 1989; Gallos, 1989; Fletcher and Bailyn, 1996; Bailyn, 1993).

Two studies have attempted to understand in detail why women leave organisations. Rosin and Korabik's (1992, 1995) large scale quantitative survey of 1400 male and female MBA students took issue with the assumption that women were leaving organisations for family reasons. They suggested that there were a range of variables to account for organisational exit encompassing family and personal reasons, but more linked to gendered workplaces. Of those who did leave, a significant number went on to set up their own business - a pertinent finding to explore further in this study (see also Marlow and Strange, 1994).

Their findings are very useful in challenging certain assumptions about women and work and highlighting the problems of gendered workplaces. My concern with this study is that it belongs very much to the orthodox school of thought about career (Arthur et al., 1989). In seeking to protect women from charges that they put family before career, they under-estimate exit as a possible positive move for those seeking a more permeable interface between home and work. Exit is constructed negatively only within the dominant paradigm of the traditional, progressive career. In the light of the pleas (Bailyn, 1993; Fletcher and Bailyn, 1996) for a more flexible view of what career success constitutes, this study contributes little.

Marshall's (1995) qualitative study of 16 women leaving organisations adds a subjective dimension. The stories these women tell are personal, detailed and compelling. In so far as Marshall is prepared to generalise from them (and she errs on the side of preferring to allow them to stand alone) she highlights their views of gendered organisational cultures; weariness with organisational battling and attempting to push through chance as well as a need for a more balanced life. She insists that her focus on women's experiences does not negate those of men but argues that problems

are confounded for women given perceptions of their "difference" "in this symbolic world of conformity" (1995: 201). [1]

While not wanting to minimise the pervasive and pernicious effects of gendered organisational cultures (Mills, 1992; Maddock and Parkin, 1993) there is a wider issue of organisational fit (Green and Cassell, 199) to consider. Those men, not tied to the traditional career (New Ways to Work, 1996); at odds with their organisational culture or the corporate world in general (Scase and Goffee, 1989; 1992) or keen to embrace more parenting responsibilities, may also find themselves marginalised.

3.3.2.1. Downshifting

"Downshifting" is a recently identified phenomenon (Sundstrom and Kleiner, 1992; Ghazi and Jones, 1997) which has received more media attention than empirical analysis but it might prove relevant in this study. The assumption is that individuals voluntarily opt out of the stressed and demanding corporate world in order to lead a more balanced and fulfilling life where work is not the sole source of satisfaction or identity development. A recent newspaper article (IoS 15 February, 1998: 3) suggests that it provokes hostility in some because "it challenges those who are driving their career way past the speed limit." Downshifting is quite compatible with the literature on the boundaryless career but contrary to the precepts of the upward and onward career.

3.3.3.3. Career Development

Arguably, at the most voluntary end of the continuum is exit associated with career development. I have already introduced the models of Kanter (1989) and Savage et al. (1992) which suggest that managers are swapping organisational employment for the "better bet" of professional work or self employment. As yet, there is little empirical evidence to verify such a trend. Human capital theory (Becker, 1964) suggests that individuals will seek to maximise their own career investment and move on when they can best do so. Attempts to investigate this theory have been equivocal in their findings (e.g. Rosenbaum, 1989) as it proves difficult to separate out personal career investment from the emergence of abilities over time and from the structuring of organisational and occupational career paths. The notion of timetables (age or stage based) for career development is noted as significant in individual's career decisions, (London and Stumpf, 1982; Lawrence, 1984; Herriot et al. 1993) although, as discussed in the last section, they too are socially constructed and amenable to change.

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[1] Thomas and Alderfer (1989) point to the dearth of studies on black people's careers and highlight the malign effects on them of organisational cultures and career assumptions.

Much of the literature on boundaryless careers implies that individuals may make a positive choice to move to a looser career form for career development reasons. Several authors suggest that this decision will be made by those aware and sassy enough to know that the future of successful careers will be outside the confines of a single organisation (e.g. Peiperl and Baruch, 1997; Halal, 1997; Kanter, 1989; Hall et al., 1996).

3.3.3.1. The Career Plateau

Career plateaux have recently received attention on the assumption of a reduction in hierarchical opportunities for managers as organisations delayer (Nicholson, 1993; Carson and Carson, 1997; Pemberton and Herriot, 1994; Tremblay et al., 1995). Pemberton and Herriot (1994: 31) make a useful distinction between the "structurally plateauxed" for whom the career ladder has run out and the "content plateauxed" who are no longer stimulated and challenged at work. Indeed most authors acknowledge plateau as a subjective phenomenon which does not correlate necessarily to job satisfaction or job attitudes and must no longer be read as a statement of personal failure (Pemberton and Herriot, 1994: 32). There is no heightened propensity to quit among plateaued managers (Nicholson, 1993), although that may be a function of exit barriers (or at least perceptions of them) to those who have become entrenched in their career (Carson and Carson, 1997). I am reminded here of Hirsch and Shanley's (1996) comments on the lack of appeal of the unfamiliar external labour market for those with a long career investment sunk in one company. As Riley (1995) suggests perceptions of labour markets are always salient in career decisions even if individuals can be shown to be "objectively" wrong in their assessment of their standing in it.

3.3.4. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY

A range of possible reasons for organisational exit have been considered from forced to voluntary but while there are useful studies to draw on, this remains under researched topic (Ornstein and Isabella, 1993). Any one of the reasons indicated above could be implicated in the decisions of the participants in this study to exit their organisation. This study will thus add a qualitative dimension to the literature on exit

However, what I find most intriguing is not so much why an individual would choose to leave one organisation and move on to join another, but why they leave and then do not seek organisational employment elsewhere. The next section moves on to that decision.

3.4. OPTING TO REMAIN OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

This section considers why an individual might opt not for employment but for portfolio work. Recognising the dearth of literature on the transition to portfolio work or any other type of boundaryless career, the literature on the move to self employment is considered, as that context is applicable to the notion of portfolio work. Push and pull explanatory factors are explored first, followed by a brief review of what is known about entrepreneurs \ people who start businesses. Models which look at this transition in a more holistic way recognising the intersection of personal and situational factors and the context of the individuals life and careers are introduced. The section concludes by considering the contribution of this study to a theoretical understanding of the move from employment to portfolio working.

3.4.1. INTRODUCTION

As discussed in chapter 1, the concept of portfolio work is vague and fluid, rarely defined and usually taken to apply to people who have a number of ways of earning a living and\or work with a variety of employers. There is little literature beyond the anecdotal (Comfort, 1997; Grigg, 1997) which discusses the move out of organisational employment and into a portfolio career specifically. Self help rather than academic analysis is their concern and they proceed from the assumption that portfolio work is a primarily a response to job loss. Some limited attention is also being paid to the apparent rise of the "interim manager" (Overell, 1996; Whitehead, 1997) who are described as temporary executives, usually working through an agency, who are brought in to deal with company crises on a short term basis. These people are also assumed to be the casualties of organisational downsizings who have not succeeded in finding jobs (age discrimination is implied). However, very little is yet known about them either. It may be that participants in this study include interim management in their portfolio.

The literature on the boundaryless career provides some pointers about motivations but at a very general and non-empirically grounded level. The assumption is that people will want to pursue "distinctive personally relevant opportunities" (Arthur 1994:9) which might include the need for autonomy, to be creative, to be freed from organisational bounds and to express an entrepreneurial urge.

The most relevant literature available is about the move to self employment. I have already identified that self employment is itself a tricky concept to define, capable of

being understood as a continuum embracing circumstances very close to employment through to running a business empire. I have also indicated that the majority of new businesses are sole traders or employ very few people (Stanworth et al., 1995) which may well describe the work of many of those in portfolio careers. I will therefore review the literature on the transition to self employment and draw out the potential links and overlaps with the move out of employment into portfolio work.

3.4.1. PUSHED OR PULLED TO SELF EMPLOYMENT?

The main questions addressed in this literature are firstly whether or not people are pushed to self employment by economic and labour market circumstance in the context of organisational changes and the growth in small business activity. The second question addresses the extent of "pull" based on individuals propensity for this way of working and \ or a belief in the intrinsic merits of self employment within the prevalent discourses of the enterprise culture (du Gay, 1996) and entrepreneurial, liberated new careers (Kanter, 1989; Golzen and Garner, 1990).

3.4.1.1. Exploring evidence on push and pull factors to self employment

Hakim's (1988) quantitative study of self employed people with fewer than five employees explored why they opted for self employment. She introduced the notion of push and pull factors as an explanatory device. Push factors were identified as unemployment, redundancy, job insecurity; pull factors were centred on ideas of autonomy, control and independence. Her data suggests that "pull factors clearly outweigh the push factors" (1988: 290). People who pointed to push factors are the smallest group in her study, no more than one quarter of her sample. Indeed she found that many of those who became redundant actually described themselves as voluntarily self employed as they had since identified benefits of their new situation. Central to her analysis is the ideology of self employment and the enhanced control and independence it implies.

However, other studies do not back up her findings (Granger et al. 1995). Bogenhold and Staber (1991 suggest that the rise in self employment is due more to the cyclical effects of recession and labour market failures than to ideologies. They go on to suggest two potential logics related to labour market position which may propel people to self employment. One logic is based on *economic necessity*. People who find themselves marginalised economically and socially by low skills levels, poor wages, discrimination, unstable employment may believe that self employment is the only route available to them. By contrast the *logic of autonomy* can apply to people who are more advantaged

in the labour market and have acquired a high degree of saleable cultural capital (see also Savage et al., 1992) and who believe that self employment can satisfy a desire "to leave a stifling or otherwise unsatisfactory work situation" (1991:226).

This is a potentially useful distinction to make, although, in essence, they are utilising Hakim's push and pull dichotomy. However, it seems to me that the two logics could co-exist particularly as recent labour market changes can threaten the position of those with a high degree of skill and cultural capital who previously thought themselves secure in their organisation. An individual may find themselves considering alternative labour markets for reasons of economic necessity but subsequently make a more measured decision to follow the self employment route based on an assessment of the relative merits of employment and self employment. Baucus and Human (1994) discuss the apparently growing trend of redundant or semi-retired executives entering self employment, a trend that Schein (1994) calls defensive self employment. Quinn suggests people are making rational and instrumental decisions about employment: "The corporation has become a voluntary organisation to be joined only because it can let them achieve more of their personal goals than any other institution" (1992:9). However, it may be that while onlookers could assume that the logic of *economic necessity* has forced an individual into self employment, the logic of *autonomy* that Quinn implies, might be how the individual makes sense of their own transition (Weick, 1995).

Bogenhold and Staber (1991) reject the notion of self employment as some kind of "cure all": indeed their stated objective in the paper is to guard against unreflective optimism about it. They emphasise the precariousness of self employment and the high failure rate of new businesses. However, they do recognise that while the labour market may be a dominant factor it "says nothing about an individual's ability to accomplish change, nor does it explain why some individuals remain in their new status while others leave it quickly" (1991: 469). Individual propensity for self employment needs to be explored alongside labour market factors.

3.4.2. WHO SETS UP BUSINESSES?

Central to the literature on self employment is the concept of entrepreneurship which purports to explain why some people want to be in business for themselves. I am interested to briefly explore that concept, as entrepreneurial principles and practice are invoked in the developing literature on new careers.

3.4.2.1. The entrepreneur

There are a myriad of definitions (Kao, 1989: 92). As Kao remarks, entrepreneurs, in this current context, have emerged as "the new cultural heroes." However, they could also be identified much less positively as associated with the Thatcherite projects of the 1980s (du Gay, 1996b) and driven by individual greed. There is little agreement about what factors identify some one as an entrepreneur and how that state differs or overlaps with being self employed. The link between being an entrepreneur and establishing a business is in itself ambiguous. Does one need to be entrepreneurial to be self employed? Some authors are keen to retain a distinction between those who are made as self employed (entrepreneurs) and those who have it thrust upon them:

"self employment and starting up businesses to survive economically in mid-life because of being laid off or early retired should not be treated as equivalent or similar to entrepreneurship. Let us not fall into the trap of minimizing the psychological distance between self employment and entrepreneurship" (Schein, 1994: 87).

Hence self employment is constructed as a contingent matter, distinguished from entrepreneurship as a calling. Schein's comments are in line with his theory of career anchors (1978) which assumes that we are dominated by one unchanging anchor through our lives. By contrast, Halal (1997:15), talking about the rise of the knowledge entrepreneur, suggests that the trend towards people moving out of organisational employment and setting up businesses constitutes a "major shift to an independent, more mature mode of self employment."

The more static approach to definition rather dominates the literature on entrepreneurship. In seeking to identify what is an entrepreneur, studies tend to focus on either personal factors, situational or contextual factors or socio-economic factors (Stanworth and Gray, 1991; Katz, 1994). Individual factors centre on the notions of propensity to innovation, risk taking and need for achievement as Stanworth and Curran, 1976; Carland et al., 1984) inherent traits (Brockhaus, 1982) such as need to control or lead. Social and psycho social studies focus on issues such as early childhood experiences and family backgrounds (Katz, 1994; Kets de Vries, 1989); prior family experience of self employment (Carroll and Mosakowski, 1987); and race (Thomas and Alderfer, 1989). Economic factors which relate to labour markets and restructuring are particularly relevant in the current context.

This literature has been criticised on several counts. Firstly Kao (1989) points to gender and cultural biases. It has been pointed out, for example, that what might serve as a success measure for entrepreneurial activity, like maximising profit and growth, does

not accord with the experience of women in business who report quite different criteria for success - like building a stable business (Lee Gosselin and Grice, 1990; Marlow and Strange, 1994) or self fulfilment and personal goal achievement (Buttner and Moore, 1997). With the rise in female entrepreneurs (Cohen, 1997) it is acknowledged that the entrepreneurship literature needs to take account of a range of different motivations and attitudes (Katz, 1994). Secondly trait oriented approaches are criticised in similar ways to trait theories of career choice: for a tendency to static determinism and under-socialisation of individuals (Kao, 1989) and furthermore for a lack of evidence suggesting definite links between traits and behaviour (Katz, 1994). Thirdly, the socio-economic and situational factor literature pays insufficient attention to individual needs and differences as Bogenhold and Staber (1991) point out. It is clearly inadequate analytically to look at any of these various factors in isolation from each other.

3.4.2.2. Integrated models for understanding the move to self employment

There are some seemingly useful integrated studies. For example, Cooper (1981) a dynamic and interactive model which takes account of several factors. First *antecedent factors* related to personality and characteristics and including issues like family background, level of education are considered. Secondly - and probably most pertinent to this study - *the incubator organisation* is cited. By this he means relevant factors concerned with previous organisational employment, like geographical location and the skills, knowledge and networks acquired while there, the opportunities it offered for entrepreneurial activity and reasons for leaving. Birley's (1989) study also provides a useful indication of a tendency to move into self employment via a period of occasional or part-time self employment while still employed. Finally, Cooper points to *environment factors* beyond the individual and the organisation. The move to self employment can be understood in the intersection of those various factors. There is no determinism in this model, nor is it founded on a stereotyped (and male) notion of what constitutes entrepreneurial activities.

Carroll and Mosakowski (1987) also criticise much existing literature on this transition for a static, one-dimensional approach which rarely offers a well developed theoretical base and neglects the historical experience of individuals. They attempt to answer the question of who becomes self employed by using retrospective career history data. They conclude that while certain social structural variables such as family self employment and previous experience of self employment are pertinent, what is most important in this research is not to assume stable individuals, nor to concentrate on the traits of entrepreneurs in isolation from the prevailing sociological and organisational conditions. Self employment can also be seen as episodic and linked both to the history and stage in the life course of individuals. However, in general, the career trajectories of

self employed people is still an undeveloped and under-researched area (Gibb Dyer, 1994).

An awareness of an historical perspective leads into the final model which appears to have most relevance to this study. Granger et al. (1995) looked at the drivers to self employment in people who had previously been employed in the UK book publishing industry. Their qualitative research focused on those who formally employ no labour (and hence is particularly relevant to this study) and sought to understand the move to self employment within the wider context of an individual's life. They specifically recognise the intersection of personal and situational factors that might be implicated. They acknowledge the contribution of studies such as that of Bogenhold and Staber (1991) agreeing that self employment is not an economic panacea but they judge the push\ pull dichotomy to be too simplistic and rigid. The move needs to be seen in the context of the rest of the individuals life and within the overall history of their career. They identify four self employed career types:

refugees, The biggest group in their study who are pushed to self employment by labour market factors and retain an orientation towards contractual employment;

missionaries, They typically fell into one of two groups: either those have a positive orientation to entrepreneurial work or those who have taken the opportunity to regain some autonomy in their career. Although they leave employment voluntarily they do so because they feel "I've had enough" and instead opt to "boldly go" into self employment;

trade offs, They are seeking to balance work with other needs perhaps on a temporary basis. Their central concern shifts from work to home;

converts, They come to appreciate the lure of self employment. They can come from all categories but are likely to start as refugees before converting.

The push of labour market forces then is represented by the *refugees* (and unlike with Hakim's (1988) study they were the largest group) and the lure of the logic of autonomy is demonstrated by the *missionaries*. However, their model also acknowledges that, for other people (the *trade-offs*), self employment offers a way of combining home and work perhaps for a temporary period to deal with a specific need. This was the second largest group in their category and, not surprisingly perhaps, women were over-represented.

To my mind the most interesting category analytically are the *converts*. These people started off as *refugees* or as *trade offs* but began to identify what they saw as the merits of self employment. They had no marked desire to return to employment. As Granger et al. suggest, in their case "unemployment push became ideological pull" (1995:510).

Stanworth and Stanworth (1995), reporting on the same research, question the extent to which these people did experience the increased autonomy, independence and control that they claimed. The authors suggest that this sense was illusory and that, in fact, their independence is disguised dependence, recalling a long standing debate about the extent of freedom of self employed people given the constraints and confinements of the market place (Burchall and Rubery, 1992). Research often portrays self employed people as thus constrained but continuing to assert the benefits of self reliance and autonomy. Following Rainbird, (1991), Stanworth and Stanworth suggest that their participants were in fact disguised wage labour who had simply substituted employment contracts for commercial ones. They conclude that the discourse of enterprise has had a powerful effect and that their participants have "adopted the ideology of enterprise without most of its accepted trappings" (1995:224).

The theoretical assumptions on which such statements rest must be questioned. I accept that there is merit in looking at what might be considered as the structural characteristics of their new situation within a recognition of asymmetric power relations and the hegemonic nature of discourse (which will be discussed further in chapter 4). I recognise that individuals can be "made up" (du Gay et al., 1996), within discourses (at least to some extent). However, I am more uneasy about asserting that what individuals feel to be true is in fact an illusion. I am much more interested to consider how they account for the transition and their experience of it and how that spurs them to further action (Barley, 1989). I will of course be interested to probe within and between their accounts to identify any such ambiguities, contradictions and awareness of alternative interpretations in how they themselves are making sense of their new context (Weick, 1995).

That reservation aside I envisage that this will be a useful framework to consider the transition from organisational to portfolio work particularly as it takes a holistic view of the participants lives and incorporates the historical dimension of their career history.

3.4.3. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY

Taking this literature with that identified in chapter 3.2 and 3.3, I am interested in the extent to which moves out of organisations and into other forms of working can be considered as one seamless move. It may be that the decision is made (or forced) first, to leave the organisation and then the individual makes the decision to opt for portfolio work, out of choice, or because other options seem limited. Alternatively, they may leave their organisations precisely in order to follow another way of working, attracted by its apparent merits or because they have a negative view of their standing in the internal or external labour market. Within this context, the model of Granger et al. should prove a useful analytical device for considering their move to portfolio work. The notion Cooper (1981) suggests about the incubator organisation also appears applicable. Together, these two models should enable me to consider the issues of change and continuity in how they tell the story of this career move.

Self employment is clearly an evolving concept particularly in the light of the growth in defensive self employment (Schein (1994) and Halal's (1997) view that portfolio type workers are implicated in the maturing of this mode of working. I do not intend to contribute to a structural understanding of self employment. However, in so far as participants identify themselves as self employed this study will also contribute to what is known about drivers to self employment and experience of it. By the same token their way of defining their new career should provide some data to assess the analytical merit of the concept of portfolio working.

In summary, then the study aims to contribute a theoretical understanding of the transition from employment to portfolio working by focusing on the sense that individuals make (Weick, 1995) of why they left their organisation; what attracted them to their new context and how they define it in relation to employment. Considering the move within the context of their overall career and the changing material and discursive practices of work should provide a historically located and integrated career study which focuses on the links between individuals actions and social structures (Barley, 1989).

3.5. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE THE ORGANISATION

This section explores what Ornstein and Isabella (1993) would call the "marriage" part of a career transition: where an ongoing relationship develops between individual and organisation. In the case of portfolio careers, however, polygamy may be a more appropriate image, or even, as Mirvis and Hall (1996) describe it sex, not marriage. Without going any further with such imagery, the point is made that individuals will form some sort of relationship with organisations with whom they contract. The aim of this section is to explore how individuals feel that they can develop their new role outside of the traditional ongoing employment relationship with a single employer. The section will begin by exploring in general terms what the literature on new careers suggests as optimal ways for individuals to adapt to this career change and move on to look at it in more detail using the model of the new competencies for career success proposed by DeFillippi and Arthur: knowing how; knowing whom and knowing why. The relationship with the organisation will then be further explored by consideration of the implications of its changed contractual basis.

A summary of chapter 3 with implications for the study will then follow.

3.5.1. INTRODUCTION

As previously discussed, much new career literature rests on normative assumptions and prescriptions about the shape and needs of careers despite a weak empirical base. Paradigmatic thinking (Nicholson, 1996) elevates new careers as qualitatively different from, and inherently preferable to, the more employer dependent model that preceded them. The key challenge for individuals is said to be to enhance their human and social capital (Burt, 1992) by accepting personal responsibility for the development of skills and finding opportunities to exercise them (Grigg, 1997; Comfort, 1997). Key concepts are the development of the meta skills of adaptability, resilience, identity formation and learning to learn (Hall, 1996; London, 1993). Kanter's (1989a:321) focus is on the influential notion of "employability" i. e. "the knowledge that today's work will enhance

the person's value in terms of future opportunities" rather than employment security (see also Bridges, 1995; Hakim, 1994; Amin, 1996).[1]

There is highly individualistic and instrumental flavour to the prescriptions about how best to pursue a new career. While the organisational dimension is not the subject of this study it is worth remarking in passing that the potential undermining effect of such individual career activities on the foundation stones of human resource management (and associated initiatives like corporate culture programmes) is not addressed in any depth in this literature. Rather, the potential for a mutuality of purpose between individuals, who want to develop skill, and organisations who cannot offer job security, is assumed to be self-evident.

3.5.1. COMPETENCIES FOR NEW CAREERS

DeFillippi and Arthur (1996) have developed a competency framework which attempts to be more explicit about how organisations can benefit from boundaryless careers. Their work is drawn from research on firm's competencies for survival which they identify as culture, know how and networks. They seek to match them respectively to the individual's competencies of *knowing how*, *knowing why* and *knowing whom* (1996:117). They suggest that the development of these competencies will contribute to the individual's ability to pursue a career with subjectively defined measures of success. In pursuit of those competencies, individuals can enhance the overall capability of the organisation. They contrast the bounded career, in which all competencies were bound up with the firm - so an individual would be an NHS manager who had learned to work the NHS way within the NHS family (they use the example of IBM with the boundaryless (and therefore portfolio career) which is characterised by:

"an identity that is independent of the employer (e.g. I am a software engineer"); the accumulation of employment -flexible know-how (e.g. how to do work in an innovative,

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[1]Pascale (1995) contends that no more than 10% of the blue and white collar workforce is likely to pass "the employability test" as self reliant free agents. Hendry (1996) argues that this figure seems unduly patronising and while I agree, I am also reminded of Hirsh (1994) and Pahl's (1995:4) concern that this type of working will be "fun" for a "small, self conscious and lucky minority" only. Yet, others do share the concern that few can deal with what is happening. Kegan (1994) suggests that only half of the workforce have reached the level of psychological development at which they could be comfortable operating independently in today's complex environment.

efficient and\or quality enhancing way); and the development of networks that are independent of the firm (e.g. occupation or industry based), non hierarchic (e.g. communities of practice), and worker enacted" (1996: 124).

That such a shift represents a tall order is recognised (Mirvis and Hall, 1996), but in so doing, its perceived inevitability is only restated. I will look first at each of these competencies in turn.

3.5.1.1. Knowing why

This competency is seen as central to the development of a new career. It involves the individual in clarifying their own personal career motivations linked to a need to re-appraise what personal and occupational identity means to them. No less than a redefinition of self and career is called for (London, 1996; Hall, 1996).

Very few caution that there are potentially winners and losers in this "new world" (Hirsch and Shanley, 1996). The challenge for individuals is to maintain psychological success ("achieving goals that are personally meaningful to the individual" Mirvis and Hall, 1996:238) in the face of this, by making sense of the experience and integrating it into a coherent self picture. If individuals fail to develop this, then their career "will seem aimless and could yield self doubt and fragmentation" (Mirvis and Hall, 1996:239). As the markers of the so-called external career fade, the meaning that any individual will extract from their life takes precedence over visible symbols of career success (Weick and Berlinger,1989; Shepherd, 1984).

What I find fascinating about this debate is the implied assumptions that, either individuals in the traditional career were in some way alienated from their own true self (as discussed in 3.2) which can be found again in the more liberated world of the portfolio career; or individuals have to find another true self as the conditions which sustained the previous one are lost. Beyond asserting the evident need for individuals to recast their views of career, career success and identity, there is less engagement with the more problematic question of what that might actually mean.

3.5.1.2. Knowing how

This competency refers to the development of job specific and career related knowledge. It is central to Kanter's (1989) notion of employability and Handy's (1994) idea of a developing portfolio. To ensure up to date skills and knowledge is crucial, if one is to sell "know-how" to a variety of clients. The notion of occupational careers is mobilised as an example (Kanter, 1989; Tolbert, 1996; Van Maanen and Barley, 1984) of how people can gain on-going credentialised skills. Indeed this idea is scarcely controversial currently given the governmental focus on life-long learning and the extension of the principles of Continuous Professional Development to a number of occupations (not least human resource management).

The superficially appealing notion of self development has gained much credence in HRM (Megginson and Whitaker, 1996; Mumford, 1995; Pedler et al., 1990) and career literature recently as an option for career growth, to the mutual benefit of individual and organisation, and not necessarily linked to reward in terms of hierarchical progress. However, it proves to be a frustratingly vague concept and it is particularly difficult to assess what self development might mean and how it might be experienced outside of the framework of organisational employment, however imperfect that may be (Hatcher, 1997; Daudelin, 1996). Career self development, even within organisation employment, has been shown to vary considerably in execution and intent (MacKenzie Davey and Guest, 1993; Guest and MacKenzie Davey, 1996; Jackson et al., 1996) ranging from an abdication of all organisational responsibility to well managed and researched initiatives. Outside of organisational employment and its ladders, climbing frames and scaffolding which can indicate a path for individual's development, how are they to determine and enact their own development needs?

What is generally missing from this debate is a exploration of organisational attitudes to employability. Pascale (1995) calls the notion "empty rhetoric, " "the sound of one hand clapping... an ill thought through concept with more hope than substance." As Hendry and Jenkins (1996:41) argue: "organisations have tended to show considerably more interests in promoting internal employability (to retain skills) than external employability (to give them away)." Individual "free agents" are most unlikely, then, to find that organisations are concerned about their wider employability. Even Handy (1994) worries about portfolio workers' skills atrophying in isolation.

Megginson (1994) recognises that people need help to learn and to recognise the learning in their experiences: not always so easy for the solo operator, although clearly not impossible. Hence participation in conscious self development is likely to be widely varied. He also cautions that not everyone will take responsibility for their development. It occurs to me that individual resistance to self development in portfolio work may simply hinge around the fact that it will be a costly venture outside of organisational employment. In the literature on "new careers" financial implications are largely ignored or played down (Mirvis and Hall, 1996; Peiperl and Baruch, 1997).

The plethora of career self help books that have emerged in recent years (e.g. Grigg, 1997; Comfort, 1997; Robbins, 1992; Bolles, 1997) are a testimony to how challenging self development can be for individuals. Indeed, proponents of new careers are concerned that this sort of "introspective life planning can be a lonely pursuit" (Mirvis and Hall, 1996:239). Such guides - "individualised manifestos of control" - which speak to "conditions of insecurity" and yet offer no answers to it, are caustically critiqued by Garston and Grey (1997:226).

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But Peiperl and Baruch (1997:12) are excited by the possibilities available when, as they see it, new careers "confer independence on people." For them the notion of making all one's own choices can be "extremely energising; its the external parallel to the elusive "total empowerment" in organisations." And, it would seem that such self development is no less elusive when applied to individuals.

Bird (1996) warns that it is precisely at times of change that learning can be inhibited. Drawing on Nonaka's (1991) work on the interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge, he highlights some of the implications for knowledge accumulation in the context of boundaryless careers. Specifically, he suggests that frequent moves and a tendency to avoid learning under complex and turbulent conditions can prejudice the development opportunities of individuals in boundaryless careers and in doing so he points up a dilemma:

"the uncertainty associated with greater freedom is likely to result in greater individual stress, leading in turn, to a falling back on overlearned and first learned behaviours.

Rather than knowledge creation, individuals may end up locked into repetitive and dysfunctional behaviour" (Bird, 1996: 161).

Whether the development of know how competencies, then, is about the freedom to constantly develop, even reinvent oneself, or about "the bitter taste of compulsion" (Fournier, 1998:76) is a moot point.

3.5.1.3. Knowing whom

This competency refers to developing career relevant networks. I see it as the outlet for the *knowing how* the individual is charged with developing. The literature is in agreement on the centrality of networks for non-organisationally anchored workers (with the exception of Hirsch and Shanley (1996), as I will discuss below). The issue is the "social capital" on which an individual can draw for the pursuit of their new career.

Raider and Burt, discussing social capital in the context of the boundaryless career, draw on network theories (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1988) and build on the research of Granovetter[2] (1973) to raise the issue of the contingent nature of "social capital" - "the structure of individual's contact network" (1996:187). They comment on the relative disadvantage, in pursuing boundaryless careers, of those with long organisational careers who have tended to establish strong and deep ties with a limited social circle - "a clique network." People with such networks apparently compare unfavourably in finding work opportunities with those whose working life, or natural inclination, have led them to develop "entrepreneurial networks" which are wide and dispersed, thus linking them by various routes to many "disconnected others" who may be of assistance in this regard. Hence they identify constraining and enabling effects of location in social networks.

3.5.1.3.1. Inequities in networks

This point is further developed by Hirsch and Shanley (1996). They refer to earlier work by Hirsch (1987) (who seems to have a had a change of heart) which promoted the "free agent" ethic for new managerial careers, based on avoiding commitment and cultivating wide networks (the image of postmodern identity painted by Bauman (1996) resounds

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[2]Granovetter's (1973) research on white collar job seeking indicated advantage to those who have weak ties to socially distant others as opposed to strong ties with an immediate social group.

here). What the authors now suggest is that the structural nature of social networks need to be considered (and Burke et al., 1993 also discuss the gendered nature of work and social networks). Although outsourcing type of activities may have proceeded on assumptions of a perfectly competitive market it seems that firms continue to rely on a tightly controlled and selected pool of highly networked people. The author's new belief is that, once outside the firm, the individual gradually becomes more isolated and ever less likely to be placed to hear about opportunities for work and hence they raise concern about the "increasing powerlessness and insecurities of a horde of newly detached and isolated professionals, ... seeking scarce opportunities" (1996:226).

3.5.1.3.2. The importance of social exchange

The point I think they are making concerns how the market for the buying and selling of individual skill appears to be operating in practice. Rather than a rational, classical market model what appears to be in place are ongoing arrangements between already known or connected individuals. In other words decisions on who to give work to are proceeding on the basis of concrete social relations (Granovetter, 1985) and are self perpetuating. Clark's (1995) research on management consultants pointed to the same message: that organisations are most keen to give work to those they know or know of. Reasons for these decisions include the economic interest that individuals have in the ongoing success of a continuing relationships and the social content expectations of trust and honesty with which such continuing economic relationships become suffused. Burchall and Rubery (1992) recognise that a dependent relationship on one organisation for work can question the apparent autonomy of some self employed people, but they also point to the evidential importance of on-going and stable relationships between customer and supplier on the market position of self employed people.

Ferlie et al. (1996) also found that, in the emerging network forms within the NHS, managers came to prefer on-going relational contracts with suppliers to market oriented transactional ones. Hence, the market interaction process comes to be seen as predicated less on short term discrete transactions (MacNeill, 1985) and more on the process of social exchange (Blau, 1968).

It would seem, as Raider and Burt (1996) point out, that positions in social networks will have an ongoing effect in careers outside the organisation. But, people are not

necessarily disadvantaged in the pursuit of a portfolio career by previous employment within a large hierarchical organisation, if as predicted (Handy, 1989; Kanter, 1989; Peiperl and Baruch, 1997), individuals will get their work (at least initially) from previous employers. Hence the friendship networks of the bureaucratic organisation [3]- which Hecksher (1995), for example, thinks will fade in the post bureaucratic world to be replaced by relations based on specific performances and abilities - may have more enduring currency than some theorists presume.

The competencies so far outlined seem to be about an instrumental pursuit of linking one's human capital investment to social capital within a revamped view of career identity and success which eschew dependence on a single employer. The commodification of social relations (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996) causes some concern even to the proponents of new careers. DeFillippi and Jones recognise a challenge in being both strategic and genuine in relationships:

"Strategic implies locating those with social capital who give access to critical resources and opportunities; being genuine implies concern for gaining friendships, caring and connectedness in such a transitory community. The pitfall of the boundaryless career systems may lie in their emphasis on social capital, which can lead to treating all social interactions as means to gain personal ends. This dehumanises not only others but life" (1996:97).

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[3]It could be read that the ideal\typical model of bureaucracy defined by Weber would mitigate the development of organisational friendships given the impersonality of the role and position. According to a more wide ranging critique by du Gay of the interpretations of Weber, this constitutes a selective reading of his views. His stress on the impersonality and objectivity of bureaucratic conduct " *refers simply to the setting aside of pre bureaucratic forms of patronage"* (1991:667). Hence, what is excluded is not personal feelings per se., but their expression in personally motivated favours. It is the stereotyping of bureaucracy assumes that it effectively forbids personal, emotional feelings in the workplace. du Gay goes on to quote Minson who argues: "the supposition of a essential antipathy between bureaucracy and informal relations such as friendship - at least at the level of official norms-hinges on a romantic identification of such relations with freedom from normative compulsion, spontaneous attraction, intimacy, free choice etc." (1991:15). Indeed, as Hecksher (1995)suggests, it is precisely in corporations with long service staff (described by Whyte (1956) as "feudal communities") that traditional warm community or "gemeinschaft" will be experienced (1995:22).

3.5.2. THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATION

Waterman et al. (1994) paint a picture of "a workforce of loners, roaming corporate halls, factories and E-mail systems" (1994: 87) and insist that to minimise this effect, organisations, as much as individuals, must develop a covenant of shared responsibility for developing an individual's long term employability, even if that is to be exercised outside the firm. They thus introduce the question about what responsibility, if any, do organisations have for involvement in the ongoing development of portfolio workers.

There are very few studies (Caudron, 1994) about the interaction between portfolio (or similar) individuals and the organisations in \ with which they work and so there is little empirical evidence about how the relationship will develop. As ever, within the new career literature, this does not diminish the appetite for prescription. Organisations are assured there is much to be gained for them by the evolution of boundaryless careers (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996; Arthur, 1994; Bodine, 1998).

3.5.2.1. Organisational involvement in portfolio career development

The idea that an organisation has something to gain suggests that they also have something to contribute, but that notion seems to be intuitively challenging when applied to "non traditional" careers. Why should an organisation get involved in the development of staff with whom it does not intend to have a long term relationship? Career management has been predicated on long term investment for organisational gain. Poaching of trained staff, for example, is regarded as major problem by those organisations who do train and develop. The "hard" instrumental model of human resource management which has been seen as more applicable to those individuals not in the organisation's core would be unlikely to accommodate training for them (CBI, 1994). The "soft" model of human resource management is based on ongoing commitment in return for development and so is also unlikely to sustain such training. There is little evidence indeed that organisation get involved in the training and development of non employed staff (CBI, 1994). Indeed there is even evidence that part-time staff get proportionally less training than full time staff (Jackson and Barber, 1993).

Organisations appear to have difficulties in switching the focus of their career development and management activities, even for employed staff, in the directions suggested within the new career literature - self development, mentoring and career centres. It may well be that these notions are shaky and conceptually suspect (Guest and MacKenzie Davey, 1996). However, it may also be, following Rousseau (1996), that individuals and organisations still pay more attention to the apparently objective terms of contracts and are not yet attuned to considering the possible implications and opportunities of changed relationships. It seems a large leap of faith to assume that organisations will review the exchange basis of the relationship with portfolio workers to get involved in ongoing development. I will be interested, however, to find out what the individuals regard as their wants and needs (Herriot et al., 1996) within these new working relationships.

3.5.2.2. The psychological contract

Herriot et al. (1996) propose a focus on the notion of psychological contracts as a corrective to the overly managerialist perspective of human resource management. Where psychological contracts are discussed in the literature on new careers, the transactional contract is implicated (e.g. Mirvis and Hall, 1996). While people may experience difficulties with this at first, it is speculated, that they will come to feel more pride in their self reliance and the knowledge that they remain with the organisations specifically because they are performing. My guess is that this is an over-optimistic and overly rational view of the complex mass of possible responses.

In the literature on flexibility, self employed people can be seen as simply exchanging employed contracts for commercial ones to their detriment (e.g. Rainbird, 1991). Indeed in Britain we make a distinction, legally between a contract of service and a contract for services, equating to employment contracts and commercial contracts respectively. As Rousseau indicates, the debate is a good deal more complex that.

All contracts are exchange agreements with implied terms and explicit terms which may be written or oral terms. Thinking in terms of the employment contract as a legal document only is to under-estimate the extent to which all contracts, whether written, oral or some combination of both, are also psychological (MacNeill, 1985). As Rousseau argues, typical contracts are incomplete because of bounded rationality

(Simon, 1976) and because of changing organisational environments: hence both parties fill in the blanks and are likely to have an imperfect awareness of each other's understanding of the terms. Rousseau insists that too much contract theory is under socialised (Granovetter, 1985) and that too much attention has been paid to apparently objective terms and not enough to behaviour.

Intuitively, as well as legally, however, there are some differences between employment and commercial contracts not easily overlooked: like a regular wage for example. The nature of the exchange arrangement about a myriad of other factors is questionable when people are contracted to, rather than employed by, an organisation. For example, training and development, company benefits, social arrangement like the use of canteens or sports facilities, the provision of desk, phone, e.mail address etc. are all issues which are relevant to the nature of the contract established between portfolio workers and the companies they work for\with. The extent to which any such arrangements will be documented legally is another matter.

The issue of psychological contract is pertinent: it is a pity then that its empirical base is still so shaky (Maclean Parks and Kidder, 1994). Some research has been done (Rousseau, 1996), although all too much of it with ex-graduates (e.g. Robinson and Rousseau). Sparrow (1995),who conducted research using the concept, suggested that it raised more questions than it answered. Judgements are still made on flimsy empirical bases about what types of contract different types of people will want (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Rousseau, 1996).

The notion of a continuum of contracts from transactional to relational makes more sense to me than the polarity that characterises some of the literature. It is possible to envisage, for example, a situation where an explicit transactional contract exists for specified time limited services but a "relational" type relationship pertains for the duration of that contract as the individual has some form of affective commitment to the organisation (Coopey and Hartley, 1991; Allen and Meyer, 1990).

To summarise, the psychological contract literature is still in development and the idea is yet too under-theorised to bear the burden of discussion about changing relationships in this study. Rousseau (1996) recognises the contingent, evolving and socially

constructed nature of the concept of psychological contract. With that in mind the idea may prove to be a useful way to approach the data about changing relationships with organisation, using "relational" and "transactional" as ends of a continuum to structure discussion .

3.6. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3

In this chapter I have been concerned to lay the foundations for understanding the experience of career change from an organisationally based managerial career to a more independent position. I have explored the reasons for the tenacity of the bureaucratic career and examined the emerging discourse on new careers. While it was acknowledged that emerging definitions of career are more inclusive and holistic, traditional meanings continue to endure and are likely to be implicated in the way individuals act out, and others judge, careers. This point is all the more pertinent given the ambiguous empirical evidence of career changes. Kanter's (1989) model about professional and entrepreneurial careers was identified as a useful framework for discussion.

The divide between subjective and objective careers was raised and rejected and the ontological duality of careers discussed. In attempting to understand how individuals are involved in both producing and reproducing the career worlds in which they live, I highlighted the perspectives on career as social construction and the importance of an interpretative perspective. The model proposed by Barley (1989) was adopted as a useful sensitising device for approaching the research linking as it does human actions and social structures through the modalities of career scripts.

Moving on from the general theoretical perspective I explored the notion of career transition, introducing the Nicholson (1990) process model and made the case for its limited application in terms of suggesting questions in data collection. The wider issue of identity was explored within a recognition of the shifting and complex relationships between roles and identities and the notion of the individual as knowledgeable and reflexive was discussed (Giddens, 1991; Weick, 1995).

The review moved on in chapter 3.3 and 3.4 to consider why individuals leave employment and opt not to return. In the absence of literature on the transition to portfolio working, the literature on self employment was explored. The model proposed by Granger et al. (1995) was identified as a potentially useful way of considering the transition under debate. Finally, ongoing career development was considered in 3.5 using the framework of the knowing competencies developed by DeFillippi and Bird (1996). The instrumentality inherent in much discussion about new careers was questioned in the light of the embedded nature of ongoing social relations. The new relationship between individual and employer along with the psychological contract was considered and the continuum of relational- transactional contract seems a useful construct to apply in data analysis. The next chapter moves on to detail the research questions.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH RATIONALE

There are two linked purposes to this chapter. The first (4.1) is to draw out the research questions which have emerged from the review of the literature and identify useful models and approaches for data analysis. 4.2 analyses in more detail the theoretical positions underpinning the Barley (1989) model.

4.1.1. LITERATURE REVIEWS: KEY THEMES

This section highlights the major themes of the literature which were influential in determining the overall aims of the study.

4.1.1.1. Change and continuity

The notion of change - in organisations, labour markets and individual careers-dominated the literature reviews. The extent and exact nature of change may be disputed but there is widespread agreement that the world of work has undergone certain transformations of significance individuals'working lives. Chapter 3 discussed how the notion of career can be a useful analytical tool to consider the intersection of organisation, individuals and the wider social scene particularly in a period of change.

The tendency in the literature to propose breaks with the past expressed in binary oppositions such as Fordism and Post-Fordism, Bureaucracy and Post Bureaucracy was noted. Such oppositions are reflected in the career literature where the notion of a move from dependence on employer for career in the traditional, bureaucratic career to career self management, or the professional or entrepreneurial career was described as a key trend. The emerging discourses of flexibility at work, enterprise and "new careers" were examined in this context of change. While the pervasive and colonising nature of these discourses were noted (du Gay, 1996; Kress and Hodge, 1985) so were opposing viewpoints (Hutton, 1995; Hirsch and Shanley, 1996; Pollert, 1991).

Of course, what constitutes dramatic change and which changes actually have their roots in long established practices is the subject of hot debate which will be reflected in the study in the career stories of indivdiduals who have apparently made a break with their own employment past.

4.1.1.2. Social structures and human agency

The,extent to which people's destinies are within their own control or subject to the vagaries of an overarching system was raised. The issue of social structures and their relationship to human agency was considered as a counter to the largely deterministic tone of the literature on organisational change which proposed a hierarchy of effect from global changes, through organisational change, down to the working life of individuals.

Within the literature on careers the notion of the ontological duality of the concept (being not just about the external events of an individuals life but the meanings attached to it by the individual as a social being) was highlighted as a means of viewing the changes outlined in Chapter 2 and transcending the arid divide between the objective or subjective based approaches to career theorising. This debate is central to the study and will be explored more fully in 4.2.

4.1.1.3. Liberation or subjugation

The final point I want to highlight is the question of how these putative changes can be experienced. The notions of liberation from a suffocating organisational career and the chance to develop a more rounded sense of self identity were discussed and queried in chapter 3 which built on the review of changing organisations in chapter 2. Conversely, the idea that individuals are in fact subjugated in different ways by their new work arrangements was also raised and debated. That one or the other will be the answer seems most unlikely and it will be of interest to consider if individuals are aware of these competing interpretations in their construction of their changing career.

4.1.2. THE RESEARCH STUDY

What is generally missing from this literature on changing organisations and changing careers is the qualitative dimension about how such changes are being experienced by individuals (Pollert, 1991; Ornstein and Isabella, 1993). The dearth of qualitative studies about the putative transition to new types of career was noted (Mirvis and Hall, 1996) and Bailyn (1989) specifically called for studies of what she terms "leading edge exemplars" of new forms to help us better understand what may be the career concerns of the volatile future, rather than incrementally building on knowledge rooted in the more stable past.

This study will therefore take as its focus, the experience of individuals undergoing a specific change widely discussed in the literature - the move out of the bureaucratic form of organisation and into some form of portfolio. The aim is not to determine cause and effect of recent changes but to understand how they are experienced and interpreted by individuals living them.

Portfolio working is the term adopted in this study to consider the new context that participants move on to. It is used with reservations as it is not empirically grounded; it is defined more by what it is not than what it actually is (i.e. it is not full-time employment with a single employer); the boundaries between this concept and others such as self- employment, freelance working, consultancy are not clear. On this last point it must be said that the boundaries of those concepts are also open to debate. However, I opt to use the term for these reasons:

1. In a literature dominated by North American contributions this term was derived from and is more well known in a British context.

2. The term can be used inclusively to accommodate self employment, selling one's own skills, thus it incorporates other terms in use like vendor worker (Bridges, 1995) free agent (Hirsch, 1987) and independent contractor (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997); knowldge entrepreneur (Halal, 1997). It may be that an individual only participates in freelance or other consultancy work on a self employed basis but I still include them in the concept of portfolio as they are selling their various skills to a variety of clients (Handy, 1994).

3. It is able to accommodate other forms of work than self employment, freelance and consultancy work. The term suggests variety and it may well be that people have a number of different contractual arrangement for the selling of their skills e.g. part-time, temporary or occasional employment. Hence, it will include those who combine some form of self employment with other activities or those who combine employment with other activities. However, it is not the intention to study people with full time, career oriented jobs and out of work hours, absorbing hobbies. The focus is those who have made a transition out of such employment.

"Portfolio" incorporates, far more effectively than the other terms in use, the issue of balance of home and work which pervades new career literature. Hence a portfolio career could include unpaid activities like community work and even parenting if individuals regard those activities as part of their career (Mirvis and Hall, 1996).The final point I want to make is that I take portfolio working as so defined to be a variant of boundaryless careers. It is a feature of that literature (as I have already discussed) that it does not draw boundaries around the various types of boundarylessness it identifies. Hence when discussing boundaryless careers, portfolio working is implied.

4.1.3. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

DRIVERS TO PORTFOLIO WORKING	PATTERN OF WORK	EXPERIENCE OF PORTFOLIO WORKING	CONSTRUING CAREER	RELATION-SHIP WITH EMPLOYER
why leave?	what is the pattern?	what are the highs and lows?	what is the same and what has changed?	how do they experience the new relationship?
why not seek employment elsewhere?	why chosen?	what are the similarities and differences with employment?	what scripts and discourses are significant in their career? Are they following scripts or do they feel like pioneers?	
why go portfolio?	is concept of portfolio working meaningful ?		how do they measure success, then and now ? has there been a change in their career identity and is this reflected in attitudes of others?	

Table 1. The research questions

I will go on now to outline the specific questions that have emerged from the literature, identifying, where appropriate models and ideas which may prove useful in gathering

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and interpreting the data. Inevitably, the explication of the research questions will stray into areas of methodological approach which will be identified as they occur but fuller treatment is reserved for 4.2. The following table sets out the main research questions and their components.

4.1.3.1. What drives people to portfolio working?

This question seeks to explore how people understand the constellation of factors which may be implicated in a move from employment to portfolio working. From the literature reviews it has been indicated that people may well have been pushed against their will by organisational change to leave a known career for more uncharted waters. Conversely, people may be embodying the discourses suggesting a more flexible and enterprising approach to life and employment.

Two models which are potentially useful here are that of Granger et al.(1995) and Savage et al.(1992) both discussed in Chapter 2. The Granger et al. (1995) model which seeks to understand a move from employment to self employment in the UK book publishing industry, characterises leavers as refugees, trade offs, missionaries or converts and thus it goes beyond the simple push \ pull dichotomy to explain this move and takes account of other prevailing circumstances in individuals lives.

Savage et al. (1992) propose that, as organisationally bound managerial assets are losing their potency in the labour market, managers may explicitly look to swap them for the more transferable and storable assets of the professional or entrepreneur, a theme which will be echoed in the later question about emerging career forms.

The transition cycle developed by Nicholson (1990) was judged rather static to deal with a transition into such a volatile and uncertain context but the stages and associated task and problems provide a basis for data collection about this work role change.

4.1.3.2. The pattern of work

The term portfolio working has been adopted in this study with some reservations as discussed above. The term is neither empirically grounded nor conceptually specified. Yet, along with other similar terms, such as the boundaryless career, it has entered the literature on new career patterns and demands some attention. What is interesting is

about the use of all such terms is that they imply that the individual may adopt a variety of working patterns. Thus, they could be employed part-time and spend the remainder of their time occupied in freelance work, related or not their "job". People could be fully self employed but occasionally take some work on an employed basis. Voluntary work may play a bigger part in their week; they make take time for study or leisure pursuits, hence the work\non work boundaries become more blurred. On the face of it the possibilities are endless.

This study does not try to delimit, definitively, the term portfolio working, but to explore its usefulness as applied t ex managers now outside of organisational employment, considering the kinds of packages of working arrangements that have been adopted by them, why and with what results.

4.1.3.3. How do participants experience their new working world?

We know little about how people experience portfolio working. I want to explore what people characterise as the highs and lows of this way of working. This question revolves around the optimistic \ pessimistic dichotomy explored in Chapter 2 and the career transition issues discussed in Chapter 3. It will involve an engagement with the issues of discourse and ideology discussed by du Gay (1996) and Giddens (1984) and the debate on the constraining and enabling effects of social structures. These issues and their implications for research approach will be discussed at more length in 4.2.

The literature tends to set up a dichotomy between this way of working as belonging to the future and organisational employment which is being consigned to the past. I also want to explore what individuals identify as the similarities and differences between the two contexts.

4.1.3.4. What are the implications for thinking about careers?

How people experience portfolio working may be implicated in the extent to which it becomes embedded as a new career form or as another career route for managers. The overall question here is how individuals have understood this change in the external dimensions of their working life in terms of their view of career. There are several aspects to this question as outlined above.

Certainly, the literature on new careers sees the linear, organisationally bound career form as being on the wane, eclipsed by career forms based more on skills and organisational independence. I am interested to explore how far people feel their own change of working life can be implicated in the emergence of new ways of viewing careers. The model offered by Kanter (1989) of the move from bureaucratic to professional and entrepreneurial career forms is potentially useful here.

DeFillippi and Arthur's (1996) view on the use of different types of competence - know how, know why and know whom- to develop new careers could be used in considering how people feel that their career will now develop.

Barley's (1989) model drawing on Structuration theory and Symbolic Interactionism has considerable potential as a means of integrating these questions.

4.1.2.5. Relationship with employer

To accept the duality of careers is to recognise individuals do not bring new career forms into existence in a social vacuum. Employers' responses to portfolio working are implicated in the extent to which it will come be seen as socially valid and ratified. The new career changes the legal base of the relationship and calls into question the rights and responsibilities on both sides. It undermines much of what has been expressed in the name of HRM about ensuring commitment from employees and thus highlights the ambiguities in HRM in relation to flexibility and commitment. If it is to be the case that more people will have tangential relationships with employers it is of interest to those involved in HRM to understand how new tangential "employees" view the relationship. The notion of the psychological contract may be a useful device to structure discussion about the new relationship.

4.1.2.6. Summary of research questions

The questions proceed from developing an understanding of the specific move out of the organisation to portfolio working, through description of working arrangements and participants' views on the highs and lows involved to wider questions about how they now construe the notion of career, how they see themselves in relation to this putative new career form and how that impels them to action. The relationship of individual to employing organisation will also be discussed.

4.2. DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH APPROACH

This section focuses on the model proposed by Barley (1989) for theorising the link between institutions and individuals in the study of careers. It begins with some general comments on the use of the model and moves on to examine its antecedents in Symbolic Interactionism and Structuration Theory. The aim is to clarify how the concepts of structure, agent and career scripts will be used in this study in order to discuss the ontological assumptions behind it (Slife and Williams, 1995). It concludes by elaborating how the model will be used in this thesis.

4.2.1. USING THE BARLEY MODEL IN THE STUDY

The model is derived from Giddens' Structuration theory (1984) and is informed by the approach to careers developed by the Chicago School of Symbolic Interactionists (Hughes, 1937). Giddens (1984, 1990) is clear that researchers should use Structuration theory sparingly, utilising only those features they find useful and employing it as a sensitising device for empirical research rather than as a theoretical framework to be rigorously applied. Barley (1989) has heeded this advice to some extent in that he has drawn on some features of Structuration theory and left unexplored many of its dimensions.

Barley suggests that the four arrows in the model represent analytically distinct dynamics and that each should be incorporated in career research in longitudinal studies of social systems. This appears to me to be unnecessarily restrictive in delimiting the kinds of research that can be done. Furthermore, in comparing subjective career understanding with the objective events of an individual's career, as he suggests, appears to reintroduce dualism and allows the researcher to undermine the interpretation of the individual.

Thus, he proposes the model as a more prescriptive framework for research than would Giddens. My use of Barley's model will be more in line with Giddens' suggestion; using it as a sensitising device in data collection and analysis to alert me to the interplay of structures- including interpretative schemes, career norms and sanctions - and the career interpretations and activities of individuals.

INSTITUTION[1]

↓   ↑

1. Encode   **4. Constitute**

CAREER SCRIPTS

(resources, interpretative schemes, norms)

↓   ↑

2. Fashion   **3. Enact**

INDIVIDUAL ACTION AND INTERACTION
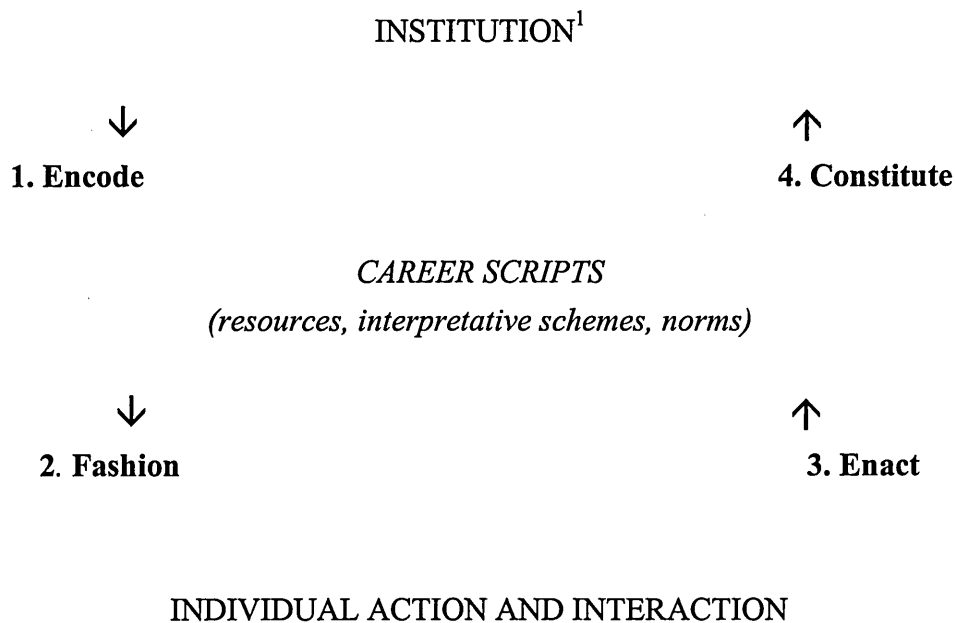
Figure 2. Careers role in the structuring process (Barley, 1989: 54)

4.2.1.1. Methodological bracketing

Career theorists who insist on the duality of careers nevertheless allow for some process of bracketing of the internal or external career in career research (Derr and Laurent, 1989). Giddens (1984) also proposes the device of methodological bracketing by which researchers can look either to institutional analysis in which they "bracket", in their research, the complex social skills of individuals. Alternatively, the focus of study can be the strategic conduct of individuals "where the focus is upon modes in which actors draw upon structural properties in the constitution of social relations" (p. 288), and in that case the institutionalised properties of social settings are bracketed and taken as "given." Both sets of research would proceed however with an underlying awareness of the essential duality of structure and action. I am aware that this device is criticised as allowing back in the dualism that Giddens seeks to overcome (Archer, 1983; Mouzelis, 1989).

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[1] Barley uses the term "Institution" in his model, following Hughes (1937) to mean "a social system's logic: an abstract framework of relations derived from a cumulative history of action and interaction." The notion of Institution is central to the model developed by Barley (1989) and to other authors in the Handbook of Career Theory (Arthur et al., 1989). As examples, they cite organisations and the work roles which can constitute careers and occupations in which the features of collective behaviour can be well established. Abstracting further, they also refer to the institutions of education, the family and, more problematically of society itself. Barley suggests that this usage relates directly to how Giddens uses the word structure but in fact such a usage is more clearly tied to Giddens' notion of social system whereby he sees structure being a mediating feature between social systems and human action. At this point I don't want to get side-tracked into the relevance of this in Barley's model but it might suggest an area of concern in the application of the model.

However, Giddens is clear that methodological bracketing is a pragmatic measure which is underpinned by a recognition of the inextricable link between the structure and action. What he suggests can be done is to take the institutional realm as "given" while not losing sight of its genesis in human action. In that way the researcher can concentrate on the contextually situated activities of definite groups of actors.

It appears to me that a bracketed analysis of strategic conduct of individuals offers a way forward in this study to give primacy to the subjective understandings of individuals who may be experiencing (and creating) changing career structures while not negating the potential impact on them of social structures, nor their impact on those structures. However, to empirically establish whether identified changes in human action and interpretation actually have an impact on those social structures is not the concern of this particular study. This is not to deny it as a proper concern of future research.

The Barley model is usable as it stands but I feel that a further exploration of its antecedents in Symbolic Interactionism and Structuration theory will add depth to its potential usage and highlight some potential difficulties which may be more apparent in the data analysis stage.

4.2.2. SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Symbolic Interactionism is the term loosely applied to a fairly diverse group of thinkers. The emphasis in this brief review will be on the so-called Chicago School and their "humanist" approach (Plummer, 1983). The Symbolic Interactionists potentially have much to offer a study of careers. The contribution of the Chicago school in developing a view of career as being both about its external and internal dimensions has already been noted, as has their expanded definition of what constitutes a career. The work of Mead on identity (1934) has also been discussed in relation to career identity in Chapter 3.

Blumer (1969) summarised Symbolic Interactionist assumptions:

1. Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings the things have for them;
2. These meanings are the product of social interaction in human society;
3. These meanings are modified and handled through an interpretative process that each individual in dealing with the signs each encounters.

Such assumptions deny deterministic views of an over-arching system imposing itself on individuals in their daily world. Rather, in the Symbolic Interactionism formulation individuals, in interaction, create their social world, by attaching meanings to their actions and those of others, by interpreting language and other symbols and by skilful presentations of themselves to others (Goffman, 1959). The social worlds, thus constructed, are fluid and changing; meaning does not remain static and so the reflexivity of people is central to this theoretical perspective. How people theorise, come to terms with and choose to live in their social world is a meaningful topic of study. Research in the Symbolic Interactionism tradition focuses on day to day worlds (although not necessarily exclusively) and on the flow of interaction, the interpretation of individuals of their world and how those meanings develop and change. Structures have a much more shadowy status beyond a general recognition that, while we may impose ourselves on and create our social world, we live within a network of typifications "that endow a particular culture with a coherent "rationality" as a system of shared meaning" (Jones, 1983:148).

4.2.2. Critique of Symbolic Interactionism

While I appreciate the value of an approach which stresses individual meanings and interpretations, the criticism of Symbolic Interactionists' approach to structure does seem to me to be salient. As Layder suggests:

"The weakness of Symbolic Interactionism is that it does not postulate any link between localised, face to face issues and wider structural features. In a very real sense, structural features provide the wider backdrop against which interpersonal dealings take place" (1994:74).

A Symbolic Interactionist counter to this could be that we can only ever understand structures mediated in some way through the interpretations of individuals, be they research subjects or the researcher herself. But this still begs some explicit recognition of how the researcher herself is viewing social structure (Jones 1983). Further criticism concerns the lack of attention to what Layder calls "the established and mandatory meaning" (1994:73) of some social circumstances and the potential of manipulation of meaning by powerful interest groups. While this critique of Symbolic Interactionism can be overstated (Craib 1992) nonetheless it seems fair criticism that the Symbolic Interactionism approach may miss opportunities to look at how structural influences interact with human action to affect the development of meanings. Giddens argues that Symbolic Interactionism "lacks an understanding of the broader society as a differentiated and historically located formation" (1979: 254).

Layder (1994) suggests that while Symbolic Interactionism alone does not adequately deal with these issues, the insights it offers into the meaning of social interaction could fruitfully be linked with more structural theories to enhance understandings of the links between micro and macro level phenomenon. Barley (1989) himself concludes the charges of vagueness and under-theorisation directed at the Symbolic Interactionists school are warranted and that their insights could be strengthened by the application of the more theoretically developed link between structure and action as envisaged by Giddens in Structuration theory.

Both approaches would allow us to consider the ontological duality of career as discussed in Chapter 3. They would reject the notion of an objectively verifiable external world imposing constraints on the actions of individuals by emphasising the recursion whereby institutions jointly constitute and are constituted by the actions of individuals living their daily lives. A central role is accorded in both to the notion of shared meanings and interpretations. While the Symbolic Interactionists would direct their attention to the level of social action and interaction, Giddens, in his concern to understand how social systems are produced, reproduced and transformed by individuals living their lives, gives more credence to the very notion of social structures. In so doing he postulates the connections between individual action and wider structural features. Furthermore, as shall be discussed, Structuration theory explicitly allows for the dialectic of control in social situations and the hegemonic effect of discourse.

New (1994) suggests that what is required is a more developed ontology of the social, a way of "conceptualising structure that recognises its reality, i.e. its causal powers, yet also recognises that these operate via human action by presenting agents with reasons - sometimes "overwhelming" reasons- for acting in certain ways" (p.192). She feels Giddens offers us this in Structuration theory with his formulation of structure as rules and resources.

4.2.3. STRUCTURATION THEORY

Moving on to the major component of Barley's model - Giddens' Structuration theory - I am mindful of Giddens' permission, as it were, to deal only with those aspects of it which appear useful to the task at hand. I will confine the debate to those which most impinge on a wider understanding of the implications of the Barley model and relate most directly to research on the "strategic conduct" of individuals. Structuration theory is an attempt to transcend the dualisms of structure \ agency; voluntarism determinism; macro \ micro which pervade sociological thought (and surface in career literature in the

objective \ subjective career divide). Giddens insists on the essential duality of what people do and the social world in which they live.

In this review I want to look at three aspects of Structuration theory: structure; modalities and agency in turn, incorporating additional insights from other sources in order to give more theoretical substance to the use of Barley's model as a sensitising device in this study.

4.2.3.1. Structures in Structuration Theory

The first issue to grapple with is Giddens' terminology mindful of Craib's (1992) warning that it is quite possible to become completely lost in the array of terminology employed by him. The most important point to make is that Giddens attributes a different meaning to structure and system than that which may be more familiar from the works of functionalists and structuralists who also tend to use the terms interchangeably. Thus his work is subject to significant criticism that he attempts to sidestep existing debate on structure and action by changing the terms (Layder 1994; Mouzelis, 1989; Thompson, 1989).

Giddens uses structure to mean the *rules* of signification (communication) and legitimation (sanction) which may be formally encoded or may be more implicit and understood as knowledge of how to go in social situations; and the *resources* of domination both allocative and authoritative. *Allocative* resources are "capabilities - or more accurately, forms of transformative capacity - generating command over objects, goods or material phenomena. *Authoritative* resources are types of transformative capacity for generating command over people" (Giddens, 1984:33).They have no independent existence outside their instantiation in social practice. Hence structure is:

"rules and resources recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists only as memory traces, the organic base of human knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action"(1984:377).

It is both medium and outcome of social action:

"a medium because it is through its use that social conduct is produced and an outcome because it is through the production of this conduct that rules and resources are reproduced in time and space" (Mouzelis, 1989:615).

According to New (1994), Giddens' use of "structure" as opposed to the more common usage, can be understood more in the manner of verb than noun:

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"Thus "rules and resources" give form to\ structure, social systems. The agents who are variously positioned in these systems draw on these rules and resources in order to act and in so acting, reproduce them" (1994:194),

and Giddens would add that in acting they can also transform them.

Structure then, has no independent existence outside of agency but Giddens' formulation is potentially useful (as compared to the Symbolic Interactionism) as it accords to social structures some measure of reality - albeit "virtual" (Giddens 1984). For many, this is simply an unacceptable notion: structures either exist or they don't. It has also been argued (Layder 1994; Thompson, 1989; Outhwaite, 1990; Urry; 1982; Archer, 1982; Mouzelis, 1989) that, in fact, Giddens strays very close to a dualist approach. This is more evident when we follow the theory beyond structure to how he regards the notion of social systems: i.e. "the patterning of social relations across time- space, understood as these reproduced practices" (1984: 377).

4.2.3.1.1. Social systems and institutions

Giddens insists that social systems are not structures as we might traditionally understand the term, although he does not dispute that they embody structural properties. Giddens further insists that social systems can vary in their degree of "systemness" and can seem nearer or further to the daily lives of individuals. None of this renders them incapable of reproduction or transformation, but the dimensions of time-space acquire more relevance.

Giddens also introduces the idea of "institution" which he uses to refer to the social practices which are the most attenuated in terms of time and space and thus seem to be the least amenable to transformation, an example would be the institution of marriage (Layder 1994). Layder suggests that it may be more useful to think of systems and institutions more simply as aspects of the same thing i.e. "the structured pattern of social relationships (over time and space) that gives societies their form and definition" Layder (1994: 140) and he criticises Giddens for presenting an unstratified model of the "social landscape." Yet Giddens insists that structures, systems, institutions etc. are all directly and immediately implicated in the actions of individuals. I can identify, from the distinctions he draws, more of a depth ontology than Layder allows. However I do agree with Layder (and other critics) that, because his concepts are so abstract and so few concrete examples are provided, the distinctions he draws ultimately serve more to confuse than to clarify.

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The important point to retain is that some aspects of social life are, indeed, recognised as durable and as confronting individuals as prior to them, likely to outlive them and not amenable to transformation by them. Giddens does recognise this. He also realises that dualism may seem to exist from the viewpoint of the situated actor (Giddens, 1990). He partially accounts for this view with his notions of system and social integration. While social integration is more about face to face encounters (and hence more the domain of Symbolic Interactionism), system integration is the reciprocal relations between people as groups or collectives that are stretched over time and space away from the immediate presence of others. This is an interesting point to consider in the study of careers of people who are separated in time and place. Can any notion of collectively, of reciprocal relations be identified? Moreover, he accepts that:

"actors own theories of the social systems which they help to constitute and reconstitute in their activities may reify those systems. The reification of social systems, or the "discursive "naturalization" of the historically contingent circumstances and products of human action, is one of the main dimensions of ideology in social life" (1984:25-26).

The notion of ideology will be addressed later, but what is important at this stage is that Giddens acknowledges that structures \ systems can feel like they are bearing down on an individual from above or confronting them ahead and constraining their actions. Grey's (1994) discussion of how accountants confront and enact their career path is a case in point. Giddens goes further to acknowledge explicitly that, while structures do not entirely constrain, they nonetheless do put limits on the options available to individuals in specific times and places. This recalls the aphorism "if men (sic) define those situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas (1966:300). Hence the accountants feel that they know what they have to do vis a vis what they confront as the structured nature of their career path.

4.2.3.1.2. Constraining and enabling features of structure
Giddens argues that even where asymmetrical power relations appear to be implicated in human action, they are usually embedded in the routines of our daily behaviour (New, 1994). This is not to deny that they constrain, nor that those constraints can be of an "implacable character" (Giddens, 1990:312). The point Giddens makes is that such constraints do not abolish agency.

However, a major plank of Giddens' theory, and one which attracts much criticism, is his insistence that conventional objectivist approaches to sociology have concentrated on the constraining features of structures and down-played their enabling. I will discuss his view of the agent in more detail below, but he argues that individuals always have a

choice in how they act. Moreover, in according some measure of reality to structure and system, he is at pains to detail that the effect is not always or necessarily constraining. People may feel that they have no choice and indeed the only choice may be whether or not to act, but this is not the "fault" of the structures as it were, but bound up with agents' reasons and motivations. Just because the accountants' career path is there, or seems to be, does not mean they have to follow it: furthermore its existence can be interpreted by those career actors as enabling to them, for example in the fulfilment of ambition or the pursuit of enhanced income. Structures then, are at once, constraining and enabling. Furthermore, they can be transformed by human agency.

Thus, Giddens' specific contributions to social theory on this issue is his consistent insistence that such structures and systems only exist via the duality of structure; they do not have a life of their own, so "ontologically then institutions and systems only exist insofar as they are bound up with people's reasons and motivations " (Layder, 1994:140).

4.2.3.2. Critique of Structuration theory

Criticism of Giddens' view of structure is legion: definitions are seen as a problem (Craib, 1992) - and I concur; the very project of overcoming duality is seen as misguided (Mouzelis, 1989; Archer, 1982); his reconceptualisation of structure is interpreted as pushing a difficult problem to one side and instead engaging in the debate on different terms to everyone else (Layder, 1994; Craib, 1992); his neglect of epistemological issues is lamented (Craib, 1992); by his views on enablment he is seen as over-privileging the power of the agent (Baber, 1991) and most of all the weak ontological status he accords to structure is seen as problematic (Archer, 1982; Thompson, 1989; Baber, 1991; Craib, 1992; Layder, 1994). The theory has rarely been applied empirically in a manner which preserves the duality of structure (Willmott, 1990). The criticisms of those authors (particularly Layder, 1994; Craib, 1992) who can accept the project to overcome duality, but who have problems with the way Giddens approaches it, are compelling. What then am I to make of Giddens' view of structure within this study?

4.2.3.1.4. Introducing Bhaskar and his view of structure

There is a linked, but alternative, view on structure which appears to answer some of the problems with Giddens': Bhaskar's (1983) transcendental model of human activity which affords structures a more "realistic" base than does Giddens. Bhaskar himself recognises the similarities between his work and Giddens save for his inclinations to:

"give structures... a stronger ontological grounding and to place more emphasis on the pre-existence of social forms"(1983: 85).

However, as New (1994:196) wryly comments: "Unfortunately he gives no examples."

In his theory of transcendental realism, Bhaskar distinguishes two realms: the intransitive realm of "real" material things and structures and the transitive realm which refers to situated theories which seek to explain, describe and interpret: he sees the two as inseparable. He uses the term "society" where others might use social structures and he regards society as being in the intransitive realm, where it can be seen to pre-exist human activity, but to interact with it in complex and dynamic ways. Society and individuals, while interrelated, and not existing independently of each other, are also theorised as "radically different things." He is interested in developing theory which can account for this "ontological hiatus" (1983:44).

Like Giddens, he recognises that the ongoing survival and transformation of society is through human action but where he specifically departs from Giddens is that he does not believe that the construction of social systems are dependent on human actions. He has less belief in voluntarism than Giddens has (or is criticised for (Craib, 1992; Layder, 1994). Central to his theory is the contention that society provides the raw materials on which individuals act, notwithstanding his view that in acting they can transform. Moreover he identifies mediating concepts between individual and society as:

positions (places, functions, rules, tasks, duties, rights etc.) occupied... by individuals and... practices (activities etc.) in which, in virtue of their occupancy of these positions (and vice versa) they engage" (1989:41).

In many ways his theorising answers some of the critique of Giddens' view of structure but even in Bhaskar's theory the ontological reality of any such pre-existing structure can still only be seen through the interpretations of individuals:

"as an object of enquiry [society] is necessarily 'theoretical' in the sense that, like a magnetic field, it is necessarily unperceivable. As such it cannot be empirically identified independently of its effects; so that it can only be known not shown to exist" (1979: 57).

There are similarities in their projects to show the inextricable link between structures and people and there are similar criticisms levelled at Bhaskar (Baehr, 1990; Hirst and Woolley, 1982), as at Giddens, not least for the lack of clarity on terms and the lack of

empirical examples. But, where Giddens is criticised for a neglect of epistemology, Bhaskar is criticised for the contradiction between his ontological and epistemological approaches - he believes structures to be real and independent of human action but argues that they can only be seen through human action and interpretation: they cannot be proven. Here the problematic debate on Burrell and Morgan's (1979) thesis of paradigmatic incommensurability is relevant (e.g. Weaver and Gioia, 1994; Johnson, 1995; Sayer, 1984). Willmott argues that Giddens' Structuration theory is "sufficiently robust to cast doubt upon Burrell and Morgan's faith in paradigmatic closure" (1990: 54). Pragmatically, perhaps, comfort can be taken from Weick (1995:35) who has little problem with "ontological oscillation" observing it in the daily practices of individuals.

4.2.3.1.5. *Using "structure" in this study*

For the purposes of this study then, I think that either Giddens' or Bhaskar's view on structure is acceptable, as in both cases, the very notion of structure depends on how individuals see and act towards it; some measure of pre-existence of structure is accepted (more by Bhaskar) and there is an acknowledgement, by both, that structure can only be causally effective through agents. In both cases the transformative effects of human actions on structures are allowed. I recognise the critiques of Giddens' views of structure [2] and they are persuasive. However, there seems to be sufficient recognition within Giddens work that structure can be near or far from the individual and if far, can, to all intents and purposes feel that it has causal powers on their actions and can thus limit options for action. That these structures are of human agency in some more primeval sense seems to matter less than it might at this stage of the research.

But, on balance and notwithstanding some of the difficulties identified, Bhaskar's view of structure has more depth than that of Giddens. It does accept some prior existence; gives a stronger view of constraint as well as enablement and hence offers a more developed analytical potential for considering how individuals make sense of what they see as their social world and how that understanding affects their actions. It may be that I need to return to this point following the analysis because it must be said that neither theory proceeds from an empirical base. To repeat the point I have already made, I am not intending to use Giddens' Structuration theory, nor the additional insights from Bhaskar, in any other way than as a sensitising device to the relationship between structure and agency and specifically, in this case, the link between the objective and the subjective career.

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[2] Giddens notes the criticism but sees no need to change his basic ideas (1990:204).

I use them to develop some understanding of the link between what the participants in this study do and say as career actors and the various career and social structures and systems they encounter. Neither the precise nature of those structures nor the transformation of them is the concern of this study as I discussed above with reference to Giddens' device of methodological bracketing. My interest is, primarily, in the encoding of these various structures in career scripts which are implicated in the actions and understandings of the interviewees. I will move on now to consider the view of the individual to be taken in this study and then turn to the modality of career scripts.

4.2.3.3. The agent

Chapter 3.2 highlighted the issue of identity and considered the work of Giddens (1991) and Weick (1995) to be the most useful for this study. In this section I will elaborate on Giddens' view of the agent and move on in chapter 5 to look at how Weick's (1995) views on sense making can be incorporated into the Barley model.

Giddens is congratulated (and incidentally so is Bhaskar) for rescuing the agent - the subject - from the decentred world of the post structuralists where the self is constructed only in language and discourse (New, 1994). Giddens identified a stratified model of the agent drawing on Freud [3] and Erikson identifying 3 levels of consciousness.

The unconscious

This is the level of motivation- the agent's wants, which refer not to action itself, but to the potential for action. Giddens believes that while people can report discursively about their reasons for doing something, they cannot necessarily do so about their motives so the unconscious is a boundary of human knowledgeability.

Practical consciousness

In describing this level, Giddens acknowledges the influence of interpretative schools of sociology. Practical consciousness refers to the taken for granted ways in which we know how to get on in our world, the conditions of our own actions. However, our knowledge about what actually is going on may not be explicit and we may not be able to make it explicit.

Discursive consciousness

This refers to our ability to monitor and reflect on our actions and our reasons for doing what we do and to give a rational account of them. There is no bar between practical and discursive consciousness. Clearly the second two levels will be appropriate to this

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[3] Although he is heavily criticised by (Craib 1992: 171-174) for an oversimplified reading of Freud's work.

study as it seeks to explore people's reflections on what they have been doing in career terms and why. The view of the agent that we can take from Giddens is as knowledgeable and involved in reflexively monitoring the actions of themselves and others. As Giddens says:

"To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who has both reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon these reasons (including lying about them)" (1984:3).

He distances himself from the hermeneutic tradition, as he accuses it of an overemphasis on voluntarism, and he does so by rooting the agent's activities in what he calls the contextuality of time and space. Thus:

"human action occurs as a durée, a continuous flow of conduct, as does cognition. Purposive action is not composed of an aggregate or series of separate intentions, reasons and motives. Thus it is useful to speak of reflexivity as grounded in the continuous monitoring of action which human beings display and expect each other to display" (1984:3).

Giddens here is also making the point, discussed in 3.2, that motives do not necessarily precede action. It is far too static an approach, then, to assume that I can necessarily trace discrete moments in the participants' stories about the decision to leave (or their motives), from action to retrospection on that action. Giddens introduces the theme of reflexive monitoring of action which hinges on the knowledgeability of agents asserting that what they know and what they do is integral to the patterning and structuring of social life. He distances himself, also, from structuralist \ functionalist arguments which discount agents' reasons and locate the origins of their actions in phenomenon of which they remain unaware. However, he also sets himself apart from the view of Symbolic Interactionism which tends to view "society as the plastic creation of individuals" (1984:26).

Hence Giddens here rejects the under and over socialised views of the self. However, he has been accused himself of an over-socialised view (Craib, 1992) which hinges rather too much on the trusting and altruistic side of human life as I shall discuss below.

4.2.3.3.1. Intended and unintended consequences
A further feature of agency in Giddens' view is that people's actions can have unintended as well as intended consequences. He gives the example of speaking or writing English in a correct way - an intentional act - which contributes reproduction of

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the English language as a whole- an unintended consequence.[4] Thus, the unintended consequences of an individual leaving an organisation are open to discussion (except in so far as they are more linked to institutional analysis, which is not the subject of this research). However, these unintended consequences can feed back as the unacknowledged, tacit conditions within which people act and may arise in discursive consciousness within the research interviews.

4.2.3.3.2. The agent could act otherwise

A central plank of Giddens' view of agency is that the agent could always have acted otherwise, no matter how hollow the choice (New 1994). This point is central to his views of social structures as both constraining and enabling. The reasons why we act in a certain way can actually be the causes of our action. New (1994) illustrates Giddens' conception of this by reference to marriage. Generally getting married is an intentional act for which we have various conscious reasons which we could account for discursively. These will be predicated on our understanding of the institution of marriage and what it means in our own lives: we are socially knowledgeable about marriage. Our various reasons for marrying contribute both to our motivation for doing so (which we may not be able to explicate) and our rationalisation, which may be a post hoc account. Giddens would not go along with any suggestion that our identifications of our reasons for acting may be spurious. However, certainly, the reasons we identify will take account of what is socially acceptable at that juncture and therefore our rationalisations "will never give a complete account of what brought about the action. Some conditions of action remain unacknowledged" (New, 1994: 190).

I think this point has important implications for this research. It indicates an interest in how individuals account for what they have done, without attempting to deliver, from the researcher's vantage point, a judgement of whether their account is objectively correct. The way Barley (1989) discusses this issue (as raised in Chapter 3) is to recognise that objective correctness of accounts is not the point rather the interest is in how the participants interpretations articulate with the surrounding social order. The next question, of course, is how is that order to be understood. I am straying here into issues of methodology which are dealt with in the next chapter but the answer for this research is that there will be a probing for such interpretations, and ambiguities about them within and between accounts and within the situated world of myself as researcher.

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[4]Giddens uses Willis' (1977) study of school boys in a poor area of Birmingham as an example of research focusing on unintended consequences. Willis treats the boys as knowledgeable actors within their own environment with discursive and practical awareness of their situation. He shows that the rebellious attitude the boys take to the school has unintended consequences in their working lives as they take up "unskilled, unrewarding jobs, thus facilitating the reproduction of some general features of capitalist- industrial labour" (Giddens, 1984: 289).

4.2.3.3.4. Ontological security

A further influential idea about the agent is what Giddens terms "ontological security" (1984:23), grounded in routine and suggesting our need to believe that things are as we think they are, our sense of the world remaining generally constant. Giddens talks about "the habitual taken for granted character of the vast bulk of the activities of day to day social life; the prevalence of familiar styles and forms of conduct, both supporting and supported by ontological security" (1984: 376). Ontological security is tied up with trust of others, all necessary for a sense of psychological well being. The actor gains a knowledgeability of how to get on in the world around themselves through a process of socialisation and participating in the routines of daily life. Within a scenario of change individuals will sense a threat to ontological security and will struggle to sustain a continuous narrative (Weick, 1995) in the face of it, particularly as people may become focused on the risks (Beck, 1992) and dangers that they see as confronting them in a changing world. Trust in others may be undermined.

Some argue that Giddens gives an insufficiently rounded view of the human agent and neglects the extent to which people might deliberately shake off routine (Craib 1992). He is judged to emphasise too much the trusting and altruistic side of life (Layder, 1994). Those concerns aside I think that the notion of ontological security can be useful in considering how individuals choose to cope and relate their story when all that is solid around them could be seen as melting into air.

4.2.3.3.5. The agent in this study

The application of Giddens' view of agents complements the Symbolic Interactionist view which is more concerned with immediate interactions and which takes a too distant view of structures. Giddens positions the agent as a stratified, psychological self and social self involved in the creation and reproduction of social structures through a project of self reflexivity which enables the individual to retain a sense of agency and authenticity in a changing social world (Weick, 1995). In this way the individual can feel an enduring sense of self through change. As discussed in 3.2 this study sees identity as an ongoing project rather than as a hard core mechanism of personal traits (Casey, 1995). Career theorising which looks at determining effects of individual personalities and self concepts in isolation from a social system was criticised in Chapter 3.1. However, I recognise that individuals themselves may attribute their actions to features that they identify as solid and enduring within their own personality or self concept (Super, 1957). By the same token the notion of age and life stages are not incorporated into the research design as they were found to be social as well as biological. Nevertheless comments that individuals make about what they perceive as the significance of such factors will be discussed.

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4.2.4. CAREER SCRIPTS

Career scripts, as Barley understands them, are plans for recurrent patterns of career action (1989:53). In fact, the term script occurs regularly in the literature on the changing nature of work (e.g. Hage, 1996) accompanied by an assumption (and a debatable one at that, Giddens, 1991; Pahl, 1995) that the previously more prescribed and regularised scripts for work (and other social practices) have been thrown into doubt in recent times, as discussed in chapter 2 and 3. Scripts are described by Barley (drawing on Giddens, 1984) as consisting of interpretative schemes, norms and resources which are the modalities between human action and social structures. The following section will explore these components of scripts and in so doing will engage with integral debates on discourses (in dealing with interpretative schemes) and on power and ideology (in dealing with resources and norms).

Interpretative schemes can be understood as "modes of typification incorporated within actors' stock of knowledge" (Giddens, 1984: 29). In career terms, this means an individual's reading of what needs to be done to get on in a particular career or to fashion an alternative career course. Some readings may come to have an established, even apparently mandatory meaning (c.f. Grey's (1994) accountants and Lawrence's (1984) evidence on the internalisation of career timetables). However, in a context of career change, especially to a more uncertain world, (as in this study) the individual may be less sure about the schemes on which they can draw to fashion their career course (Barley, 1989). Given the discussion above, it is evident that care must be taken to avoid the notion that interpretative schemes for careers are simply and always pre-constituted. Within the literature reviews, I highlighted the debate on the diminishing certainty about the precepts and patterns of the traditional career which had, arguably, provided a more or less scripted pattern for the unfolding of a career. I compared that to the emergence of new discourse about careers, which may be seen by individuals as more rhetoric than reality but is nevertheless implicated in the constitution of social practices. Discourse is a concept that requires further attention.

4.2.4.1.1. Discourse

To discuss interpretative schemes requires an engagement with the issue of discourse- a perilous terrain indeed (Burman and Parker, 1993). However, there is a considerably more developed literature about discourse than about the notion of interpretative schemes which needs to be recognised in this study. It has been noted (Burman and Parker, 1993; Watson, 1994) that there is a temptation to use words like discourse, interpretative scheme, (and terms such as story, account, narrative which I will discuss in chapter 5) interchangeably. While they may indeed have common sense meanings,

each carries a developed (and inconclusive) literature What is important here is to specify how I am using terms which regularly occur in this study.

I see interpretative schemes, as Giddens describes them, as including discourse (which I will consider below) but also as including aspects of "stock of knowledge" about careers which people may encounter as more or less scripted and which may in fact be written down (examples could be the terms of the NHS management trainee scheme or a Training and Enterprise Council's rules for funding the establishment of self employed businesses- although I am, of course, alert to their discursive dimensions).

Burman and Parker (1993) caution against reifying discourse, recognising the myriad of ways in which it is used. Fairclough (1994) identifies several conflicting and overlapping uses of the term discourse. For example in linguistics it can mean extended samples of spoken or written language. It can also be used to denote different types of language in different types of social situation e.g. the advertising discourse; classroom discourse. Alternatively it can be used, as I use it in this study, to refer to different ways of talking about and structuring areas of knowledge and social practice (Fairclough, 1994:3; Gowler and Legge, 1989). An example of such a usage of the term discourse is provided by du Gay et al. (1996). In the context of a study on managers and managerial discourse, they suggest the following useful definition which, in line with the theoretical position in this study, links action and structure. Discourse, then, is:

"a group of statements that provides a language for talking about a topic and a way of producing a kind of knowledge about that topic. Thus "discourse" serves to undermine the conventional distinctions between "thought" and "action", "language" and "practice". The term refers both to the production of knowledge through language and representation and the way that knowledge is institutionalised, shaping social practices and cultural technologies and setting new practices into play" (du Gay et al., 1996:265).

The authors go on to suggest that, in the context of their research:

" it is possible to say that management discourses "make up" particular ways for the activity of management to be conceptualised and performed" (p. 265-266).

In this study, therefore, this definition would allow me to say that career discourse provides interpretative scheme which "make up" individuals in pursuit of careers. However, this would be to suggest a less voluntarist approach than Giddens is keen to advocate. This very point highlights the controversy about the notion of discourse in that, used in a Foucauldian sense as above, it can carry the connotation of a decentred

subject. I discussed this issue with reference to identity in Chapter 3.2 and rejected then going too far down the road of asserting that there is nothing outside the text: I do so again at this point . Such a position is also incompatible with Giddens' view of the knowledgeable agent. I will return to this point below following discussion about resources and norms, the other components of Barley (1989) and Giddens' (1984) view of scripts.

4.2.4.2. Resources and norms

Giddens (1984) argues that interpretative schemes cannot be considered except alongside resources and norms which bring the issue of power into focus. Norms refer to the rights and obligations of people in interaction settings. Resources refer to capabilities to generate command over people or things (Giddens, 1984:33).

Norms may be formally encoded and written down or may be enshrined in specific instances of interaction. Giddens disputes the extent to which norms are internalised in individuals (criticising Parsons and Althusser on this point) asserting his view of the knowledgeable and reflexive agent. He refutes the notion of the pervasive influence of "a normatively co-ordinated legitimate order as an overall determinant or "programmer" of social conduct." Instead he asserts normative elements as "contingent claims which have to be sustained and made to count through the effective mobilisation of sanctions in the contexts of actual encounters" (1984: 29). These sanctions will reflect asymmetries of domination.

Giddens also asserts the relational nature of meaning within ordered social practices while acknowledging that mobilisation of power (resources, of which more below) privileges some meanings over others. As I understand this, an example would be a woman who takes extended leave or goes part time after having children but who still seeks career progress in the traditional sense. She could be seen as breaking the norm of the traditional career as exercised in a specific setting and the sanction could be curtailed upward progress (Fletcher and Bailyn, 1996). The point is that there are preferred readings of the various interpretative schemes for the fashioning of careers. The interpretation of the woman in question about combing career development and motherhood can be eclipsed by a reading by certain positioned agents within the organisation who continue to insist on their incompatibility.

Moving on to look at resources, Giddens recognises them as having no independent existence except when individuals actually instantiate them in their conduct. He argues that we should not see power- as built into social structures- producing "docile bodies." As Burman and Parker (1993:167) also argue, to see power as all pervasive threatens "to

usher in an exhausted and passive fatalism." Rather Giddens sees power as relational and although the extent of individual's influence is limited by the resources at their disposal, his active knowing agent always has a choice to act otherwise in any situation. People always have some resources they can mobilise to alter power relationships even if only passive resistance. Power is inherent in social association but that does not make it an "inherently noxious phenomenon" (p. 32). Giddens calls this idea the dialectic of control. In his Structuration theory Giddens sees action as linked to power in two senses (Knights and Willmott, 1985: 30-31): first in the broader notion of praxis - the human teleological capacity to transform nature and self; second, in the more narrow relational sense of power as a property of interaction whereby there is differential ability to achieve desired outcomes dependent on the agency of others.

However, Giddens has been criticised for stressing the voluntarist, enabling side of social relations at the expense of a recognition of the extent of constraint on peoples actions (Craib, 1992; Layder, 1994). Knights and Willmott also take issue with his view of power as failing to take account of any collective dimension. They conclude that he gives an inadequate account of the relationship between existential experience and the "structural conditions and consequences of interdependent action" (1985: 38).

However, Giddens' view of power does attend to the concern that power relations exist beyond the text, in that they endure when it stops (Burman and Parker, 1993). Hence interpretative schemes and discourse for career must be read alongside the exercise of norms and sanctions within an appreciation of unequal distribution of resources. It may be legitimate to talk of certain interpretative schemes being, at certain times, more to the advantage of some groups than others.

4.2.4.3. Scripts and ideology

This last point invites further discussion about the issue of ideology and hegemony. Giddens argues that ideology refers to the asymmetries of domination (resources) which connect signification (interpretative schemes) to legitimation of sectional interests. All those ideas are bound up in the concept of scripts as Barley (1989) describes it and in discourse. Ideology is troublesome concept and requires some attempt at definition. Alvesson offers the following:

"a relatively coherent set of assumptions, beliefs and values about a demarcated part of social reality, being illuminated in a selective and legitimising way, restricting autonomous critical reflection and sometimes favouring sectional interests" (Alvesson, 1991: 209).

In this definition he makes no claim as to the falsehood or otherwise of ideologies but sees them as a way of shining a particular light on a social phenomenon in a manner which may serve hegemonic interests. Ideology is articulated - and indeed embodied-through discourse. It is recognised that discourses can compete and co-exist and will tend to the colonisation of each other (Kress and Hodge, 1985). Discourse, then, goes beyond representing certain realities as experienced by specific groups in time and place to dynamically constructing those versions of reality, with certain discourses more dominant at certain times. If there is a site of struggle between competing discourses then the issue of hegemony - the dominance of one grouping over another in material or intellectual terms - illuminates the process by which one grouping seeks to win over or influence others to their way of seeing, but there is no inevitability about which discourse will come to dominance (Fairclough, 1994; Kress and Hodge, 1985; du Gay, 1996).

Such a view is criticised by those who see a more organised base to the application of power in society and the effect of dominant groups with a vested interest in the dominance of a particular discourse. Best and Kellner suggests that this view of power as everywhere masks the "extent to which power is still controlled and administered by specific and identifiable agents in positions of economic and political power" (1991:70).

The discourse of enterprise can be used here as a convenient example as it has been subject to more searching analysis than the discourse of new careers (to which it is closely related). This discourse is viewed as intimately bound up with the Thatcher government project (du Gay, 1996; Burrows and Curran, 1991; Ritchie, 1991; Phillips, 1996) and hence was wielded by those with position power. Discourses can achieve a significant dominance, not just at the level of ideas, but at the level of everyday lived culture (Simon, 1982) As du Gay and Salaman (1992) argue, an ideology can work hegemonically even in the face of criticism so long as it has no serious rival. Rational criticism of ideologies do not necessarily precede their collapse. du Gay and Salaman contend that the justificatory discourse of enterprise has achieved such a dominance because even though people might want to distance themselves from its claims "they are still reproducing it through their involvement in the everyday practices in which enterprise is inscribed" (1992:630).

The issue of dominant discourse is an interesting one and the dominance of the enterprise discourse is strongly asserted (Fournier, 1998) and linked (du Gay et al., 1996) in a hierarchical order to related discourse about HRM (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992); flexibility (Pollert, 1991) and careers (Fournier, 1998). Fournier (1998) discusses how two different groups of new graduate recruits within one organisation have come to

understand their career. Asserting the dominance of enterprise and new careers, she argues that these discourses constitute subject positions within them or within resistance to them. She takes an explicitly Foucauldian line in seeing resistance to the discourse of enterprise (theorised as the dominant power\knowledge regime) taking place only within the territory enterprise has colonised, and effecting the ongoing marginalisation of the resisting "other." Thus resistance to new careers and enterprise, according to Fournier, can only exist in relation to and not independently of enterprise, although she does cautiously welcome the attempt at resistance as a means of articulating a number of vocabularies of motive (Mills, 1940).

So what are we to make of this: are individuals to be seen as buffeted around, at the mercy of discourses which gain dominance. As Fairclough (1994) argues it is quite feasible to accept the constitutive practices of discourse but to see them as always constrained as they take place within a constituted material reality with pre-constituted objects and subjects (p.60). He plots a way through the various positions on the self and relationship to discourse and ideology from Althusser's interpellated subject through to Foucault's decentred subject concluding that:

"subjects are ideologically positioned, but they are also capable of acting creatively to make their own connections between the diverse practices and ideologies to which they are exposed and to restructure positioning practice and structures. The balance between the subject as "ideological effect" and the subject as active agent is a variable that depends on social conditions such as the relative stability of relations of domination" (1994:91).

Such a position is consistent with the view of agents and structures discussed so far (particularly Bhaskar's view of structures). Individuals do not slavishly follow scripts (Granovetter, 1985) as their attempts at purposive action are embedded in concrete social relations. Giddens himself (like Weick, 1995) rejects a "retreat into code- whence it is difficult to re-emerge into the world of activity and event" (1984:32).

I accept the basic premise of hegemonic discourse and do recognise the pervasiveness, in HRM and career literature, as well as in the media, of new ways of talking about work and career, but I remain unconvinced of the fundamental assumption within this line of argument, that enterprise (and new careers) are *proved* to be dominant discourses. I prefer to remain open to understanding how individuals are articulating that which they draw on to understand their (changing?) career.

Some people may indeed be able to resist the pull of such discourse as they hold on to quite competing ideological positions even as they experience themselves as a retreating minority. It does not follow, necessarily, that their resistance is only in relation to enterprise and new careers. I will talk more in chapter 5 about how I will deal with these ideas in a methodological sense. At this point I want to highlight the (fluid) parameters of the career discourses which, at this point, seem to be the most salient.

4.2.4.3.1. *Defining discourse and interpretative schemes*

One problem in talking about discourse (or scripts or interpretative schemes for that matter) is that it is difficult to know how to identify a particular discourse or scheme: what are the differences between the two; how are the content and boundaries to be defined. I have already indicated that I see interpretative schemes as embodying discourse.

The boundaries of any particular discourse are even more difficult - indeed not possible to define given their dynamic nature. There is little on the literature of discourse to help on this matter. Of course discourse can be seen as polysemic, shifting, fluid and overlapping, but it is incumbent on the researcher to indicate how discourse is to be understood in the context of a specific project. Given that the researcher is embedded in cultural and social practices just like the participants then it may well be that her reading of a particular discourse chimes with that of participants and readers. It is well to be specific, so I will identify how I understand career discourses.

The first point to attend is the problematic question of the extent to which I believe the discourses are there and waiting to be discovered, as it were, within individual interviews (Burman and Parker, 1993; Moir, 1993; Widdicombe, 1993). It is important to acknowledge the co-constitutive nature of discourse (I will discuss this issue further in chapter 5). Nevertheless, it is fair to say, I think, that certain themes: specific words, metaphors, concepts and rhetorical devices i.e. key words and formulaic phrases (Phillips, 1996) are strongly associated with certain ways of talking about careers.

I suggest that the bureaucratic discourse of career is well known and persists outside any interview setting. I contend, along with many other authors (e.g. Gowler and Legge, 1989; Inkson, 1995), that most people would agree it to be about upward mobility, organisational membership, stability some predictability and jobs. This career may well have been experienced as a material reality by the participants in this study who would be well aware of its scripts.

The "new career" discourse is a little more elusive but I believe that certain themes are associated with it. The ubiquitous post prefix is evident: post-entrepreneurial (Kanter, 1989), post corporate (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997); other images centre around selling and being business like e.g. "vendor" workers (Kanter, 1989) "You and Co." (Bridges, 1995); portfolio (Handy, 1994) which suggests diversity, and boundaryless (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) which sweeps away artificial limits and dependence; instrumentality is captured in notions like "the free agent" (Hirsch, 1987; Hecksher, 1995). The new career lexicon set out by Arthur and Rousseau is a good starting point as they outline how the language about careers has changed (a favourite ploy for academics who love to rename old realities according to Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). Here are some examples:

"EMPLOYMENT: old meaning: the action of employing a person; alternatively the state of being employed, or a person's occupation or business. New meaning: a temporary state, or the current manifestation of a long-term employability" (1996:373).

"OCCUPATION: Old meaning: a habitual course of action, a set of tasks associated with requisite skills and codified knowledge; a basis for credentials. New meaning: an anchor for lifelong learning; a basis for network participation" (1996:374).

So this new career discourse is about independence from one employer, ongoing learning, creativity, balance, self reliance and self development. As such it overlaps with the prevalent discourses about lifestyle, enterprise, flexibility. It remains to be seen if participants of this study translate it into ongoing guides for action. It could be argued, I feel, that it has eclipsed the discourse of traditional careers. Notions like the job for life are now described as hopelessly old-fashioned (Golzen and Garner, 1990: Preston and Biddle, 1994), even "risibly antique" (Seaton, 1996).

Of course, this discourse has not simply *won* as people do continue to articulate the old: surveys show that individuals hang on to the desire for security for example. This conscious attempt to alter language use is not simply accepted: indeed it is widely lampooned. The following examples are from an newspaper article entitled: The New English Babble (Cohen and Trapp, 1994:17):

*"**Human resource management**: Used to be called personnel officers. The "human resources" are so called to distinguish them from other resources like cash, computers, company cars etc. The HRM's main task in the 1990s is to tell the human resources that they are being downsized."*

*"**Portfolio jobs\careers:** People who are being <u>downsized</u> are told that jobs for life are a thing of the past and they should think of working for a "portfolio" of several firms or have a "portfolio" of different careers. In practice many older, unskilled and unlucky workers find that their portfolio are empty."*

However, the hegemonic effect of discourse is relevant here as the new career discourse, arguably, serves the interests of organisations and governments (in a time of downsizings and restructurings) more than it does that of individuals. The interesting point is that individuals may well come to appropriate it as the basis for their own actions and, in so doing, give it what would appear to be a material reality. So, to some extent at least people can be "made up" (du Gay et al., 1996) within prevalent and hegemonic discourse, although they retain the capacity to resist it and not only on the terms of this discourse (Fournier, 1998).

4.2.4.4. Career Scripts in this study
To conclude this section, I accept the notion of career scripts as incorporating interpretative schemes and discourses which must be read alongside norms and uneven distribution of resources. Scripts are at the nexus of structure and action. While I refer to the notion of "discourse" I do not propose it as an alternative for "scripts" because I want to retain the notion of both material and discursive factors (Casey, 1995) within changing work and careers.

It must also be said that I do not intend a fine graded discourse analysis in this project in a linguistic sense, but I will be looking in the interview accounts for the themes of old and new career discourse, seeking commonalties and ambiguities within and between the accounts to consider what kind of discourses and other interpretative schemes individuals are drawing on and seeking to identify what participants see as the enabling and constraining factors in the unfolding of their new careers. I will talk more about this point in a methodological sense in the next chapter.

4.2.5. SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL ISSUES RELATED TO RESEARCH APPROACH

Following the discussion above, this summary will set out how the terms of the institutions, individual realm and career scripts central to the Barley model are being understood in this study. It will move on to look at the theoretical implications this study of the use of the Barley model, incorporating Giddens' view of the double hermeneutic.

4.2.5.1. Interpretations of terms used in the Barley model

By way of summarising this section I return to the Barley model and elaborate on how the terms are to be used.

4.2.5.1.1. Institution

Institutions, then, are regarded in this study as social systems, structures and practices which pre-exist individuals and have an ontological base (Bhaskar, 1985). However, they can only be known through the interpretations of individuals who both constitute and reproduce them through their actions. Structure can be perceived by individuals as causally implicated in their action. That these structures are ultimately of human agency may not seem a relevant matter. This recognition allows the researcher some access to discussing the impact of structure and takes us beyond an approach where shared meaning is all there is.

In this study institutions are not the focus of study: rather they are bracketed and taken as given. Institutions emerge in the study to the extent that individuals identify what they perceive as their existence and effects, recognising that not every participant will necessarily perceive them in the same way. Variability between accounts on the view of institutions could be analytically useful.

4.2.5.1.2. Career Scripts: (resources, interpretative schemes, norms)

Career scripts are interpreted both as interpretative schemes which individuals may feel have a material reality and the discourses of careers which they may see as "rhetoric" as opposed to reality but which are nonetheless implicated in the constitution of social practices. The hegemonic aspect of discourse is acknowledged but Giddens' dialectic of control, which serves to deny that individuals are only made up through discourse, is asserted. While discourse is a significant feature of an individual's social landscape (and their own role in its constitution and reproduction may or may not be apparent to them) Giddens' stratified, knowledgeable and reflexive agent is not solely made up within discourses but rather retains the ability to reflect on them critically (Giddens, 1991).

4.2.5.1.3. Individual Action And Interaction

The realm of action extends beyond face to face encounters to include relations between individuals not necessarily known to each other separated through time and space who may, nonetheless feel themselves to be part of a social collective. The individual agent is perceived as stratified, knowledgeable and reflexive, capable of navigating a route between and through discourses but concerned to retain a sense of ontological security through change expressed in an ongoing reflexive narrative of the self

4.2.5.2 Summary of theoretical position in relation to Barley model

I propose, in researching the questions detailed above, to direct research to the interfaces 2 and 3 in the Barley model (see figure 4.2.1.) which focus on exploring the scripts have people drawn on to account for their career actions. I am interested in whether they think that their actions will affect institutions but any investigation about that awaits a further study.

Barley (1989) emphasises that we can belong to more than one institution which can offer competing interpretations of our fate and calls for research attention to the "dynamics by which potentially conflicting interpretations arise, how their clash influences an individuals actions" (1989: 57). I think this is a useful insight. At this stage of the research it is not possible to set out which institutions will be most relevant; that will emerge from the data. However, an educated guess given the literature reviews would suggest bureaucracy and specifically the organisation itself and maybe the managerial career in a bureaucracy would be seen as an institution. Latterly the institution of self employment may be significant and the institutions of family or community may also be pertinent. Whether or not portfolio working emerges as a significant institution as far as the participants are concerned remains to be seen.

Barley further suggests that in the research we trace the dynamics of the interfaces in terms of either the resources, norms or interpretative schemes. I think this is to misunderstand a clear direction from Giddens within Structuration theory that one cannot look at interpretative schemes - signification- without a consideration of power as a feature of social relations but recognising that there is a dialectic of control.

I want to reiterate that this is not a study using Structuration theory as a model for data collection and interpretation. As a researcher I am using it as a sensitising adjunct to the Barley model (itself a sensitising device rather than a model to be tested) which is partly derived from it.

Most importantly for this study, Giddens' work as mediated by Barley, allows me to hang on to the notion of duality because I think that is a persuasive way to consider careers. It may help to understand how people might feel at once empowered and bewildered by career changes and see them as both externally imposed and as a long awaited breakthrough of people's dissatisfactions with the traditional ways.

4.2.5.3. The double hermeneutic

One final point I wish to develop from Giddens' explication of his theory is the notion of what he calls the *double hermeneutic* which draws attention to the researcher's role (to be further considered in Chapter 5).

He defines the double hermeneutic as:

"the intersection of two frames of meaning as a logically necessary part of social science, the meaningful world as constituted by lay actors and the metalanguages invented by social scientists; there is a constant slippage from one to the other involved in the practice of the social sciences" (1984:374).

I take this to acknowledge that researcher will "intervene" in the accounts of the research subjects. As Giddens proposes all social research has a hermeneutic moment where the researcher enters a field already constituted as meaningful by the research participants and it is incumbent on the researcher to access that world in some way. Initially they may do so by the invention of what he calls second order concepts which presume some conceptual capabilities on the parts of the actors. However, those concepts can be appropriated into the actor's world and become themselves first order concepts. Sociologists must mediate the frames of meaning of individuals through descriptions which are themselves interpretative categories and also" demand an effort of translation in and out of the frames of meaning involved in sociological theories" (p. 284). His warnings of the considerations required to do this successfully, which I intend to heed, are to include a rich description of the milieu of the research participants; to be alert to their knowledgeability and complex skills in co-ordinating the contexts of their day to day behaviour (285); and to be mindful of the issues of the time and space (locales) dimensions of the constitution of their social life.

Giddens' relative lack of interest in epistemology has been noted (Layder,1994) and he is unapologetic about it but it is still an important consideration in developing the methodology. The focus here is on interpretation within a context of the duality of action and structure. I am not investigating an organisation or changes in a specific institution. I am investigating what individuals make of recent changes in their working

world, what they see as they significance of this and the wider relevance that can be drawn. The interest is not in developing and testing hypotheses, nor in quantification but rather in developing understanding of the topic of portfolio working through a range of personal interpretations of career stories, the points of transition within them and personal reflection on their significance with the aim of developing a better understanding of how this type of work is experienced and how it impacts on construction of career. Hence an epistemological approach which allows for a personal story to emerge is the most appropriate with a methodology which is qualitative and inductive, aiming towards the development of theory grounded in the data. That is the focus of the next chapter.

4.2.6 . SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

The research is concerned to investigate:
1. how individuals account for the move from employment to portfolio working;
2. how this way of working can be understood;
3. the changing relationship with employers that it may signify;
4. the developing constructions of career and career identity given a new way of working which traduces traditional views of careers.

The concern is primarily with how individuals account for their changed circumstances with a recognition that individuals are not self contained entities but social beings who produce and reproduce their social world. This study thus intends to contribute empirical data and theoretical understanding to the emerging literature on careers by an in depth focus on the experience of a putative contemporary career transition: out of organisational employment and into a more independent (in terms of employment contract) and diverse working world encapsulated in the notion of portfolio working (Handy, 1994).

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

The research is carried out by interviewing 25 ex NHS managers. This chapter explores that methodological choice. It begins by discussing general issues associated with qualitative research: generating accounts; theory building and the role of the researcher. It moves on in 5.2 to look in more detail at four aspects of the process- recognised as overlapping but presented separately to clarify the actions taken: devising the interview guide; selecting the sample; carrying out the interviews and data analysis. 5.3 considers the issues of validity and reliability; 5.4 revisits the interview questions and 5.5 introduces the participants and presents some aggregated data about them.

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Following on from the debate in chapter 4, this research is rooted in the realm of individual action but recognises that individuals are actively involved in the reproduction and creation of their social world. The phenomenon under study - portfolio working- is much discussed but under-theorised and lacking in qualitative studies which focus on how people experience it. This study then is specifically designed to explore how individuals construct and enact this phenomenon in their own social world. Hence it is rooted in a qualitative (Cassell and Symon, 1994) and interpretative perspective (Silverman, 1993), concerned to explore an aspect of the social world from the viewpoint of the situated actor. The aim is to seek out emerging themes and to generate theory about this career rather than to proceed with testing and developing hypotheses.

Within that framework, a methodology which allows maximum access to how individuals are making sense of portfolio working is required. As I will discuss below, the chosen method was in-depth interviews with individuals selected from within a purposive, non-random sampling frame (Arber, 1993). By that method, I aimed to generate accounts from individuals about why they feel they made the choices they did, how they explain them, how they experience their new way of working and what they believe are the implications of this sense-making process. Before moving on to look in detail at what I did in the research process and why, there are three key issues that I first want to discuss which are sometimes identified as problematic issues in qualitative

research: 1. generation of accounts about individuals lives or events within them; 2. theory building and 3. the role of the researcher (Silverman, 1993)

5.1.1. Generating individual accounts

Following Silverman (1997) I am choosing to use the word accounts (Wooffitt, 1993) to mean all the data generated through the interviews. The terms stories and narratives also tend to be used and at times all three words are used interchangeably. I make no particular distinction between story and narrative. Stories as Weick suggests are "powerful stand alone contents for sense-making" (1995:129). Within the overall career story (or narrative) there may be a number of specific stories about certain events and happenings which may be able to be connected in some way to generate meaning. To my mind, account is the most useful generic term as it can incorporate the notion of sequence and narrative building implied in stories and it can also accommodate themes expressed as opinions or facts which might be introduced in a less sequential, more ad hoc manner. Accounts once generated, act as texts which can be analysed and interpreted.

5.1.1.1. Individual sense making

The accounts thus focus on the non-fictive (Giddens, 1991:54) events of an individual's life and the meaning they convey about them:

"an account is neither naive nor an apology for behaviour but must be taken as an informed statement by the person whose experiences are under investigation" (Brown and Sine, 1981: 160).

As Giddens (1991) has argued, a coherent self narrative is integral to developing and maintaining a sense of identity through personal and social change. Individuals are making decisions about what to present from the mass of data about their lives and the multitude of senses that could be made of it (Weick, 1995). They are not simply telling stories about the true happenings which have occurred but are also actively constructing them in the telling:

"To engage in sense-making is to construct, filter, frame, create facticity (Turner, 1987) and render the subjective into something more tangible (Weick, 1995:14).

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Weick (1995) suggests that, in approaching the subject of sense-making, we should get used to retrospection as people can only know what they have done after they have done it. Personal narratives may be the "product of severe editing " (p.128) but we should not be surprised that people apply hindsight to telling the stories about their own lives nor that they look at past events in light of the present. What is more, people will always engage in induction "despite its scandalous reputation" (p.129).

5.1.1.2. The status of interview accounts

At issue, though, is the status of such accounts analytically. This is particularly important to address given the fact that careers stories can be described, by those of an objectivist bent, as "autobiographical fictions" (Nicholson and West, 1989) whereby individuals have re-ordered what were actually serendipitous events (Evetts, 1992) into a coherent self narrative which, in Curriculum Vitae (Miller and Morgan, 1993; Metcalfe, 1992) tradition, constructs them in the best possible light according to intended audience.

Several points need to be considered. Firstly, how participants might view the research interview as the forum for a construction of an account of their career is relevant. For example, the biographical "facts" selected and presented in a job interview may differ from those told in a more informal gathering. Within a research interview different conventions will probably apply as there are less constraints on what an individual might say if only because there are no obvious material consequences (e.g. not being appointed to a job) of "admitting" to alternative ways of making sense of career events. It would be wrong to assume however that what we hear in such an interview, however relaxed, are the unmediated inner experiences of individuals (Silverman, 1993).

Furthermore, the choices of how individuals present themselves are inevitably constrained and shaped by cultural norms and available texts (Parker, 1992). How the individual might want to appear to the researcher (Baruch, 1981) is also a relevant analytical concern. For example, Silverman (1993:109) discusses Baruch's work with parents whose children have congenital illnesses. Comparing his work with other similar research, Baruch explains that he does not simply accept parents' explanations of interactions with the medical profession at face value, or as deriving from the social structure of mother-doctor relations. Instead, he *also* looks at how, in their constructions

of what he calls "atrocity stories, parents find a way of proving to the researcher, as stranger, the extent of their own moral responsibility.

Hence, the point is raised that interviews, as symbolic interactions (Miller and Glassner, 1997), are situations where meaning is jointly constructed by interviewer and interviewee (Silverman, 1993) and can make no claim to meaning outside that context. However, like Miller and Glassner (1997), I am more inclined to take a position outside the objectivist-constructivist continuum to assert that useful meaning about social worlds are achievable through interviewing (Harding, 1987; Widdicombe, 1993) by the attempt to explore that meaning from the point of view of the actor while "granting these accounts the culturally honoured status of reality" (p 100). Interviewees themselves will give "a sense of social structure in order to assemble recognisably "sensible" accounts which are adequate for the practical; purposes at hand" (Silverman, 1993:114). It is to be expected that people will present variable, even contradictory accounts (Potter and Wetherall, 1987; Burman and Parker, 1993), drawing on available discursive resources (Billig et al., 1988) which reflect and relate to prevailing social conditions. The researcher's task is to attempt to be a credible witness to them (Casey 1995). As Silverman (1993), suggests paying attention to both form - the narrative flow of the account -and content - the stories people tell and the themes that arise can enhance the analytical endeavour.

My aim is to generate accounts of individual's careers which identify what they see as those issues in career and life - if they can be separated and indeed individuals may feel that they can - that bear upon the decision to go portfolio, the experience of it and subsequent plans. That this data is filtered and situated is not, in my view, problematic. What is interesting is the themes participants choose to identify; what aspects of current context they highlight as significant; what they feel is prompting them to further action (Barley, 1989); and the ambiguities and contradictions within and between accounts (Jones, 1983). I am not looking here at atomised individuals but trying to explore if there are similarities or key issues of difference in how these people see their personal and social circumstances in relation to portfolio work. Thus, this exploratory study may lead to the development of explanatory frames and theory to account for this inevitably situated emerging phenomenon. Furthermore, in this way, individuals themselves are involved in the development of a research agenda about an aspect of their social world.

5.1.2. Theory building

In qualitative research it is often suggested (Cassell and Symon, 1994) that theory emerges from the data and is grounded in that data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and hence is based on an inductive approach to theory building. Concern is expressed that this process is not given enough attention in some qualitative research (Silverman, 1993) or is "treated as a mysterious process about which little can be said and no guidance given. One must simply wait on the theoretical muse, it is implied." (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:177). Both texts discuss the need, in qualitative research, to describe in some detail the analytical processes by which theory emerges (and to attend to issues of reliability and validity which will be discussed below).

I recognise explicitly that I do not approach the data collection and analyses with a blank sheet. Certain ideas from the literature, pilot interviews as well as personal experiences (considered below) inform the whole research process and certain models and theoretical positions have already been identified in the literature as potentially illuminating. Hammersley and Atkinson's notion of "progressive focusing" is helpful suggesting as it does that the research problem becomes progressively clarified over time. The process of theory building involves moving back and forth between the data and multi perspectival theoretical models which are more likely to be applied indicatively than rigorously (given that they are rarely sufficiently developed to handle detailed testing, Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:181); moving back and forth between ideas so generated and the data again, also incorporating the inductive insights of participants (Weick, 1995). In that way, the process which starts off tentative and inductive can become progressively focused and clarified with theoretical ideas and frameworks emerging during the process.

5.1.3. Role of the researcher

A consideration of the role and potential effects of the researcher on a project is widely regarded as crucial in qualitative research studies (Cassell and Symon, 1994; Reason, 1988). Deciding on my own role in this project has required much thought. As I discussed in chapter 1, I made a personal career transition out of organisational employment (at a senior managerial level within Local Government) into what would be regarded as portfolio working as defined in this study. My portfolio was PhD study, a regular visiting lecturer role within the University and freelance training and

development activities - sometimes on long term contracts which in many respects seemed like employment and sometimes on one-off or short term projects.

While I recognise that being so close to the phenomenon under study might discomfort some researchers, it is generally seen as acceptable within qualitative research and some authors regard it as positive advantage (Weick, 1995; Reason, 1988; Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1994). However certain ethical dilemmas can arise and it is incumbent on me to discuss them (Harding, 1987). I will start with some general comments on the role of the researcher and move on to my own situation. In qualitative research it is neither possible nor desirable to remove the researcher as human being from the picture:

"We are part of the social world we study.. this is not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact. There is no way we can escape the social world in order to study it: nor fortunately is that necessary" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:15).

Feminists researchers challenge rigid distinctions between researchers and researched asserting that individuals should not be research subjects but active and equal participants (Stanley and Wise, 1993). While I accept that interviewers must be alert to issues of power and control within the process, I am inclined to agree with Hammersley who argues that research is a pragmatic exercise (1989:65) and that it is disingenuous to claim a non-hierarchical relationship. Casey (1995) makes a similar point recognising that, in making sense of data generated by and about other people, the best one can do is to construct oneself as "a credible witness" (p199), taking care to represent the data systematically and reliably. However she goes on to "admit the inevitability of the author's perspective and judgement, no matter how well reflected upon and the power inherent in the researcher's gaze transposed into writing" (p 200).

With such points in mind, I want to move on now to reflect on my own role. In no way was I a neutral participant in this study. I had read the literature about new careers and felt it was telling only part of the story. Some days I was quite simply proud of myself for having left organisational employment, delighted to be out of the job and organisation which had become stultifying and laden with values I did not share. I could enjoy the relative freedoms of life outside an organisation: it seemed exciting and full of

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possibilities. But, I was also aware of my own anxieties which, at times, were overwhelming, centring on money, insecurity and an awareness that I had confused and bemused friends and family. I had a certain suspicion that this would be episode only in my working life. I started the research, very alert to the potential impacts on it, of being so close to the issue: the most pressing were whether I was seeking from others a validation of what I had done myself and a sort of therapeutic need to share the highs and lows as I was experiencing them.

My response to this concern is to admit it and explain how I dealt with it in the course of the process. The first point to make is that I had been out of full time organisational employment for well over two years before the first interview so I had had time to become quite used to my new situation and had recovered from initial transition traumas. Hence any lingering need to discuss my own situation had already receded by the time I started the interviews and it became progressively less important as I proceeded.

Oakley (1981) advocates a sharing of personal experience in the interview. However, I approached that advice with some caution: after all the interviews were not about my story. I truly wanted to listen and as far as possible to keep my views and pre-conceptions from *explicitly* affecting the course of the interview - aware of course that, inevitably, as with any interviewer, they seep into the whole process.

However self-revelation is not to be feared (Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1994) so I always told interviewees of my own situation if they asked, as many did. Often this happened after the "formal" interview was over. It is my perception, based on some interviews where people knew my circumstances early in the interview, that such self revelation (or lack of it) did not materially affect how they responded to me. It is rare in life that we find some-one willing to listen to our story without super-imposing their own. As the life of the interviewees was the subject of this research, their level of introspection was high and the effect deep for most. My own story was not of that much interest to them at that point. In general, I simply presented myself as a researcher.

In terms of the conduct of the interview I had a pre-prepared interview guide derived from the research questions suggested by the literature review and three pilot interviews

(see Appendix 3). I did not slavishly follow the guide as I will discuss below, allowing for the unfolding of participant's stories. Of course I sought clarification, prompted them at times and engaged them in discussion about certain ideas, all to ensure that my research agenda was also met. However, I do not feel that my own personal experience of portfolio working significantly intervened or at least it did not do so in a way which interfered with the story the participant was telling. I am also aware that some might say I have missed an opportunity for more collaborative, participative research (Stanley and Wise, 1993) and active interviewing here (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997) but, on balance, I am happy with the decisions I made about the conduct of the interviews.

I do acknowledge that the interviews, particularly those in the early stages, provoked some personal reflection, even soul searching. I measured myself against their successes, admitted personal failures and set backs, was envious of some, relieved not to be experiencing the anxieties of others. Such impact was more central to the analysis than to the interview process. Post interview reflection involved detailed and deep reflection on what I had just heard, how it did or did not chime with my own perceptions and where it reflected and diverged from other stories. This process of reflecting and analysing the data was a natural one and considerably aided me in immersion in the data.

I was regularly surprised by the data collected (King, 1994). Certainly my personal story was validated on occasion but that became unimportant. My own views about my situation, in any event, evolved and changed throughout this period, partly I am sure because of this research, partly because this way of life was becoming ever more normal to me. Indeed my preconceptions were challenged right from the start even in the initial pilot interviews: not everyone brought stories of corporate gloom; not everyone was delighted by the liberation from corporate life; anxieties took different forms. Recognising the baggage with which I entered the process enabled me rather quickly to bracket it (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and immerse myself in the stories of others.

5.2. THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In the sections that follow I separate out four parts of the process (King, 1994) not because they necessarily happened in neat and linear way as they were in fact overlapping and backtracking but in order to explain the process as clearly as possible.

1. the interview guide- deciding what I wanted to know
2. the research sample
3. the qualitative interviews
4. data analysis

5.2.1. Developing the interview guide

An interview guide was developed as a flexible tool to ensure that interviews covered the research questions as broadly defined. The initial interview guide was derived from three main sources (King, 1994):

1. the literature - chapter 4.1 set out broad research questions that emerged from the literature;
2. personal knowledge and experience as discussed above;
3. informal, preliminary work such as unstructured discussions with people who have personal experience of the topic under discussion (King, 1994:19).

5.2.1.1. Pilot interviews

I carried out three such interviews with people who had left organisational employment (one from Local Government, one from ICL and one from a large charitable organisation) to go portfolio. Two were known to me and one was suggested by a colleague. My aim was to talk around, in a conversational manner, what I had found in the literature and my own observations and experiences. I wanted to judge if this was a viable research project and if my understandings had a wider currency. I found that the research areas as set out in 4.1 were seen as useful questions to explore; the notion of portfolio working had meaning for them, as all were involved in more than one project; some of my views on highs and lows were shared but a number of other perspectives were raised; specific issues were suggested as worth exploring such as reputation of

portfolio working and whose opinions mattered most to participants about the transition they had made.

Taking the three sources of data together I devised a broad and flexible interview guide (see Appendix 3) which I fully expected to evolve during the interview process (see Appendix 4). It was not based on specific questions but on topics that I wanted to cover at some point in the interview. It related to past experience, the point of transition and experience of the new way of working. I had prompts to discuss issues of career planning, identity, reputation, status, the highs and the lows, career influences, views on returning to organisational employment, measures of success and career development activities. I had no strong views about the sequence of the interview except that I anticipated starting with their current role and highlighting other career events and decisions through the interview.

5.2.2. Selecting the research sample

A simultaneous matter to consider was the composition of the research sample. I set some broad parameters initially.

1. Ex full time permanent employees of a large, hierarchical organisation.

The career literature assumes a move away from traditional careers associated with large hierarchical organisations due in part to organisational restructuring and in part to a change in individual attitude. This research focuses on this apparent macro career transition (Kanter, 1989) at individual level and hence I wanted to identify people who, by virtue of employment in a large bureaucracy, had had potential access to a linear and progressive career with whom I could explore the transition out of it.

2. Ex-managers

Managers were chosen as the culturally bound and rhetorically reinforced concept of "career" (Gowler and Legge, 1989) is generally seen as most salient to them given their position in the primary internal labour market. Managerial work is traditionally organisation bound and managers are potentially the most organisationally privileged in terms of access to opportunities and career development. Much of the current rhetoric on organisational change is concerned with the impact on those at managerial level. Following Grint (1995) it was decided not to delimit what was meant by manager. As

discussed in chapter 2 the term is changing and there is little agreement about what tasks or hierarchical positions or discursive formulations (du Gay, et al. 1996) would constitute a manager. Hence, I relied on self ascription. What is important in this study is that people feel they had access to a managerial career and for some reason turned away from it.

3. People in mid-career

I was interested in exploring the transition from the point of view of those who had had a chance to develop a managerial career more in the traditional mode - and hence would exclude those who would have no point of personal comparison between the putative old and new. For that reason I did not envisage interviewing anyone below age 30 or so. I did not want to include people at the end of their career who had left work on a significant pension, which may affect their approach to labour market participation.

4. People who now had a portfolio of work activities

Portfolio working is defined by what it is not, i.e. it is not permanent work for one employer only. The assumption is that people will develop a package of alternative working arrangements which emphasise the selling of their various skills to a variety of employers. Some measure of independence and variety is implied. So, I wished to identify organisational leavers who had not returned to permanent employment elsewhere unless it was a combination of fully employed part-time work and some other contractual arrangement.

I had to consider the position of those people who may have left full-time employment in order to secure part-time employment only elsewhere. My early thoughts were that I would exclude them as they would not fit the criteria of independence and variety in the working pattern.

As already discussed people who are self employed only in terms of selling their own skills to a variety of customers are included.

5.2.2.1. Identifying the individual participants

A purposive (Arber, 1993), non-probability sampling frame was judged to be the most appropriate method to select participants within these broad parameters identified. As

the area of portfolio working is not mapped it was necessary to identify people who might have information and insight into the phenomenon in question, rather than searching for generalisable individuals using highly pre-specified criteria. I needed to build up a holistic picture of this career transition by opening up the possibility of hearing a number of accounts which varied across several dimensions. While I was seeking variation there was no specific attempt to map out and identify maximum variation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Often it is not possible to understand the variations in peoples stories until they have been heard and analysed. It would have been too restrictive and imposed very difficult practical constraints to have sought people whose stories were highly pre-specified. Although the study is concerned with the development of theory grounded in the data, the Glaser and Strauss (1967) concept of "theoretical sampling" was judged too prescriptive to be applied here for these reasons (King, 1998).

The question arose how to identify such people, as operating a portfolio implies that individuals are not necessarily attached to a single organisation. I considered advertising the nature of the research and requesting participants or approaching organisations to identify portfolio individuals connected with them.

The sample actually emerged from the latter process as, early in the research, I followed up an article in People Management (Holbeche, 1995) about Careers and the NHS Career Development Register which led to the early identification of 12 ex NHS managers who appeared to meet the specification outlined above.

5.2.2.1.1. The NHS Career Development Register. The Register was launched in 1992 as part of Opportunity 2000 led by the NHS Women's Unit. It continued to be funded by them and by the Department of Health until it was recently restructured and dispersed. The original idea was for a 2 year pilot programme designed to improve the position of women in senior management from 18% to 30%. A figure of 28% had been achieved by Spring 1995. The pilot was then extended to cover 100 men, initially from 2 regions only. There are currently 727 women on the Register of which 412 are managers (the rest are doctors and other medical professionals). The register collects and stores information on the women to enable the Register to alert recruiters about suitable female candidates. It also provides training, coaching and career counselling for the individuals.

The register was originally open only to women on the NHS grade SMP11 and above (which indicates a salary around £30,000). As such they will already be in management or trying to move from a senior position in another discipline into management. These women could realistically aspire to Chief Executive or board level posts.

Holbeche's (1995) article appeared to indicate that the Career Development Register was a mechanism by which the NHS offered some training and development to ex employees, still linked in some way to the organisation. As it later transpired, this is not strictly the case. No formal provision is made but the register staff use their discretion and judgement to involve ex employees on an occasional, individual and ad hoc basis and so maintain records on individual leavers. Following a meeting with one of the Directors, which established their interest in my research, they agreed to participate.

For reasons of confidentiality, they would not disclose names but rather agreed to circulate a letter (appendix 2) to those leavers of whom they had knowledge and who they judged fitted the criteria I had outlined. The letter invited people to participate in the research into the implications of changing working patterns if they were working on a freelance and or fixed term basis At this stage I did not use the word portfolio as I did not know if people would be aware of it. So, I abstracted what I have described as the main principles: leaving full time employment and developing a package of work arrangements which may include some or all of freelance, fixed term, part-time work.

I was aware of the issues involved of allowing the organisation to effectively screen who I was to see and my reliance on their interpretation of my requirements. However, for the practical purpose of allowing the sample to emerge this was judged an acceptable risk at this early stage of the research.

Sixteen responses were generated of which twelve people met the criteria as set out above (the remainder were either over fifty, had moved on to full time employment or were not working at all temporarily). This level of response was gratifying and considerably more than I had expected. It was indicative, I felt, of a more general interest in my focus of inquiry. It seemed that I could would be able to identify considerably more ex managers within the NHS.

5.2.2.1.2. Narrowing the focus to ex NHS employees. This response prompted a consideration of focusing the research on people who had in common, the NHS as their organisation background. Certain potential advantages were apparent. First as discussed above, I had carried out pilot interviews for this study with three people, now working portfolio, who came from different organisational backgrounds (one from Local Government, one from ICL and one from a voluntary organisation). Reflecting on those interviews, illuminating though they were about potential themes to explore, I could envisage advantages of coherence in organisational antecedents to the career transition. Secondly, The NHS as a large hierarchical organisation with career management policies (Baker and Perkins, 1993; Burgoyne, 1992) was a suitable forum from which to identify people who had had access to a hierarchical career. Finally, and not to be under-estimated, was the fact that I had already established a viable research population who did share such a background.

The people who responded to the letter not only shared an NHS background but they also maintained some level of link with it. Given the assumption that portfolio workers will secure contracts, at least initially from their last employer (Kanter, 1989; Handy, 1994; Peiperl and Baruch, 1997) it seemed that to narrow the field to people who hailed from one organisation and who still retained links with it, would facilitate investigation of changing relationships with employers. I had reservations, however. I was concerned that this focus may be too narrow and inward looking and insufficiently generalisable. I had no intention of doing an organisational case study on the NHS or any other organisation as my interest was in individual perceptions of portfolio working which transcends employment with a single employer. A particular organisation and its career practices was not the concern of this research and I did not foresee doing justice to it.

I suspended judgement until I had carried out three interviews as a pilot (these interviews were in addition to the three other pilot interviews I carried out at an earlier stage) which alleviated my concerns. On a practical level, that they had a common background, reduced the number of intrusive questions I had to ask to be able understand the context they evoked (e.g. several participants talked about the national management trainee scheme, the GMTS schemes, Griffiths report etc. and I soon became familiar with them). There were also interesting before and after observations as I had suspected.

However, the first three individuals I interviewed had all had been employed at some point with organisations other than the NHS. The interviewees had worked in several different Trusts and Hospitals and negotiated portfolio contracts with many different managers. In fact, the second interviewee had not worked for the NHS for several years but had remained in a health related field and so was still on the register. This surprised me, but to my mind helped to overcome the fear that the study would be about leaving the NHS as opposed to about leaving organisations. In the event four participants, all NHS employees at some point in their careers, in fact, left an organisation other than the NHS to go portfolio.[1] My concern about the NHS as a connecting factor which could narrow the research unnecessarily proved unfounded. Furthermore the NHS is clearly not a single monolithic employer and participants attested to a wealth of diverse working experience within it. While there were some common threads in the stories there was sufficient variety in organisational background and career paths to provide rich data on a wide span of career experiences.

I decided then to limit the research sample to those who had some working connection with the NHS, even if not their last employer, and who had continued to be linked to it in some way once they had gone "portfolio". This decision allowed for some connection between the participants but was not unnecessarily restrictive in generating a sample of portfolio workers. The NHS then became a connecting variable, sometimes tenuous and short lived and sometimes the very focus of an individuals career as employee and as independent.

5.2.2.1.3. Characteristics of NHS relevant to this study. Although this is not an NHS case study it is important to set out why the connection to the NHS was seen as valid and interesting.

> 1. the NHS is an example of an organisation which was perceived (not least by many of these participants to have offered a "job for life" approach to career development;

> 2. in common with most of the public sector (Storey 1995: 40) it has been subject to specific challenges to working practices, in particular the imposition

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[1]Two people left large consultancy companies and two others left large public sector organisations

of a more free-market, contract - based culture, arguably in direct opposition to some long held beliefs about the nature and social purpose of the organisation. This may well have impacted on individuals attitudes towards the organisation, of which more below. Furthermore organisational restructuring has affected managerial opportunities (adversely for some and offering increased opportunities for others). Appendix 1 outlines the relevant recent legislative and policy changes in the NHS. The issue of changing organisational structure and values discussed in chapter 2 in relation to the public sector ethos and enterprise in government may prove significant;

3. The NHS has offered previously well defined career paths and the organisation has expressed its interest in considering how appropriate they are for changing circumstances. (IHSM, 1994; Barker and Perkins 1993).

The various decisions described resulted in a research sample of 25 people, 8 men and 17 women, all ex managers of the NHS (and all except 2 - whose situation will be discussed below) not on any full time employment contract at the time of the interview.

5.2.2.1.4. Composing the sample. The initial sample of 12 were all women on relatively high grades (or previously on those grades) and most were from the South East of England. I was concerned then to identify more male participants (who proved much more elusive than women for reasons I cannot identify with any certainty); people who were less elevated within the organisation but nonetheless defined themselves as managers and had some managerial responsibility for staff or function. I was also keen to diminish any South East effect by seeking participants from elsewhere in the country (in the event 14 participants were from the south broadly and the remainder from Yorkshire, the North East and Derbyshire). I was also interested to note at one point that the sample was too heavily weighted to those over 40 so I took steps to find younger participants.

The initial sample of 12 people snowballed as some of these participants suggested other people to interview and so on. In all nine participants were identified this way. A further five were provided by colleagues and friends familiar with the research. After 25 interviews, which had taken place and been analysed in stages over 20 months, in an

ongoing and iterative manner, I felt that I was uncovering no significant new information (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and had reached an acceptable saturation point (Douglas, 1985). The participants will be introduced in more detail in 5.4 below.

5.2.3. Research method: the qualitative interview

As mentioned above the research method used was the in-depth interview. My reasons for using interviews centred around their flexibility in allowing issues to be raised that were judged important by both the researcher and the participant. The aim was to generate an account of the individuals career story focusing on the transition out of organisational employment and into portfolio work. I wanted to explore what was most meaningful to them about this process, why they did it, what they saw as the implications and the meaning it had for them. One to one interviews were clearly the most appropriate method available to my mind and the one most likely to generate the data required, (notwithstanding the remarks above about the situated and textual nature of interview accounts). Kvale (1983) describes the qualitative interview as:

"an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomenon."

As such it describe the requirements of this study. King suggest that such interviews have a number of characteristics: a low degree of structure imposed by the researcher; a preponderance of open questions and a focus of specific situations and sequences in the world of the interviewee rather than abstractions and general opinions (1994:15).

Having decided that interviews were the key methodology to use, I reviewed additional choices. Participant observation was covered to some extent by my own involvement in this way of working. Other methodologies appeared to present more constraints on data collection than opportunities. As the field of new careers is inadequately mapped I did not think it appropriate to devise any other data collection method which relied on pre-definitions established by the researcher. I also wanted to be able to direct detailed attention to the accounts of the interviewees.

5.2.3.1. The Interview process

All the interviews took place in a location nominated by the interviewee. Fourteen interviews were in people's home which, in fact, reflected the centrality of the home in the portfolio work context. Although almost half of the interviews were in participants homes, the first such interview was the fifth one I conducted. I was struck by the informality and how conducive that was to relaxing into an interview centred around an individual's history and interpretations. This fifth interview also coincided with increasing confidence in my questions and my role of researcher: it was a significant point in allowing the interviewee to tell their story in a way which I outline below.

Meeting someone in their home has an intimate quality. You are the guest and they are in control of their own comfort in the interview. On all occasions and interviewing men and women, it was a positive, pleasurable experience. I can reflect back on enjoyable hours in gardens, conservatories, balconies, in comfortable chairs in family lounges, being offered food and drink, tours of the garden and other manner of hospitality. The impression was of being treated as a friendly guest, rather than an obtrusive interviewer (Finch, 1994). The other locations were all acceptable for the purpose and varied: eight were in cafes, bars or hotels, for example in a select hotel lobby, in a less select bar, over Sunday lunch in a crowded cafe, twice in a canteen with one interview continuing in a car journey accompanying the interviewee to her next appointment. Two interviews were in the participants' employed work offices and one was in the office of a professional organisation. The interviews lasted between one and a half and three hours, typically just over two hours.

My aim was to set a relaxed tone and quickly establish rapport which, as an experienced interviewer, I was able to do in every case. Only one man was a fairly reluctant interviewee. Although he answered all the questions amiably, portfolio working had characterised all his working life and so his curiosity about it was perhaps less than it was for everyone else. I spent some time at the beginning of each interview explaining the research and their role in it and offering any clarification needed. Permission was always sought, and given, for the use of the tape recorder. At the end of the interviews I asked if there were any questions they think I should have asked which elicited some interesting responses. One woman, for exampl, suggested I ask people when and where they had been happiest and why. I did so in subsequent interviews and always got

interesting and reflective responses. Another woman's suggestion, which I also incorporated to good effect, was to ask people what advice they would give to a would-be portfolio worker.

I worked with the interview guide as discussed above but the style of the interviews evolved during the process. I would describe the interviews as focused (Fielding, 1993) by which I mean that they were about a specific topic and were informed by an interview guide but there were few pre-set questions. I felt free to phrase questions as I thought appropriate, to prompt and to follow up issues that interviewee raised which did not fit into the guide and to engage them in discussions about ideas surfaced in the literature and by other interviewees. They became, in effect "conversations with a purpose" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:79) but with the interviewees doing by far the most talking. At first, though, there was rather more structure to them as I sought to introduce themes as they were listed on the guide. I came to develop more confidence in the questions and my overall approach to be able to let go a little and allow the interview to take a less structured course as individuals told their story as they saw fit.

5.2.3.1.1. The narrative approach in the interview

For example, it had been my intention to start off with asking participants to talk about what they were doing now. But a couple of early interviewees specifically said that they would rather start at the beginning and work up to the present. For some people then, the construction of the narrative had great importance. In telling their story, they covered a great deal of ground, moving through themes that occurred to them, tracking back, becoming side-tracked and so on. My initial concerns centred on how I would be able to make sense of data presented in such a free flowing way. However, I quickly relaxed with this approach as early analysis showed me that it was yielding rich data not only about content but about the use of the narrative form. Such story telling was also consistent with the theoretical notion of constructing a coherent self narrative (Weick, 1995: Giddens, 1991).

I amended my approach subsequently by asking the participants whether they wanted to start at the beginning of the story- as they defined it - or in the present. Two thirds preferred the narrative form: it was as if interviewees needed to divest themselves of the chronology, tell that story from beginning to end and make sense of it as a whole before

being comfortable with taking it apart (Weick, 1995). Indeed as I will discuss below that reflected my approach to the data analysis. From myself as interviewer, active listening was all that was required at that stage. Typically, the story telling comprised at least half the interview: at times it was a beginning to end narrative; others time a more fragmented and less sequential story. We all appreciate the chance to talk about ourselves and this approach engaged the interviewees in the process, reduced researcher dominance and provided a level of pay back for their time and participation.

My role then was to prompt, follow up, ask questions which filled in what I saw as some of the blanks in their stories, and to cover the topics on the guide if they had not emerged naturally. In this way the interviews attended both to chronology and to theme. In telling the story the participants established its parameters, its basic time line and key events.

As Weick (1995:128) argues "stories posit a history for an outcome." He suggests that individuals have an attitude towards the outcome of that story - in this case they have gone portfolio and have a reaction to that - and "they search for an efficient causal chain capable of producing that feeling. Stories are inventions rather than discoveries" (p.128). For Weick, the sequence is the source of sense; hence how they chose to tell their story would form part of the analytical process. This was made explicit by some interviewees who commented on how helpful the process had been to them in terms of thinking through what they had done and why. At times it seemed to be of therapeutic value to some participants. Some were reflexively aware of the process of creating a career story. For example, one man asked if I wanted the C.V. version or the truth; a woman said she had already worked out how to account for this period on her C.V. it was a relief to tell the truth about it. As noted above, I make no claim to have unearth abiding and fundamental truths about the participants careers, but it is interesting that many felt some relief at giving what they were prepared to describe as a truthful account. Another interviewee (Gillian) was at pains early in the interview to stress that this was a planned move out of her organisational employment into portfolio work for career development only. Towards the end of the interview, after we had broken for a cup of tea, she began to tell me, quite unprompted, about her early life and how she felt her parents had had limited life chances and therefore it felt incumbent on her to live life to the full. What is more, some years ago she had had a serious health scare which had

caused some re-appraisal of life. Hence, it was useful to trace how she moved from the "official" line on her career decision to a more open and personally searching way of understanding it.

The emotional effect of retrospective analysis of one's own life was demonstrated by another participant who rang me after the interview to make sure I had not left with a negative impression of her. She had told me a story in which she described herself as "a brat" in her early career- selfishly pursuing her own hierarchical progression. She had come to look back negatively at what she had done as, in her words, she had since learned to become more humanist. Talking to her husband about the interview that evening had raised for both of them memories of their earlier life which generally did not surface in their conversation. She becomes a little embarrassed that she had revealed so much about what she once was like and wanted to know that I did not disapprove of her. The way she has constructed her past is not the way she wants to be judged in the present. What was most interesting of course was that she did not want to be judged by a cultural norm of the traditional bureaucratic career.

5.2.4. Data analysis

The data collection and analysis were iterative, mutually enhancing processes. The data collection was carried out over 20 months with tentative analysis of early interviews, feeding into subsequent ones and so on. The analysis process became more formal and this iterative relationship continued until the interviews were complete. Qualitative researchers have been accused of giving inadequate accounts of the process of analysis (Silverman, 1993) so I want to explore it in some detail here.

Each interview was taped and transcribed, a laborious process but worthwhile, not least for the development of familiarity with the data. As I transcribed I made notes in parentheses of anything at all that struck me as interesting, for example where the interviewees comments related to the literature, or diverged from it; where they provoked some response from me; where they agreed with or contradicted earlier interviewees. At first this analysis was intuitive and impressionistic, producing ideas and suggesting avenues to follow up in subsequent interviews. A basic set of categories for the data was beginning to emerge which built on and developed the original ideas encoded in the evolving interview guide. After I had completed about half the

interviews, I approached the analysis more systematically. I was aware that I had generated a huge amount of what seemed unwieldy data and the broad categories already emerging were in danger of becoming too crystallised too early. I sought a way to categorise and code the data which would maintain a dialectic between categories and ideas (Dey, 1993).

My preference was for a flexible template approach (Crabtree and Miller, 1992; King, 1998) which would build on the analysis already done and remain open to continual revision. See Appendix 5 for the initial template developed at the start of the analysis which was based on the interview topics as broad higher order codes and the various ideas which had emerged from the "informal" analysis to this point. For the detailed process of analysis there are several methods suggested in the literature (Dey, 1993: Miles and Huberman, 1984; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The choice I made was the NUD.IST software package for qualitative data analysis.

5.2.4.1. Computers in Qualitative data analysis

The use of computers in qualitative data analysis is, of course, a recent phenomenon. A variety of packages have become available over the last 5 years or so which are marketed on their speed and efficiency in handling large amounts of data and assisting theory building by the process of asking of the data various types of *what-if?* and *I wonder whether?* questions. They build on the manual methods such as text coding, and categorising, cutting and pasting and editing. The computer can store data of various types, the results of all manner of categorisations and questions, retrieve data in an instant, merge, copy or rearrange it. It can hold references to text, speakers, lines of data, record any changes made to categorisations or documents, memos that the researcher creates about the data etc., thus providing a sort of audit trail through the process of analysis (QSR. NUD.IST, 1995). It can search and interrogate huge amounts of data looking for specific words and phrases or their synonyms or seeking links and exclusions within the texts. Hence computer usage can be theoretically driven offering great scope for comparisons and checking out emerging ideas about the data.

While the speed and efficiency of the packages is applauded by most commentators (Dey, 1993; Silverman, 1993) computer use is not without its problems. As Richards (1994) comments it can have dramatic implications "from unacceptable restrictions on

analysis to unexpected opening out of possibilities" (p445). At an epistemological level some social scientists (see Dey 1993) take issue with the whole analytical approach of data fragmentation which is encouraged by the ability of the packages to break down and rearrange data bits: the concern is that the whole is thereby lost. However, any method, computer or otherwise, which involves some "cutting and pasting" of the text needs to address the issue of preserving the integrity of the texts so analysed. As Dey (1993) suggests this criticism flows more from the concerns of epistemological rivalry than computer use per se. Richards (1994) attempts to answer this criticism with a spirited defence of the method of code and retrieve in theory building. She refutes that this is a problem in the hands of a sensitive researcher as the very process of selecting and categorising text is about the researcher deciding what is meaningful and how and why. Likewise Dey (1993) suggests that the processes of being able to explore, and record links in the data and store such insights as extra data to be further explored mitigates the issue of fragmentation.

5.2.4.1.1. Using NUD.IST. Initially I found the arguments in favour of the NUD. IST system persuasive. Following the advice in the handbook for use, I already had an initial list of categories which could be used to begin the coding of the data. The process starts with the first transcript which the researcher works through line by line, using the category list as a guide, but also creating new categories and assigning bits of data to them. With the next transcript, the same process is followed but additional categories may be suggested or the existing ones challenged and changed. The idea is then to go back to the first transcripts and re-code using the new categories that have emerged. This constant comparative method continues, progressively focusing (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) until all the transcripts have been fully coded.

The system certainly calls for systematic and detailed reading of the texts; it is fast and flexible. However, some of the problems raised about computer use proved salient to me. As I shall go on to describe, I used NUD.IST initially, moved back to manual coding and later returned to the computer package. The following description of how the data analysis unfolded explains those decisions and accounts for the development of the analytical approach.

As Monica was the first interview I conducted, hers was the first transcript I analysed. I found the majority of codes I had identified in the initial template to be salient, although not always specified correctly, but within the first few lines of Monica's transcript I identified several other codes. She starts off by talking about her (mixed) portfolio and insists that it is legitimate for her to work this way as all parts of the portfolio hang together. Hence a new category of "legitimacy of portfolio" was suggested. Indeed this category proved useful in several subsequent texts as certain individuals talked in the same way as Monica. However, another interviewee, Helen, talked about how she enjoyed the mix and would do anything for money. I did not code this response under legitimacy, but rather under the "fun" of portfolio. Later it became more apparent to me that the interesting issue was how individuals talked about their portfolios and it was possible that I would have lost this interesting discrepant attitude that Helen displayed had I not returned later to the coding to review my categories.

Monica also talked about her dual career marriage and the significance of that, for which I created a category, and she went on to talk about the difficulties of combining motherhood and career because of organisational attitude to it. Again new categories were created but later, I came to feel that the interesting issues were about how individuals experience difficulties operating outside the strongly felt norms of the traditional career, rather than simply about family matters in themselves. It became clear to me that participants had a strong view of the scripts and norms of the traditional career, even if they did not always follow it. Some felt distinct sanctions when they broke its "rules." Eventually, a category was developed to incorporate all manner of instances when an individual felt that they had broken the norms of the traditional career.

On the one hand, the data soon began to fragment into smaller and smaller categories. For example I had derived very many categories about how individuals were talking about their personal qualities and the numerous insecurities they felt about portfolio working. The opposite problem was that certain categories soon became huge and unwieldy. For example, I created a category about previous career and another about career identity. In a sense they became convenient "bins" (Miles and Huberman, 1984) for data that appeared to defy coding, so idiosyncratic did it appear in the early stages.

I began to understand the criticism directed at computer based coding packages. Because of the mechanical nature of the task of coding, at times it did substitute for searching thought about the data. The categories actually became fixed after several documents were coded, not so much because they were necessarily correct but because of the sheer keyboard labour involved in moving back through the documents to recode. Because the categories and sub categories could be created with ease and because data could easily be assigned to several categories, the temptation was to assign large amounts of data to several categories and simultaneously to create ever more minor categories. I was also concerned that instead of reflecting on disconfirming and discrepant data and what might be significant, I tended to create another category. Of course, these problems could afflict a manual approach to coding; the significance of the computer is that the ease and speed of it, in all likelihood, exacerbate the effect.

However, I also had more fundamental reservations about this analytical method. I realised that I had indeed lost sight of the whole picture of the accounts. The way that stories were unfolding was lost in fragmentation that had happened before \I was familiar with the "big picture". I also had been keen to consider the scripts on which individuals seemed to be drawing but such permeating themes were lost in the categorisation. I attempted to remedy that by, for example, searching on words such as security and stability for old careers and autonomy and freedom for new careers (a swift and relatively procedure with the software package). What this did was to create further huge categories where the data "bits" were presented out of context of the developing story.

I decided to abandon NUD.IST, at least temporarily, and returned to reading and rereading the transcripts, The task at this stage was to immerse myself again in the data by noting down new categories and revisiting the existing ones, marking themes, looking for interpretative schemes, following up hunches, ideas from participants, reflecting on apparently discrepant data and drawing links between emerging categories. It seemed to me that the research questions as broadly outlined in chapter 4.1 were still the right ones, but the way the data had been analysed thus far did not facilitate answering them. I identified three more specific tasks that needed to be done which I will outline below with examples of how they assisted the evolution of the categories and hence the approach to answering the questions.

1. to look at each transcript to see how the story was being told.

In this way I came to see that some participants had clearly needed to build up a story from the beginning (and it was interesting to note what they identified as the beginning: many started part way through their working life); others told the story in a series of flashbacks and yet others were more inclined to focus on the present and had to be prompted to discuss previous career issues. I noted in some stories (as with Gillian discussed above) that an "official" (CV type, Miller and Morgan, 1993) tale was told before the individual felt comfortable enough to share alternative interpretations. Other participants, e.g. Steve were keen to develop a "no nonsense" approach right from the outset and acknowledge that their story could be told in several ways.

By noting down these insights as memos which could then be analysed along with the rest of the data, I recaptured the notion of career a developing narrative and became more familiar with how each individuals told their story.

2. to identity interpretative schemes including discourses within the transcripts.

What I was seeking was not one true version of events but an examination of the ways in which certain sets of interpretations constructed and warranted versions of events (Wooffitt, 1993). Using discourse as an analytical tool is the subject of much debate as discussed in the last chapter, not least because of the numerous meanings attaching to the concept of discourse and discourse analysis (Burman and Parker, 1993; Fairclough, 1994). Hence the notion of identifying interpretative schemes becomes ever more complex. It was fruitful, though to search for what Gilbert and Mulkay (1983) call "repertoires" - the recurrence of certain words, phrases, rhetorical devices, like formulaic phrases (Phillips, 1996).

In the last chapter, I noted some ways in which the discourses of traditional and new careers could be identified by use of certain such repertoires as well as reference to certain ways of behaving and looked to find them in individual accounts, as well as looking to see how their use of such repertoires varied, related, evolved and shifted within the interview. Variability was found in the accounts, with individuals drawing on a number of such interpretative schemes to explain this transition (Potter and Wetherall, 1987; Billig, 1988). Several people indicted that once they had been attached to the traditional career but they had come to reject that "socialisation" and begun to develop

different ways to view their career which focused on autonomy, freedom and creativity, as the discourse of new careers suggests.

While I had ideas about the kinds of schemes and discourses I expected to find in the transcripts, I did not want to close down, too prematurely, analysis of other ways in which individuals might be making sense of their situation. Other common repertoires were also apparent in the data. For example, I became increasingly aware that many participants were understanding their career before and after the transition, not so much in relation to the discourses of old and new careers, but in terms of a personal value based orientation towards public service. Hence, they talked of values, of integrity, of serving clients, of exercising influence on behalf of the disadvantaged, trying to "make a blasted difference" as Andrew, one participant, put it, in their work. Another evident discourse (although less apparent in most interviews) was about changing lifestyle to accommodate balance between home, work and leisure, even if that meant some shift in their material aspirations; others talked in terms associated with Kanter's view of the professional (see next section below) about their skills, expertise, national reputation etc. In this way other specific categories were suggested as were the words and phrases to look out for across all categories

3. to apply extant models in the literature as sensitising devices to approach the data analysis.
While various ideas and models from the literature had been influential in the development of the research questions, I had not yet attempted to analyse the data in any systematic way with them in mind. Hence, the third task at this stage of developing a thematic analysis of the data was to consider the application of certain models. Here I will give three examples.

In 3.3 I identified the Granger model which purported to theorise the move from employment to self employment. They identified the category of refugee to indicate those who had been made redundant or had lost their job for other labour market factors. Setting up a sort of dialogue between their model and the data enabled me to explore in more detail how people were accounting for the move out of employment. The model did not do justice to this data, primarily because it obscured the reluctance of many people to enter portfolio work, even though it was a voluntary decision (at least in that

they had not been made redundant). It seemed that from my data that the area to focus on was the interaction of push and pull factors which seemed to have resulted in an analytically interesting group of "reluctant independents" (Kanter, 1989; Handy, 1994).

A second example was Kanter's (1989) notion of a shift from bureaucratic to professional and entrepreneurial forms which I had already begun to identify (as did Cohen, 1997), more as discourse than the concrete forms that Kanter implies. What I found was that the distinction between professional and entrepreneurial did not hold with this data, as people were in business for themselves (and thus in Kanter's view acting entrepreneurially) although they had little to say about that: what was significant, and troubling to many, was that the product they were selling was themselves and their (professional skills). In this way the category of "the product is myself" was suggested along with an indication that I should look more closely at how they identified their professional skills and their apparent reluctance to identify themselves as self employed. I also explored the use of DeFillippi and Arthur's (1996) model about the three competencies for "new careers" knowing how, knowing whom and knowing why. Examining my data in this light it became very evident to me that I had obscured what should be higher order categories within a number of lower order categories in the template (King, 1998). Hence, the notion of training and development, which is central to discourse on new careers had been fragmented in my data. Looking again at the transcripts, I could identify, in many, the gap between high hopes for training and development in portfolio work but relatively little evidence of such action. This insight appeared to have much analytical potential and eventually resulted in the splicing of a number of categories (Dey, 1993) [2] to create a high order code for know why: training and development. A similar issue arose with the notion of social networks (know whom).

I also reviewed how I was categorising know why (identity) and split and spliced categories to make it more prominent in the analysis. I wanted to look at identity before and after the transition (or how individuals were making sense of it in retrospect) so I created one major category to focus on the identity issues involved with going portfolio

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[2] Dey (1993) talks about how categories, once created can be *split* i e. refined by sub-division and *spliced* i.e. woven together for greater integration. While he talks of this process happening after initial categorisation, I found that the two processes evolved interactively.

(Mirvis and Hall, 1996) and brought together how individuals talked about identity across all of their career.

I was still carrying out interviews at this stage and when transcribing them I would return to earlier transcripts, comparing and contrasting them and gradually built up a rich and detailed picture of links, common themes, points of divergence, and how they matched or diverged from the theoretical models I had identified as potentially useful and from those developing theoretical ideas grounded in the data.

When I had a detailed picture of both the content and form of each transcript; when I could look at a fragment of text, know who said it and in what context, I returned to NUD.IST. I used it to gather together and interrogate the data swiftly and comprehensively to enable me to answer specific research questions and consider the applicability of the developing theory. NUD.IST allowed for swift re-categorisation and for further refinement of the categories by the process of splitting and splicing. The categories became more clearly defined and more exclusive, although given the complexity of gathering data on individual's life stores (Jones, 1983), there was overlap between categories. It was never my intention to assign data to one category only; rather I adopted a parallel coding approach (King, 1998) to ensure that data was coded in all relevant categories so as not to miss both confirming and disconfirming data. During the remainder of the analysis the template evolved (see Appendix 6) which served as the basis for coding the remaining transcripts with fewer revisions.

Once coded in this way, it is the categories which become the medium for analysis rather than the raw data, so the final steps involve seeking out the relations between the categories (again this is not simply a linear process as this activity has been happening all through the development of the template). Looking for links within these categories, I applied both a career story perspective, considering how certain issues developed within the categories (e.g. I found that some individuals had moved from using the traditional career repertoires to an explicit rejection of it) and a thematic perspective looking for the recurrence of certain repertoires within and between categories. NUD.IST also allowed for swift links to be made. For example, I examined how people who had been late entrants to the NHS were talking about the public sector ethos as opposed to how long term NHS servers talked about it. I examined those who had

undertaken training as a portfolio worker and could compare quickly to how they had talked about training in their previous career. I reviewed the use of traditional career discourse in the ways in which individuals talked about their portfolios and so on. Looking at how individuals drew on skills gained in organisations *and* contacts from those organisations, Cooper's (1981) concept of the "incubator organisation" became relevant. Hence I attended to both a detailed and relational analysis of the data.

5.3. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The means of assessing these issues is contingent on method but no less important in qualitative research (Silverman, 1993).

5.3.1. Reliability

In the qualitative context reliability does not depend on proving that another researcher would have elicited the same data (King, 1994), rather it is about means of ensuring that the researcher has been true to the data generated. King discusses means of reducing interviewer bias[3] by explicitly recognising, as I did, one's own preconceptions and allowing oneself, as again I was, to be surprised by the data (e.g. I had expected more people to feel a strong disinclination to return to their ex- employer; that people would have given more consideration to the external labour market; that they would have been more proactive about training and development).

Inter-rater comparison is also judged a useful tool, although not always available to the solitary PhD researcher I had some access to this in a seminar with other PhD researchers when my coding criteria were analysed in some detail by the group with reference to one transcript. I was called on to justify my codes and benefited from the ideas expressed by colleagues.

As the data was collected over a relatively extended period I was also able to check out with participants if my tentative and developing ideas about data already collected were idiosyncratic or more widely shared and if terms in use in the interview had shared

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[3] I find it interesting that both positivistic and interpretivist studies are at pains to minimise any notion of interviewer bias, although other perspectives, for example in feminist research, would frame the issue less in terms of bias than explicitly recognising the inevitable role that the researcher plays.

meanings. In this way the interview guide and analytical categories were regularly checked and developed as the process unfolded. The data was also documented through the transcription of each interview.

5.3.2. Validity

In this research, I was not seeking to uncover and prove a truth, I was looking at the process of making sense of transition within a career and life. Such a move is not exhausted by one interpretative scheme (Weick, 1995). Many of the assumptions about what constitutes validity in more quantitative research threaten the very basis on which qualitative research proceeds (Silverman, 1993:151). Nevertheless it is reasonable to answer questions about the grounds on which I claim this research to be valid, that I have a warrant for my inferences (Fielding and Fielding, 1986).

Silverman draws on Hammersley (1990) to suggest that the key to validity in qualitative research is in convincing reader that we have produced plausible and credible accounts from the evidence gathered. (1993:155). As the process took place over an extended period some measure of respondent validation happened quite naturally as tentative ideas emerging from early interviews were discussed with subsequent interviewees. I considered respondent validation towards the end of the analysis process and contacted four participants. While it was very interesting to talk to them, and in they were interested in, and supportive of, the ideas generated, I believe that this process raised more questions than it answered. For one thing, it generated more data that I was not in a position to systematically analyse. Further more as several authors point out (Silverman, 1993; Bryman, 1988) any such feedback has no more warranted status as validation or refutation than any other. I also discussed the findings with two of the original pilot interviewees and once again found the process interesting but not necessarily confirming.

One method that I found useful to enhance validity was the critical and searching analysis of the discrepant and disconfirming data and the constant comparative method of analysing that the NUD.IST permits.

5.4. REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The initial questions were broadly conceived and did not change significantly during the process of analysis; rather they were augmented and refined as set out below:

1. What was the initial career pattern and permeating interpretative schemes?

how does that link to changing perceptions of career now?

2. How can the move to portfolio work be understood?

What were the drivers to portfolio working?

Why leave?

Why portfolio?

Why not another job?

3. Is the concept of portfolio work meaningful to participants?

What was the pattern of work and what are the implications of working portfolio?

4. How is portfolio work experienced?

What are the highs, lows and significant features of portfolio working?

How is training and development experienced

How are social networks relevant?

How does this way of work differ from organisational employment

5. What is the new relationship with the organisation?

Is there any scope for mutual approach to training and development?

6. How are they now construing career?

What scripts do they draw on to fashion their portfolio career? Are they pioneers or following more established paths?

7. What do they understand now by career success?

What are their future plans?

The data is presented in three parts. Part 1 looks to the career up to the point of leaving organisational employment, attending to the question about drivers to portfolio work and introducing data about construction of career. Part 2 concentrates on the experience of portfolio working. In chapter 8, it focuses on how the portfolio is composed and how participants make sense of that. Chapter 9 is divided up according to the DeFillippi and

Bird (1996) into their experience of training and development (know how); social networks (know whom) and implications for developing identity (know why). These chapters thus attend to questions about the meaning and experience of portfolio working and about patterns of portfolio working. The questions about relationship with employer are addressed in 9.2 which deals with social issues. Part 3 considers both future plans and reviews how notions of career, career identity and career success had evolved.

5.5. INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

Appendix 7 contains pen portraits of the participants highlighting the key transitions they made in their careers and the other factors they raised as relevant. Table 2. provides an overall summary of the individuals and their main jobs up to the point they left; their portfolios - (some further explanation is given below, particularly about those marked with an asterix) and the length of time they have spent in portfolio work.

NAME	BACKGROUND	PORTFOLIO	YEARS
Andrew	Nurse \ social worker \ trainer and manager and head hunted to national organisation	Training and development Consultancy with community emphasis	2
Anne	Financial Manager- private sector and then NHS	Community Health Job; Financial Management consultancy; Psychotherapy training	3 *
Brenda	Nurse - Nurse Manager- Regional Nursing Officer made redundant	Consultancy (small scale); Voluntary work- then returned to full-time employment	1 then returned to work *
Bridget	Late entry to NHS, Strategic Development Manager	Management consultancy in NHS and private sector	4

Carole	NHS management trainee-NHS manager-career break- consultancy company	Health Sector research job; Management Consultancy; Non-executive director of Health Authority; Parent	8
Claire	Radiographer-manager-Health Education	Organisation Development Contract with University; Parent; Developing other work	1+
David	Two public sector organisations- NHS as workforce planning manager	Management Consultancy; Writing	1+
Gillian	Management trainee NHS-Chief Executive of NHS Trust	Management Consultancy; Executive Coaching	2
Geoff	Engineer - management services NHS- Local Government Personnel Manager	Personnel and Training Consultancy partnership; Partner in organisation selling HR systems	4
Helen	Dietician- management-Quality Assurance Manager for NHS Hospital	Dietetics; Research; Lecturing; Writing	2
Henry	Engineer - NHS - Regional Workforce Planning-Manager- made redundant	School Inspection; School Governor; Interim Management; Secretary of professional organisation (unpaid) Sports coach(unpaid)	3
Jim	Social work - Training and Development Management in Local Government and NHS	Training and Development Consultant including association with two companies; Lecturer	4+

Joan	Research - Social Services - NHS Strategic Development Manager	Management Consultancy; Training; Coaching	2
John	Engineer - training and development - NHS Training Manager- running in-house careers trading agency	Career Counselling; Management Consultancy; Property letting; Computer repair; Software design	6
Judith	Nurse -nurse manager - Chief Executive of NHS Trust	Management Consultancy; Research	1+
Julia	Nurse-nurse manager- marketing-consultant	Partner with husband in Management and Health Consultancy company	2
Laura	NHS management - consultancy- freelance- NHS management- freelance -paid consultancy company	Previously Management Consultant on two occasions- now just embarking on it again	2+ years in total over two occasions
Liz	Management trainee with NHS, NHS General Manager, - job share research post Personnel Manager -left after job share refused	Part-time post In University; Lecturing; Masters Student; Consultancy; and Parent and then returned to permanent work in NHS	1+ then returned to work *
Margaret	Management Trainee NHS- NHS manager-Consultancy company- joint venture with public sector company	Management consultancy; School Governor; Parent	3

Monica	Management Trainee -NHS Manager- left after job share refused	Initially private sector retail job, personnel consultancy to small firms and shop ownership. Now job share senior post; Partner in Management Consultancy; writer	10
Robert	IT professional and consultant, mainly self employed	IT consultancy in NHS and other clients; Voluntary work with environmental group, now going to be employed by them	3
Steve	Chemist-Teacher- Operations Research and Manager in NCB and NHS	Three companies- two as sole trader offering HR consultancy and software development; Partner in third company on HR and Training	4
Suzanne	Educational Psychologist - Training Manager in NHS	Management Consultancy; Research	3+
Val	Nurse- NHS manager- Community Development- via secondments abroad and work outside NHS	Consultancy on management development and training; Research; community activities (unpaid); writing	1
Wendy	Management trainee- deputy personnel manager NHS	Association with established one man consultancy company	just starting

Table 2. previous employment and current portfolio

It will be noted that I have included parenting and community work in some portfolios. The justification will be developed in more detail in Chapter 8; suffice to say here that this is how individuals describe their own portfolios and such description is in line with

the view of Handy (1989) on portfolio work and other career theorists (e.g. Mirvis and Hall, 1999; Fletcher and Bailyn, 1996) on changing careers.

I have included two participants - Liz and Brenda - who had both returned to work by the time of the interviews. Both were suggested to me by another participant (who, in fact met my criteria and so I assumed she understood them) and I had arranged to interview them before I knew of their employment status. Nevertheless I defend their inclusion in the study because both had made some attempts at portfolio work before finding a permanent job and hence have useful insights from viewpoint of non converts to this way of working. Anne has also returned to work having spent two years on portfolio work. However, she has returned to a job where she can determine her own hours, - and she never works more than 37 (considerably less than in her last job), and her salary and status are lower than that which she left and- most crucially- she retains a portfolio of other activities, taking a very pragmatic approach to her job.

It can be seen from this table that participants have had a wide range of careers which will be further explored in the next chapter. What follows now is aggregated data about the participants.
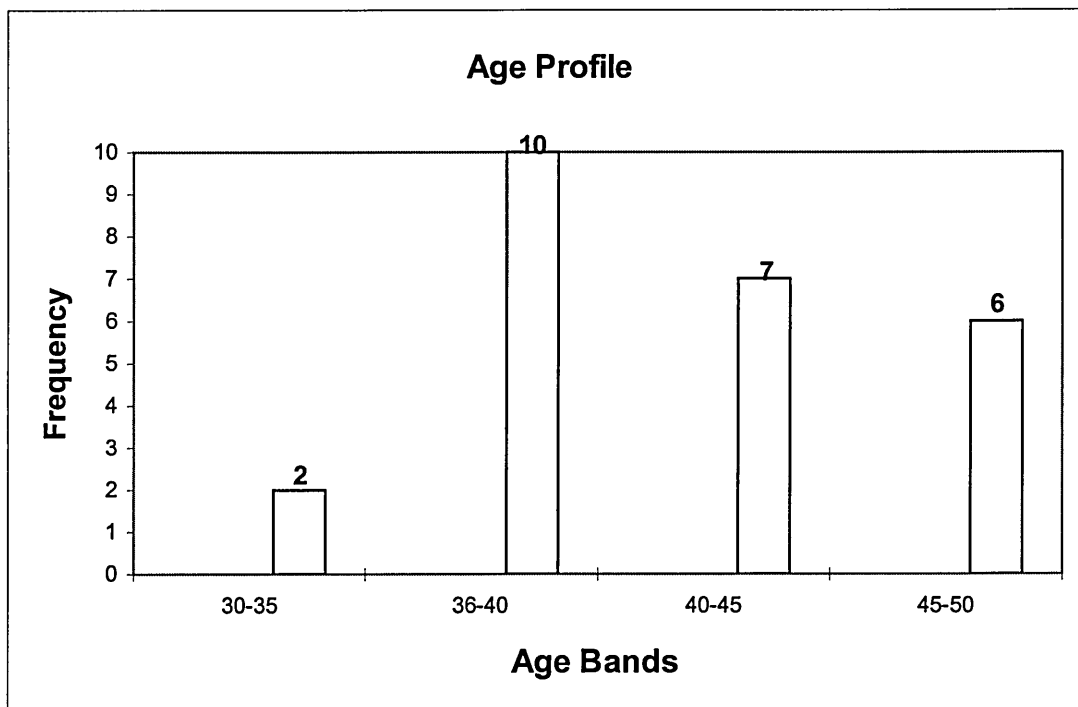
Table 3. Age Profile

The age profile shows a mix across the age bands within the parameters of the sample (30-50 years).
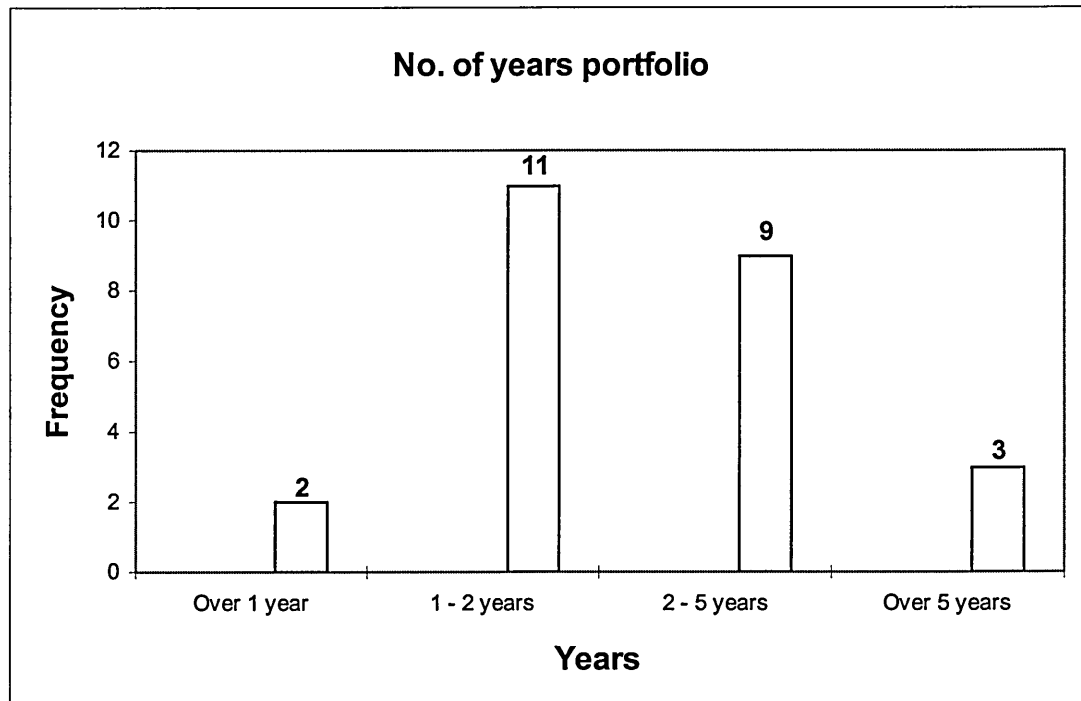
Table 4. No. of years portfolio

Years portfolio shows that the majority of people have been working this way for between 2-5 years, therefore had some time to reflect on the experience and passed immediate crises when they might return to work.
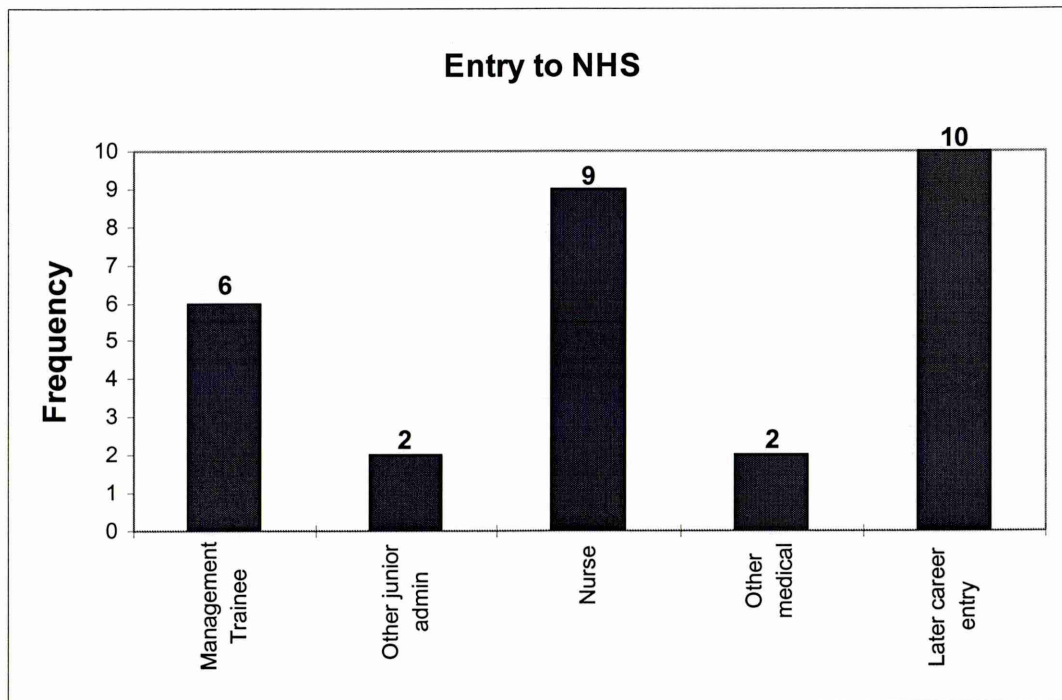
Table 5. Entry to NHS

Entry to the NHS is interesting as so many people entered later in their career, having already worked for at least one other organisation. However, the majority of people began their career in the NHS either in administration or in nursing or other profession allied to medicine. Those who entered as management trainees were on a managed career path initially with a reasonable expectation of making it to the top.
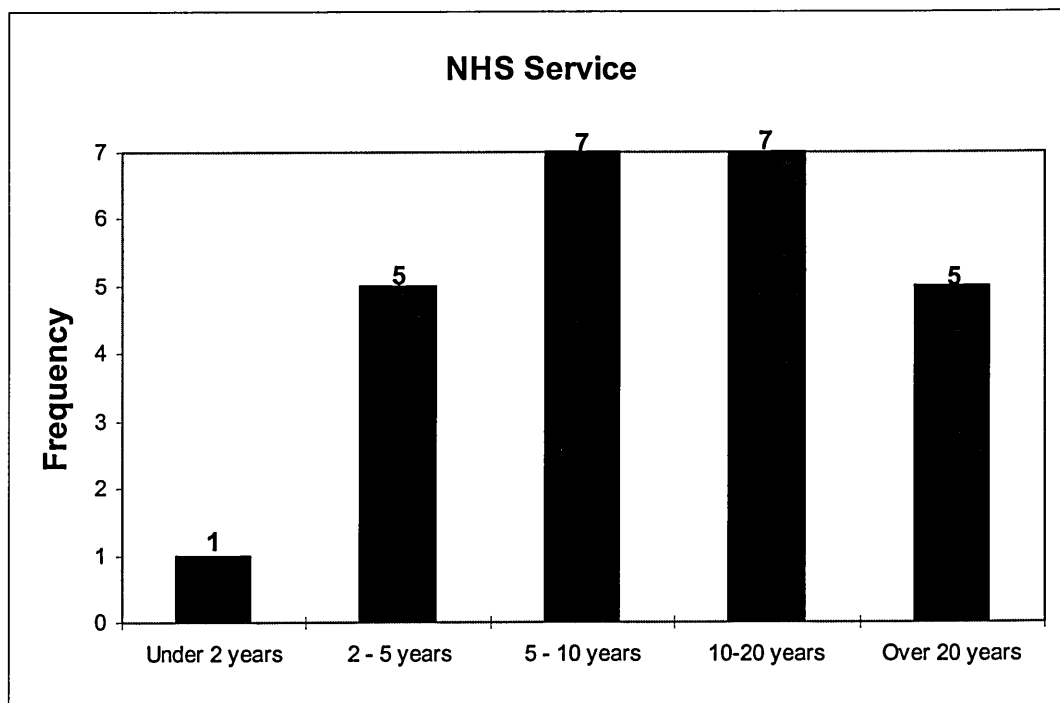
NHS Service

Table 6. NHS Service

This table gives a flavour of the extent to which the participants were career NHS people. As the majority had less than ten years service, it seems that the evidence of Inkson and Coe (1995) about regular movement in managerial careers may be relevant.
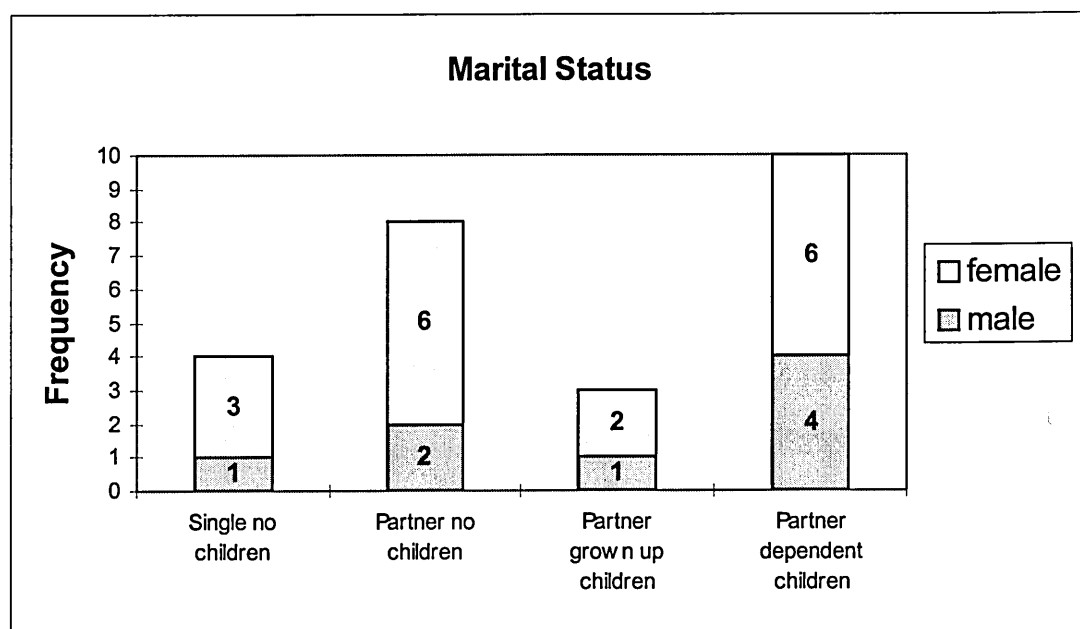
Marital Status

Table 7. Marital Status

This information is to acknowledge people's domestic circumstances which might be relevant the decision to be or remain portfolio. All the married people (men and women)

had working partners and it is interesting that so few of the women have dependent children which reflects other studies on women who attain traditional career success.
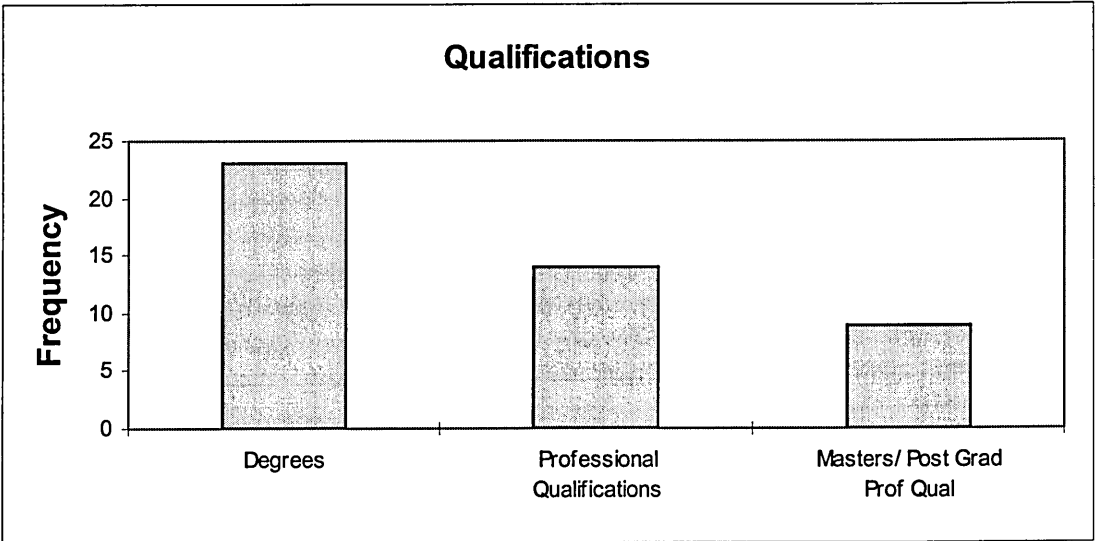
Table 8. Qualifications

Hence they are well qualified and educated group, although only 7 of them have qualifications directly relating to management i.e. DMS, MBA, Postgraduate Diploma in Human Resource Management (which confirms the general tendency for British managers to be un - credentialised in management). A further four people had attended the NHS own senior management development programme.

5.5. SUMMARY

This chapter has set out the rationale for the generation of a sample of 25 ex NHS managers who have been broadly profiled above and the methodology of in-depth qualitative interviews for the generation of data. Analysis focused on both the form and the content of the interview accounts in order to identify recurrent (and discrepant themes) and to take note of how the career stories unfolded.

PART ONE: CAREER UP TO ORGANISATIONAL EXIT

Part one of the analysis consists of Chapter 6: an overview of participants' careers and Chapter 7: leaving the organisation to go portfolio. Together, they explore the participants' careers up to the point of organisational exit. As such they deal with retrospective accounts of their careers and seek to consider the various ways in which they talk about their previous career. Chapter 6 focuses on part one of research question 1:

> "what are the initial career patterns and what interpretative schemes are relevant?"

In answering this question, it introduces data which will be further explored in Chapter 10 in order to answer the second part of the question:

> "how does that link to changing perceptions of career now?"

Chapter 7 considers research question 2 about the move to portfolio working.

Various models were explored in relation to this data at the analysis stage. Specifically, Driver's (1982) model about career concepts and Granger et al.'s (1995) model about the move to self employment will be critically examined here.

CHAPTER 6: AN OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS' CAREERS

This chapter seeks to understand the careers of the participants prior to the move to portfolio working. It begins by categorising participants according to their mode of entry to the NHS in order to highlight the diversity of career paths, and moves on to review their career patterns according to Driver's (1982) model of linear, steady state, spiral and transitory concepts. The chapter considers how participants themselves account for the various moves in their careers, looking at the range of approaches to career planning. The participants are broadly divided in this section into those whose career is organised primarily around linear movement and those who centre their career stories around unfolding interests or personal values but who, nonetheless experience linear movement.

6. 1. INTRODUCTION

The transition made by the participants in this research, out of organisational employment and into portfolio work is widely supposed to represent a distinct rupture in the careers of managers who have hitherto led organisationally bounded and predictable careers. This chapter examines the types of careers these individuals had before they moved out of organisational employment, seeking to explore to what extent they were linear, bounded and planned. This chapter does not claim to exhaustively cover all aspects of the individual's career as that was not the aim in the interviews. Rather, I was interested in both the broad patterns and the points of transition that they chose to relate.

In line with Nicholson and West (1988) contention that "career patterns exhibit many possible forms, varying considerably in their manifestations of continuity and discontinuity" (1989:189), there was diversity in the participants career paths which proved challenging to analyse systematically. I begin by sketching their career paths very broadly, grouping participants according to their entry to the NHS. I have chosen this method of categorisation as it emerges in the data as significant to the participants. Furthermore, it serves to highlight the diversity in their earlier careers. The categories should be read in conjunction with the more detailed pen portraits in Appendix 7.

6.1.1. Joined NHS on national management trainee scheme for graduates:

Gillian

Monica

Carole

Margaret

Liz

Wendy

The management training scheme is a fast track programme by which individuals early career moves are managed in order to give them a broad view of the organisation. Individuals on the scheme realistically aspire to Chief Executive posts. Within the NHS this scheme is often referred to as "the golden pathway"(IHSM, 1994). However, only Gillian attained the "endpoint" of Chief Executive; Wendy left in her early thirties, and while it was feasible that she would have reached the top, she did not except to do so. Margaret left voluntarily after only three years as she wished to gain broader experience. The other three women had children and found their careers interrupted. Monica left when the organisation refused to allow her to job-share; Carole took a career break and returned part-time to find that career opportunities were blocked. She left and moved to a consultancy company. Liz was made redundant from a part-time post but has since resumed a linear NHS career.

Gillian described herself as a general manager with no specialism and was concerned that she had become a "jack of all trades." Wendy, Liz and Monica had all specialised in Personnel Management, studying for the relevant qualification while in work, funded by the organisation.

6.1.2. Joined NHS in administrative capacity - not on traineeship

Laura

Bridget

Bridget entered the NHS in her thirties and proceeded to develop a managerial career by being prepared to take secondments and risky (in the view of her contemporaries) sideways moves. She was invited on to the GMTS (Thompson, 1993) the prestigious management scheme for senior managers. Although she did not have the early

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advantages of the graduate scheme she was poised for Chief Executive posts before she left. Laura was making similar progress initially but feeling her career to be stifled she moved out, thus setting in train a pattern of moves in and out of the NHS and in and out of self employment. She describes all the moves she made as rational and planned but rarely did her plans work out as she hoped. She considers that she was badly treated by NHS and other organisational managers and has come to see hierarchical progress as incompatible with personal integrity.

6.1.3. Started as nurse or other medical occupation

Julia

Judith

Andrew

Colleen

Brenda

Claire

Helen

The early careers of Claire, Julia, Helen and Judith and Brenda were similar, starting with gaining their professional qualifications and moving into managing their own function, prompted usually by the advice of others. Hence they moved into management although that was not an aspiration when their career started. Only Brenda finished her NHS career at the top (bar one rung which was the top national post) of the nurse management ladder. Judith made a deliberate move into general management and thus moved away from her nursing roots, with no regrets. In fact,as Julia and Judith both assert, a nursing background was generally seen as a hindrance in aspiring to general management. Claire and Julia both moved off this ladder for personal reasons - Julia because her marriage had broken down and she decided to pursue her career more vigorously; Claire because she relocated with her husband. They both went on to develop skills not directly related to their professional background. The careers of Andrew and Colleen were more eclectic as neither followed a career path in their profession(s). Rather, they pursued their own interests within the service seeking post of influence which, generally, also constituted promotions although that was not their expressed intent.

6.1.4. Late entry

Geoff: Engineering to Local Government to NHS management services for 12 years

Jim: Welfare rights to NHS Training for 10 years

Steve: Science research to Teaching to Operations Research in Public Sector to manpower planning in NHS for 6 years

John: Engineer to Training Board to large organisation in Training Role to NHS for 6 years as Training Manager and manager of in-house career service

Anne: Financial Management to NHS in similar role for 3 years

Robert: Information technology; as self employed and period in communal living to NHS as IT manager for 2 years

Henry: Engineer to NHS management for 22 years

David: From Personnel and marketing in two other public sector organisations to NHS as Workforce Planner for 8 years

It is more difficult to draw out trends within this diverse group but a couple are notable. One significant factor is that the majority of them (excluding David and Jim) started their careers in a specific occupation before moving to management. As such their paths are more in line with the managerial careers noted by Alban-Metcalfe and Nicholson (1984) who suggested that the most common route into management was in mid -career via an occupational specialism (the same point applies of course to the ex nurses and other medical occupations). For Henry, for example, the move was a deliberate exchange of professional roots for management; while John describes his path as a "*diagonal drift from the bench.*" Jim and David's career did not start with an occupational specialism, but rather, that was acquired after a period in more general administrative \ managerial and advisory capacities. Robert's path is different to that of all other participants as he has been self employed and resistant to notions of career path for the majority of his working life. Finally, it is interesting to note that all but one of the men are in this category.

For most of these participants, it was a positive choice to work in the NHS or at least the public sector. Anne, for example, wanted to escape the profit motive of the private sector where she had worked for over 25 years. For John and Henry it was a more pragmatic decision in that the NHS was where suitable opportunities arose.

6.2. CAREER PATTERNS- the Driver (1982) model

Seeking links between these categories, I sought to apply the typology suggested by Driver (1982) as a means of analysing overall patterns. I chose this influential model because it has been promoted recently as a means of ensuring a plural approach to organisational careers (Brousseau et al., 1996) and because Weick and Berlinger (1989) argue that its spiral and transitory patterns are the preferred career patterns of the future.

The *linear* concept in which a field is chosen early in life and a plan for upward movement developed and executed. This upward movement may be in an organisation or within a relevant reference group like a professional association.

The *transitory* concept in which no set field or job is ever chosen but there is regular movement between jobs with little or no upward progress.

The *spiral* concept in which one develop in a chosen field for a time and then moves on to another field which may or not be related to the last one.

The *steady state* concept in which a job or field is selected early and the individual stays it for life. There is no concept of movement except to higher income of professional skill (1982: 24-25).

6.2.1. The linear path

Contrary to the picture of steady managerial careers disrupted by organisational change, the ideal typical linear pattern is a minority career form for the participants in this study. Only Gillian, Bridget, Wendy had a linear career within one organisation and involving no radical change of function. This is not to say that the linear path is insignificant in other people's careers. Monica was happy on the linear path until the job share she requested was refused. Her brief foray into the private sector was then quickly followed

by portfolio work. Helen, for example, had 22 years in her profession, moving up the managerial ladder in it but remaining as a practitioner. She only moved off this path in the last two years of her organisational employment. Similarly, Anne developed a long career in financial management in the private sector before moving (in the same function) to the NHS. Henry made one move, out of engineering, early in his career, before developing a linear managerial career over 22 years in the NHS; Geoff moved out of engineering and then pursued a linear career over two public sector organisations.

For most participants, however, the amount of change in organisation and function is in line with Nicholson and West (1988) and Inkson and Coe's (1993) research which indicated regular movement. To my mind this interesting early finding guards against a stereotypical view of traditional careers.

6.2.2. Steady state - or expert

Only one person- Robert- has had a steady state career, as Driver (1982) describes it, all through his working life. He started as a IT specialist and has remained thus, mostly as self employed but with a short spell as an employed NHS manager. As the data above shows many participants started off in a steady state mode but subsequently changed direction, like Steve or John, or developed via a move into management, like Helen and Brenda. This category ignores the extent to which the development of career in some occupations unfolds within a linear structure (Evetts, 1992). Hence while the individuals may well be developing skill, there may also be a parallel movement up a hierarchy.

6.2.3. The spiral path

The majority of participants could be said to be more or less spiral in their career patterns. Some people had several loops to their spiral career: Steve who moved from science to teaching to operations research to work-force planning and management; John who started as an engineer, and began to develop skills and interests in training and development through work in three different organisations; Andrew who started as a nurse, became a social worker and moved into training and management; Julia who started as a nurse, became nurse manager, moved to consultancy, to marketing and into Information Technology. Others had many different jobs all within the NHS: e.g. Judith who started as a nurse, moved to nurse management and to general management. Others moved across the public sector, for example, Jim and David.

Some people's spirals were less complex than others as with Helen, Henry and Anne mentioned above. Given that there was only one spiral within their career they would not strictly fit Driver's typology. What interests me about those examples is that they point to the rather static base of Driver's typology. While he would assign people to one of four categories, these participants seem to indicate that one can move between them and that the categories themselves are dynamic and evolving.

Within this spiral category, the majority of participants have two key features in common. First, their careers unfolded, for the most part, within large and hierarchical organisations. Only one man- David- had a distinct quirk in his career, leaving organisational employment to pursue creative work, but later returning to the organisational world in order to keep his creativity separate from his work (an interesting perspective on the portfolio notion to be discussed further in Chapter 8).

Secondly, within the loops of each spiral, participants careers were generally upward: so while there may have been movement and change across employers and functions, they were still climbing in terms of salary, points on the organisation's pay scales, levels of responsibility and \ or increasingly prestigious job titles. Hence spirals or not, the precepts of the traditional career still had salience for the majority of these participants. The model below indicates the spiral, yet linear shape of the majority of participant's careers.
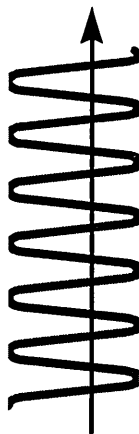
Figure 4. The advancing spiral career

6.2.4. Transitory patterns - not the way the story is told

No one has drifted in the way that Driver (1982) describes the transitory state: there is some consistency of type of work, organisation or linear movement within all their stories.

I recognise, as discussed in Chapter 5, that the very act of telling a career story tends to lead one to gloss over the quirks and stops and starts in a work history in order to develop a clear and apparently logical narrative (Nicholson and West, 1989; Barley, 1989; Giddens, 1991; Weick, 1995). I was alert to this issue in the analysis, examining the transcripts in detail for the ambiguities, consistencies and contradictions within their stories (Jones, 1983). Many participants were reflexively aware themselves that there were several ways in which they could present their story to me. For example, John admitted towards the end of the interview:

"I'm conscious that I have put a gloss on while I have been talking to you. I've smoothed out the edges a bit. It's about presenting myself. I'm not as confident about myself as other people have been about me so I have had to let myself be pushed and pulled by that I suppose." (John)

Others indicated right from the beginning that they knew they could choose to present a "CV version of events" (Miller and Morgan, 1993) to me or to tell it as they believe it actually was. Steve was frank from the start:

"Of course, if I was trying to impress you with my business empire for want of a better phrase, I wouldn't put it like that." (Steve)

However, even with the recognition that the story can be told in many ways, there were still no tales of transitory careers. Whether or not their stories were "true", even if that could be proved, is less important than their perceived need to tell a story which not only made sense but also to construct themselves as individuals more or less in control of their career. While it may well be that one person's tale of career spirals, might look to an observer (Collin and Watt, 1996) as transitory and drifting, that is not the subjective sense that these participants make of their careers. To drift and make no plans for career development is not a socially ratified way to approach careers: it is a more

maverick, not to say deviant, career form viewed objectively. Such career patterns have been largely ignored in career theory to date (Arthur et al., 1989). However, it is fascinating to now note how the transitory concept is being repackaged:

"People who intentionally pursue transitory careers often do not think of themselves as having careers. They are merely treating themselves to a fascinating smorgasbord of work experiences, seeking variety and independence" (Brousseau et al. 1996:57).

Here the authors imply a link with portfolio careers. These ideas will surface later in the study when participants experience of their portfolio career is discussed.

A general point to make is that the majority of participants are at pains to emphasise their success in their career to date. This is not surprising given the insecurity that many of them attest to about the status of their new employment context which is discussed in Chapter 8. In the interviews and reading through the transcripts I was struck by the descriptions of themselves in relation to their careers as the "first ever" or "the youngest", the fastest to achieve a certain status. They talked about the prizes they had won (e.g. manager of the year; trainee of the year); the leading edge ideas they had been associated with; the papers they had been invited to deliver at foreign conferences. Clearly it was important to them to establish that they had had successful careers prior to the move to portfolio working.

6.2.5. Career patterns reviewed

In summary then, I feel that Driver's model has limitations in explicating career patterns. It has been a useful exercise to look at each participant in the light of it, as certain issues have been clarified. While the analysis concurs with Nicholson's (1996) caution about assuming homogeneity in managerial careers it has also pointed out key links between participants. The centrality of large hierarchical organisations and upward movement within their careers has been demonstrated.

However, this type of modelling of career stories tells us very little about what motivations might lie behind the moves people made (Nicholson and West, 1989). The focus is on the objective features of a career as an observer might note them. Central to this study is a recognition that subjective and objective careers are mutually constitutive

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and interacting. Having looked at these objective features, I want to move on now to look how individuals account for them, exploring the relative importance that they attribute to agentic and structural forces in the unfolding of their career.

6.3. UNFOLDING CAREERS

Chapter 3.2. introduced the problematic concept of career planing, widely regarded as desirable but much less practised. Planning is generally equated with rational, goal directed activity but can also be seen as a "communion based" activity whereby the individual has dreams but holds them lightly (Marshall, 1989); or as emerging strategy (Watson and Harris, 1995) as the individual "exercises improvisational skill (Nicholson and West, 1989) on unfolding opportunities, threats and constraints. Hence the career proceeds with some planning and some "chance, luck and serendipity" (Evetts, 1992:9).

Participants in this study demonstrate several approaches to career planning, moving in between them at certain stages of their career. Broadly they fall into two main categories: those people who more or less planned for linear movement; those whose careers unfolded around personal value systems or professional interests.

6.3.1. Developing plans for career progress

Participants construct accounts of their careers in which various approaches were noted, varying between goal directed planning and more passively following an unfolding career path. I will deal with them all in turn below, recognising that they are indicative of how participants discuss their approach rather than hard and fast categories.

6.3.1.1. Advance planning

A few only of the participants assert that they planned their career moves years in advance and worked their way towards an end point. Henry exemplifies this approach, taking a cool look at his situation in his late thirties.

"I eventually realised I could get no further in that field. I knew I had done good and could see 3 sideways moves to pursue. I was planning it and went to work for the xxx Unit, I was one of a few drawn nationally. Really, I cut a niche and followed it. It was a

strange niche because in this type of job, you are never the expert... but I was on course, I wanted to end up in HQ and retire about 55 - 58. I had a plan."

As I will discuss in the next chapter, however, Henry's plans were scuppered as he was made compulsorily redundant by the organisation when he was forty nine. Plans, where they were laid in advance, did not always work out. Monica approached her early career with a five and a ten year plan only to have them over-turned when the organisation refused her request to job share. Liz planned her career ahead, although she did take some unexpected moves in response to opportunities. She was heading for the top however, and even planned her pregnancies, but she was also made redundant. Once the wounds of that had healed, she resumed her linear planning, and at the time of the interview was advancing according to her own schedule.

I include Laura in this section as she identifies herself as someone who tried to rationally plan her career. For example, she talks of one of her moves to of freelance work and back to the NHS in this way:

"I took quite a tough decision that, although I could get freelance work, my CV was rather short of operational experience, although I had it, I didn't have enough that would be sustainable for long term freelance work. So I decided to get more operational experience and go back in."

However, her plans have not worked out and she has come to doubt the applicability of logic and rationale in career planning and to move towards a more flexible approach:

"and that is very tough because I had been brought up and educated on the basis that rational planning wins the day and the answer is it doesn't... I think that is what is becoming clear to me as a planner, is that there aint a lot of planning. You have to be able to flexible."

These individuals were consciously motivated by moves up an organisational hierarchy, only revisiting their motivations when circumstances intervened.

6.3.1.2. Taking advantage of a path ahead

Other people talk less about conscious planning than making the most of a path that lay ahead of them. The NHS managerial scheme had appealed to Gillian as it seemed "quite sexy and fast track." When she realised where and how fast her career was going:

" I thought "crikey! and then I said, well, I can do this, I really can, so why not give it a go." (Gillian).

Gillian then has little to say about how that career developed until she reached the Chief Executive post. Wendy, also a management trainee starter, describes a similar process, but she feels that her career derailed when she was promoted (temporarily) too soon to too senior a post in which she coped but didn't thrive. This was a career risk too far: she would have been better off opting for the slow and steady progress implied in the managerial career route.

Bridget told of every move she made. No obvious path was ahead of her at first as she began her career on a junior administrative grade at age 30 with her mobility constrained by family responsibilities. She took secondments, covered posts on temporary bases, acted up and moved into jobs other colleagues thought were dead ends, all to improve her skill and broad base. She began to see a path open up. While she describes her career as unfolding haphazardly, she always had her eye on the prize of linear progress. Bridget dissociates herself to some extent with goal directed planning and in so doing has more in common with some of the other participants whose stories are detailed below. For her, it is as if she cannot help moving on as her childhood was spent on the move with a father in the RAF:

"so I absorb things quickly and observe a lot and try and take on board what is going on in a way that I expect people take a lot longer to do, so I have reached that absorption level very quickly and I am ready to achieve and I can feel the top of the bell curve tipping over to the other end and I just have to move on to something else. "

Other people describe their career as unfolding in stages, each requiring decisions as they were presented:

"I wasn't one of those people where if you said to me what will you be doing in 5 years time, I could tell you.. I didn't plan it in that sort of way, I went into jobs realised I was capable of doing them and realised I was capable of doing something bigger and almost better, when I say better I mean larger, and more challenging so I have gone one step at a time, if you like... so it was ... a nurse, specialising, a sister, specialising, nursing officer and then senior manager, then acute manager, regional experience and on to Chief Executive, so yes it was a steady climb, to the top." (Judith).

Hence, while denying any advance planning these participants move steadily up the pre-existing career ladder.

6.3.1.2. The career just happened

It is intriguing, I think, that people do describe their careers as if they just happened which, of course, rather belies the effort and anxiety of applying for jobs and attending interviews. Other participants talk of a "meteoric rise" that was not planned as such but unfolded as they realised it was becoming possible. Claire, for example, suggests that this is how she rose into a very senior position in a medical function very rapidly. Looking back now she sees that she was very career oriented - a *career brat* as she calls herself. At the time, it had all seemed very normal to her and not something to which she gave much thought. Claire's linear progress was halted when she relocated with her husband and even more so when she later had a child and went part-time. She found work in another sector of the NHS and progressed but never again felt a sense of professional pride. She came to realise that had been more of a motivator for her than linear progress.

Brenda tells a similar story of her relentless rise through the nursing ranks in which she left contemporaries far behind. She accounts for this rise by her willingness to relocate and live apart from her husband and yet she insists that she did not plan it all, but rather responded to job advertisements she saw and did not concern herself unduly with career planning. She proved in every upward move that she could do the job and so was happy to apply for another.

Joan also insists that she was not ambitious and talks of her career developing with minimum agentic input from herself:

"I was an assistant director for about 10 years or so and feeling very, well I had worked myself out of a job, basically and the job that was being developed was finance and I had a good finance man who was snapping at my heels. And at that time a Unit General Manager post in the NHS, became vacant and it was actually suggested to me that I might think about applying. and I was really taken aback, because it was a big huge jump up in responsibility, but then I had always done that,- this Assistant Director job was also huge jump up in responsibility. I had never planned it like that, I was never ambitious, so that is how I got the job in the NHS. "

Hence in some accounts there is distinct reluctance to associate one's career rise with rational, goal-directed activity. It may be that the script that individuals are following for progress in the linear career is internalised to the extent that they do not particularly note their own activities to make it happen. It is experienced as shocking when well laid plans, made in accordance with the "rules" for an unfolding linear career, do not work out.

More obvious to participants are the norms and sanctions for not following a linear career script, as Monica, Carole and Claire, for example, found when they interrupted their career paths. Although women's managerial career paths have been the subject of extensive discussion (e.g. Davidson and Burke, 1994), Marshall (1989) points out that where they deviate from the male norm they still remain tinged with failure.

6.3.1.3. Linear plans disrupted by family considerations

I have already mentioned that Monica and Liz encountered difficulties with their careers following the birth of their children. While Liz has since recovered her (full-time) career and Monica has made the transition happily to portfolio work (and incidentally now has a board level, job share post), Carole continues to mourn her disrupted plans. She works now in a leading NHS research company part-time and operates as a non-executive director. After taking a career break she returned part-time and found her career blocked; moving on to a consultancy company she was no more satisfied so she left on unpaid when her husband secured a temporary job in America. There she did research at a leading University. Despite this type of success in her career Carole remains wedded to the notion of linear success and yearns to return to full-time work. For her the issue is twofold: partly structural in that organisation do not take seriously the career aspirations

of part-time workers and partly personal in balancing the career aspirations of husband and wife:

" My feeling is that we cannot both significant career progress at the same time. Because the pressures on the rest of the family are horrendous when you are both bushed ...I think because I have been in a planning for life situation and... since before going to America, I've not been sure what part of the country I would be living in and not sure what my husband was going to be doing, that has prevented me thinking forward to see what I should be doing, what I can do, it is frustration from that which is coming to a head, which has come to a head recently. It is about the only point of friction I have with my husband, why can't I determine the career moves for once. "

Being the subordinate member of a dual career couple (Sekaran and Hall, 1989; Lewis, 1994) is a permeating theme in her story. Her upset about her curtailed career aspirations was evident and resounds in her story about portfolio working. It rather gives pause to the assertions of Sekaran and Hall (1989) who insist that such couples are writing their own mutual criteria for success.

6.3.1.4. From less to more planned

Another notable feature of the data is that a number of people pinpoint a time in their life when they decided to take control of their career. In some cases, that moment was linked to personal issues - as in the case of Julia and Anne; in others it was a dawning realisation that they should change career direction.

Julia had made progress up the rungs of nursing management with the support of key managers who, in effect, acted as mentors to her. Incidentally, the literature suggests that mentors are key to women developing successful careers (Arnold and Davidson, 1990) and it is notable that several women in this study identify individuals who were influential in their career. However, Julia reckons that she paid little attention to her career: it just happened. Then, at age 40 her marriage broke up, at which point she made a deliberate decision to pursue career more vigorously and soon moved out of the NHS. Career planning became synonymous with regaining some control in her life:

"I know me well enough to know that to cope with stress I have to be progressing, to see a light at the end of the tunnel. Even if I move only one inch forward that day I can see that I have done something and that is how I cope with it."

Even so, she talks about finding other jobs as a serendipitous process, of chancing her arm and taking flyers because jobs looked like fun. Of her move into consultancy, for example, she says:

"Somebody said to me, why did you want to go to management consultancy when I sent the CV into XX,... and I said I liked the sound of it, and they said, did you know what management consultancy was, and I said no. That is the little shaper in me. I haven't a clue, well it sounds fun, I'll have a go."

Anne's story is rather different as she decided to make a significant career transition out of a linear career in financial management in the private sector and into the NHS-following a re diagnosis of a long standing medical condition:

"They said I should be wheelchair bound in my 20s and be totally disabled in my 30s and dead in my 40s. I got to 43 and none of those things had happened and to cut a long story short I got re-diagnosed and given normal life expectancy for the first time by the medical profession in 29 years...so I stopped and looked at my life and thought OK what am I doing, what do I enjoy doing? Life has changed now,...I had become disillusioned with a profit driven organisation. ..the whole company ethos had changed and I thought it is time to go, it didn't feel right."

Helen's story is less dramatic but she too encountered a point where she felt a need to overhaul her career motivations. She describes a seamless and unplanned move up the hierarchy of her medical occupation over 20 years, becoming one of the top three in the world in her very narrow specialism (but acquiring linear progress as well as developing a professional reputation). Gradually she began to feel hemmed into her specialised niche although she had a host of activities going on "to stop me getting bored, three or four balls in the air, always scamming." Following a discussion with a friend she decided to do an MBA course as she was in management already and the organisation

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would part fund her. At that point she became much more reflexively aware of her career and became heavily involved in career self help and planning:

"then I started buying myself books about rainbows and exploring and I started doing a lot of that and I went to see somebody about career visualisation."

Eventually she was instrumental in setting up a career forum because she had a need for it herself.

6.3.2. Career unfolding around interests or personal values

While the linear concept remains strong in terms of why individuals made their career moves, several participants talk of alternative scripts for the unfolding of their careers: those based around personal values and personal and professional interests.

6.3. 2. 1. Value based motivation

Five people's careers were dominated by a personal value base which they have striven to maintain. David wanted to work within the public sector, for what he calls a *"sort of liberal, sixties ethic."* He knows that this has been to his career detriment in earning capacity but that does not worry him unduly as long as he can maintain a certain salary level. He attributes to himself a free wheeling independent streak which he hangs on to despite the constraints of the bureaucracy. He moved within three bureaucratic organisations, trying to find a less restrained place in which to operate. What remains a motivation is to contribute to the public sector in some way. Having had his success in his creative world, he is less bothered about external badges of success in this one.

Val is a black woman, very aware of community and disadvantage and feeling a need to make her contribution. This she has allied with a roller coaster but overall upward career which progressively focuses on the theme of giving value. She says she doesn't "have the time to climb a ladder." She started as a nurse and took a series of moves which have seen her working in various countries on secondment, taking scholarships, moving in and out of the NHS but also managing what she calls spectacular leaps. Val attained some very senior and influential positions but she regard her career motivation as achieving influence on behalf of her clients:

"the whole notion of titles and status, well, I am probably an inverted snob but I would rather have an exciting, obscenely well paid job for a year than have some title that goes on for 10 years where I don't have clout and influence and access to really powerful people."

Andrew felt himself to be *a deviant* from the beginning. He is gay and he comes from what he calls a problem family and believes that both factors have led him to reject what he calls the *boys club* of career building. He has derived enormous success in his career which can be measured both in the bureaucratic scale of job and salary and more professionally in terms of his reputation. His last move prior to going independent was to a head hunted and nationally prestigious position. Yet underlying it all is an insistence that all he wanted was to build influence. Like the others in this category, he has little respect for traditional career building:

"I saw that there was always far more potential to have influence in am organisation then having managerial control, for me it was to have influence, to facilitate, rather than to be the Area officer, the Director, the boss, the boss was not something that I was terribly interested in... I wanted people who had vision, where work was something that they believed in, not just as a career and going up the ladder and the next stage and working for your next increment."

Aware of the dominant script for the pursuit of a career, he has always defined himself outside it, drawing on his views of what it is to be a public servant; to be a member of a socialist health organisation. Like most other participants Andrew denies that anyone ever planned his career for him. He goes further than most, though, to suggest that there were many times when he sensed that someone was attempting to manage his career and strongly resisted such assistance, even when it might have been to his benefit:

"and any time anybody started to put me in a place I reacted against it. Does that sound devious? But definitely I will not be pigeonholed and I will not have people mapping out my future for me."

David talks in similar terms:

"I don't mind telling people what I was doing and having a few objectives but I didn't like to have, what I would perceive as, my career managed. Other people like to be given structure and direction and I could do that better myself."

Jim also resists any notion of a planned and managed career. He talks of a drift into training management via welfare rights and advice work. He is heavily involved in local politics and sees his motivation very much about improving individual chances in life through the provision of local services. All five people in this category disavow hierarchical progress as a central organising feature for their careers yet it has not eluded any of them. Whether or not it has been their expressed intention, they have all continued to progress in terms of salary and positions within organisational hierarchies. None has any story to tell, in their employed career, of a decision to make between conscience and career progress: thus far, the two have evolved interactively.

6.3.2.2. Developing skills and interests
A few participants - John Steve, Margaret, and Robert describe their career as unfolding around their developing interests. Robert's story is quite different to most people in the study. Arguing that he has always known *"career to be a form of social control,"* he tells of the development of his IT skills and about interrupting his work life with an extended period of communal living. However, what he does have in common with these participants (and those with a value based motivation) is the centrality of factors other than linear progress in his career.

I have established a separate category here of people who put interests and personal development at the centre of the story, primarily for the practical purposes of presenting the data. However, as I will show by using John's story as an illustration the themes of personal and career development are interlinked but can come to be seen as site of conflict in individual's lives. This point surfaces again in the discussions of people decisions to go portfolio in Chapter 7.

John started off as an engineer in a heavy engineering company *"projecting in a straight line"* and expecting to end up as Chief Engineer. Hence his early moves were linear and within an organisation's hierarchy. However he found that he began a *"diagonal drift away from the bench"* as his interests switched away from the professional hands on

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work and more into the people interaction side of his job. He made a transition then into a job with the EITB for personal and career development reasons. It was regarded by some colleagues as a capricious move as he was stepping off a recognised career path. He made linear progress in that he was promoted rapidly; what he reports as more important however was the enormous personal and professional development that ensued. He decided to leave eventually, citing two reasons for the transition- a new boss who was not as supportive as previous bosses and a growing frustration with the bureaucratic nature of the organisation.

Once again he moved jobs for what he sees as personal and career development, but again not in a linear sense. His wife didn't support the move, feeling that he was putting his own interest ahead of family needs as this job meant more travelling, and, into the bargain, it was not a sufficient move up:

"We were in the traditional career. We must be climbing. We must have a better house than we had two years ago. We must have better car, we must have caravan, we must have two foreign holidays, we must have, we must have etc. etc."

Almost immediately on joining this firm he was threatened with redundancy as the organisation hit financial problems. Under pressure at home, upset that his own plans for personal and professional development within the organisation had been hit and feeling tension between following his interests and following a career path, he left to take a job he did not really want with the NHS which was a linear step up. This move did not work out as the marriage collapsed any way and he found himself within a bureaucratic organisation in which he felt very out of place. He made the best of it, brought his own ways to bear on the organisation and progressed upwards. Nevertheless John constructs the decision he made as a big mistake and a source of regret. To him, sacrificing interest for linear type progress was a bad deal. Pointedly, his decision to go portfolio which is explained more fully in the next chapter, followed a scenario where he was presented with a similar choice. He opted on that occasion to follow his interests rather than remain in steady organisational employment. John's story emphasises the point made earlier, that within the loops of participant's spiral, the movement was still generally upwards. Likewise, Steve started as a science PhD. student, moved into

teaching for a few years and then moved into operational research, quite by chance as he describes it:

"I looked through some leaflets in the Careers Service and came up with this thing called operational research, which I had never heard of and thought this sounds just like me because I love working things out on the back of an envelope and trying to work out theoretical models of things."

He then made two moves within that field which were intended to take him up the career ladder. However, he found the move out of the actual doing and into the managerial side to be frustrating on several counts. Nonetheless, the sense of upward career progress was important to him. Eventually, the managerial and professional aspirations collided and as we shall see in Chapter 7, the professional side took over. Hence the loops of these career spirals have been characterised by promotions but have also involved a searching for self and professional development.

Margaret left the NHS ladder she was on to gain more broad based skill which she did in two other organisations where she moved up the hierarchies, being head hunted to her last position:

"I never subscribed to the job for life, which I demonstrated with my early sideways moves. There will be no burn out for me, why the rush. I have never seen it as a ladder. I am ambitious but what I rate highly is not the top of the tree. I am not fearful of that but it is not what I want... My identity is more dispersed, it is not bound up with work alone. The work and play boundaries get blurred."

6.4 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This review of the careers of the participants in this study is based on the understanding, discussed in chapter 5, that individuals will make sense of their career by selecting among elements of their history and weaving them into a story which is largely compatible with their present circumstances (Weick, 1995). It was clearly important to them to paint a picture of prior success in career terms and most did so. However, the

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majority also acknowledged where things had gone wrong and many "admitted" that they had told me - or had started to tell me- a "cleansed" story. For several people this was the first time they had revisited the whole story in some years and hence the interview was about active construction of their past circumstances. However, such a stance is not regarded as problematic but illuminating about how participants feel their interpretations articulate with the surrounding social order (Barely, 1989).

Looking back at their careers, few appear to follow any ideal \ typical notion of traditional career success. However, normative career themes were evident. Notwithstanding some spiral loops, in most stories the trajectory was basically upwards. There were no instances of downshifting in this study during their organisational careers, even in those participants who saw personal values being the organising principle of their careers. There were very few instances of steps into organisations or occupations un-related to previous jobs. With the exception of David and Robert no-one had given up their jobs to pursue creative dreams, travel, do voluntary work or otherwise express other needs that could not be satisfied in organisationally based paid work. The vast majority had spent all their working lives within large hierarchical organisations. To that extent there was a certain steadiness to their previous work lives. While their careers are not the stereotyped traditional one, nonetheless they do not deviate very far from it.

In terms of how they account for it, few people pointed to a rational and goal directed view of their career. Marshall's (1989) notion of communion based planning seemed to be more in evidence, which perhaps, will be to their benefit in this career (Weick, 1996). The majority of people had careers broadly characterised by a desire for linear advancement. However, most were rather diffident about describing how they had unfolded, rather downplaying their own agentic role and assuming that the opportunity structure of the career carried them forward. I suggested that it may be that scripts for the upward career are internalised to such a degree that individuals are not so conscious of their own role in enacting it. What they are conscious of is breaches of it like redundancy or the organisation not playing out the role the individual expected; and the operation of norms and sanctions when their actions challenge it, as with the women who interrupted their career paths on the birth of their children. Some people are able to develop their own scripts for action, drawing on discourses of personal values within the

public sector or the primacy of skill and fulfilment over linear progress. However, it seems pertinent that while such motivations proved not to be incompatible with linear success, these participants distanced themselves from traditional career approaches.

To characterise linear advancement as being somehow in opposition to or instead of personal growth (Golzen and Garner 1990) is to negate participants' subjective perceptions of their career. Objective views of career success privilege vertical movement and thus it cannot be surprising if most individuals do equate personal development with organisational advancement. However, in some cases it was apparent that there are points at which personal hopes and perceived career realities clash.

Only a muted tendency away from linear career aspirations to more complex desires to establish personal autonomy, to develop skills, to develop personally and to take a more balanced approach to life can be detected.It might be suggest that all this shows is a long standing and buried career anchor being allowed expression at last *Schein, 1978; Derr, 1986) but that is to under-estimate the potential impact of situational cues. A criticism of the works of Schein and other early career theorists is that their work was done in a period of economic stability (Ornstein and Isabella, 1993). However, the people I interviewed are telling their stories at a time when the very essence of work itself is being challenged (Bridges, 1995) and the organisations in which they work have been subject to great pressures (Storey, 1995) and they have made a choice to get out of organisational life and go portfolio. The next chapter looks at how they account for that transition in their career.

CHAPTER 7: LEAVING THE ORGANISATION TO GO PORTFOLIO

This chapter seeks to answer composite research question 2: why do individuals leave organisational employment and rather than seeking alternative employment, why do they opt for portfolio working? It starts off by broadly categorising participants according to whether the primary reason for leaving was organisational factors, personal factors or some combination of the two. Recalling the push - pull dichotomy of reasons for making such a transition discussed in chapter 2 the point is made that they should be seen as interacting and dynamic forces rather than as opposing alternatives. However, in individual's accounts of this decision certain factors are privileged. Hence the discussion begins by looking at the extent to which they implicate organisational issues, including redundancy and aspects of organisational change. Moving on in 7.2, it considers the "pull" factors which attracted people to portfolio working. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relative weight given to the push and pull factors and participants' reflexive awareness of their own sense-making processes.

7.1. INTRODUCTION

I intend to start by sketching some of the main findings in order to highlight the major themes that arose from the data. The following table shows four broad categories apparent in the data which encompass the reasons individuals gave for making this transition. Further details are provided in Appendix 8.

made redundant	portfolio as positive choice	push then pull	push and pull: *left to go portfolio*
Henry, Liz, Brenda	Gillian, David, Bridget, Helen Val and Laura: *(ex-redundant)*	Monica, Judith, Geoff, Jim, Carole, Anne	Steve, Julia, John, Margaret, Suzanne, Andrew, Joan, Robert, Claire, Wendy

Table 9. The transition: push and pull factors (Hakim, 1989)

Only three people lost their jobs involuntarily - all three were long serving NHS employees, made redundant, to their surprise and very much against their will. This data suggests that people making the move to portfolio work are not doing so in response to job loss.

Conversely, only four people opted positively for portfolio work for personal and career development reasons in the absence of any other explanatory factors. Another two people, who were initially made redundant, later came to portfolio work more voluntarily.

Therefore, sixteen people in this study identified a more complex range of reasons for leaving their organisation and for going portfolio encompassing organisational and personal and career development issues.

Of these sixteen people, six people left their organisation first, without any future plans and then made the decision to go into portfolio working, suggesting the existence of two separate decisions.

In examining the related literature on moves to self employment, the notion of a push \ pull dichotomy was introduced. Push factors are generally seen as the "logic of economic necessity" (Bogenhold and Staber, 1991) and pull factors are about the perceived benefits of self employment - or the "logic of autonomy." Granger et al. (1995) suggest that push and pull be seen as a continuum with interacting situational and personal factors, whose congruence, or lack of it, determine labour market behaviour. They go on to identify a category of "*missionary*." According to them, this group comprises both those who make a positive choice to pursue freelance working (and hence would include the six people in category 2 in table 7.1. above) and those whose movement into self employment involve "the voluntary termination of direct employment - because of organisational, occupational or environmental rejection... in this form "missionary" combines "boldly" going as the positive notion of entrepreneurial pull implied and the "negative," I've had enough." (1995:514). Hence, using their category a further sixteen people would be included.

Looking at the data in this study, it would seem to me that allocating so many participants to a single category obscures potentially significant differences between those who focus on pull factors in explaining their decision to go portfolio and those who identify some mix of push and pull. It is possible to see a continuum of push and pull factors in their stories, in that some stories focus most on what happened to them within the organisation to prompt the move, but other people talk more about their personal needs and career hopes. However, the push and pull forces must be seen to exist in a more dynamic interaction than the Granger et al. (1995) model allows. If push is understood as structural factors and pull as agentic factors, then the theoretical models adopted in this study (Barley, 1989) argue that they be seen as inextricably linked, and mutually constitutive. What I want to explore, within the very broad categories outlined in table 7.1, is how people account for this transition; what scripts they draw on in telling the story; the extent to which they privilege organisational or personal issues and how they link them together.

Having objected to the notion of a dichotomy, I must say that two major themes were evident in the way the participants tell their stories, which, on the face of it, very broadly equate to the notions of push (organisational factors) and pull (the lure of portfolio working). For the purposes of presenting the data I will look at them in turn, but point out their duality as the analysis unfolds.

7.2. ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS IMPLICATED IN THE DECISION TO GO PORTFOLIO

Threading through the stories of the majority of participants is a sense of anger, bitterness, even despair about organisations changing around them, the value base shifting to something they do not admire, the appearance of new bosses, the long hours, the intransigence in accommodating child care. As such, this data recalls other career based studies which point to a growing disaffection with organisational life (Scase and Goffe, 1989; Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). Three themes in particular emerged as worthy of discussion: 1. redundancy; 2. effects of organisational changes and organisational culture; 3. organisations and families. I will deal with them in turn recognising that they overlapped in the stories of many participants.

7.2.1. Redundancy

Involuntary exits from the organisation prompted by unilateral withdrawal of the employment contract are perhaps the easiest place to start, in that the individual choice in the process is necessarily constrained by circumstances. While certain organisational issues, like culture and restructuring, may be open to interpretation from the start, receiving a redundancy notice has a distinct material reality. What is most interesting is how the individual subsequently makes sense of that situation.

Five people had experienced redundancy from the NHS (and one of them, Laura had also been made redundant from another organisation). For 3 people - Brenda, Henry and Liz- redundancy was the reason for their most recent organisational exit. Following Granger et al. (1995) I will call them *refugees*. Val and Laura were made redundant previously in their careers and although they have since made a more measured decision to go portfolio, their previous experiences of being made redundant are seen as significant. Thus, they can be seen as *ex -refugees*.

7.2.1.1. The "refugees"

Three people were made compulsorily redundant from senior positions within their organisations, unexpectedly, after a long career (in two cases all their working life) within the organisations. For all three people, moving up an organisational hierarchy was noted in the last chapter as their primary career motivation. As with Granger et al.'s (1995) "refugees", they have never really reconciled themselves to any other form of working than full time employment. The redundancy was a devastating blow in all three cases, although Liz rather anticipated it. Once redundant, the decision had to be made as to what to do next. All three people started to look for other jobs: Liz and Brenda both found full-time work elsewhere within less than eighteen months. Hence like Granger et al.'s (1995) refugees, their point of reference in the working world remained full time working and they returned to it as soon as they could. (I talked in chapter 5 about their inclusion in this study on the grounds of their having had a period of work as a portfolio worker even though they have now returned to organisational employment). Henry, however, was unsuccessful in finding work. His problem, as he now sees it, was injured pride and lingering bitterness:

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"There was a lot of ill-feeling, bad blood and things hanging over... it left me with a lot of bitterness, very intense against employers and specifically against the NHS... I have a lot of friends, having been so involved in the NHS for so long, very powerful friends but I chose not to use them, it was pride I couldn't ask for work, I couldn't even talk about being redundant, so I was well connected but made no use of it." (Henry)

It is interesting that his bitterness extends to other employers and this is a theme which surfaces in many stories. If the NHS can treat me this way, they seem to be saying, then so could any employer. He spent 18 months trying to find work and feels that age was against him in the external labour market. That time is regretted now, as he feels it would have been better spent trying to reconcile himself to, what he now sees, as his new reality. Eventually and reluctantly, prompted by an offer of work from an ex-colleague, he began to develop a portfolio of work.

There is nothing in the stories of these three people, save for the compulsory redundancy, to mark them out from others. Many others had careers as led by bureaucratic career principles as theirs - as illustrated in chapter 6. They had as much evidence as most of career innovation and risk taking and had all felt themselves to be professionally well regarded. What was missing from their stories, that arose to some extent in all the others, was any positive pull at all towards self employment or portfolio working. The redundancy was an unwelcome bolt from the blue, on the face of it, a structural intervention in their career world that left them all feeling bewildered, disoriented, let down, bitter (Latack et al., 1995).

7.2.1.2. The "ex-refugees

Val and Laura had previously been affected by redundancy and had had similar reactions initially. The difference for them is that they are now able to tell a story in which they overcame the hurdle of compulsory redundancy. In both cases they moved back into employment but, scarred by the redundancy and their reaction to it, they came to reject organisational employment.

Laura has been in and out of employment, in and out of the NHS - made redundant early in her career from a consultancy company and later by an NHS Trust. Laura's story tells of a personal journey: she started by seeing hierarchical success as paramount in a

career but has come to value the retention of one's personal integrity above all. Her experiences have led her to question the value base of organisations and to assert her own. She doubts if hierarchical success and integrity are compatible. As a portfolio worker, she believes she is free, in a way she is not as an employee, to act on her own value base. As such, her experiences have led her to adopt a value centred attitude to career that Val has avowed all her working life (as discussed in chapter 6). Once Val recovered from what she saw as the indignity of being made redundant and secured another fixed term contract, she knew that she would then not seek to renew it, but to move out of organisational employment altogether.

7.2.1.3. Making sense of being made redundant

Taking all five stories together what struck me was how they struggled to attribute causes, to find some way of understanding why they had been selected for redundancy. In the end, they rejected the notion that it was the random hand of fate and instead looked also to themselves. Only Liz sees her redundancy as being primarily structural as the part of the organisation in which she worked was closing down. She allows herself to wonder, however, if the fact that she was working part-time made her more vulnerable to being selected for redundancy.

The other four people all attribute their leaving to some form of revenge by disgruntled bosses: their faces did not fit. Laura sees no blame in her own behaviour, suggesting that her manager simply couldn't cope with her because she could do the job better than him. Henry and Brenda however do reflect on how they could have done things differently to prevent their selection for redundancy. Brenda could have got her MBA for example, and could have played the game. Henry could have been a less enthusiastic agent of change so that his fall was not so welcomed by many people. Val knows herself to be a forthright character and wonders who she upset this time. Hence the stories are constructed with the individual and their own modus operandi at the centre. They come to terms with the redundancy by casting themselves as the blunt, plain speaking and highly capable individual facing an organisation unable to deal with them. As Giddens (1984) might say they all could have acted otherwise. Hence an agentic dimension is added by the participants themselves to what could otherwise have been a simple story of organisational push.

Agency is also implicated in how they react to and make sense of this imposed change. It is often suggested that redundancy can be just the push individuals need to take charge of their own destiny. For Henry, however, the redundancy continues to be a defining feature of his life, one he has found very difficult to overcome. For the others, it has opened up other horizons. While Brenda and Liz have dealt with it as an episode in their life which to some extent they can close as they are now back in employment, Val and Laura are more actively engaged in an ongoing project to make sense of the redundancy and their subsequent "missionary" decisions to go portfolio. The explanations of both women for rejecting employment now are bound up with a growing disillusionment with the working world - sparked, they feel by their bitter experience of redundancy:

"I am a little more sanguine and a little more careful now. I don't, by and large, I do not trust people now until they have proved that I can trust them. I didn't start off on that road. That's sad." (Laura)

Both argue that they can work most effectively, with the most integrity outside the organisation, thus introducing a notion to be discussed further below:

"they reward people who try not to make any fuss, prefer not to take any risks, who will do as they are told, but the rebels, the real rebels, not the ones who will go home on a Friday and just come back in on Monday, the real rebels don't hang around, ... people like me, all we can hope to do is try to influence those who are willing to be influenced so I find myself now working from the outside in." (Val)

Furthermore, this notion of distancing oneself from those who stay behind permeates a number of stories as will also be discussed below. From being refugees, then, their subsequent experience at work has contributed to an ideological shift to a more positive missionary orientation (Granger et al., 1995) towards portfolio working. They had the opportunity to return to work and then to leave again, this time of their own volition, allowing them to appropriate a positive explanatory system for this transition denied to them at time of the initial (shocking and unwanted) redundancy.

7.2.2. Organisational change

The transcripts were peppered by stories of participants' negative responses to organisational changes and they way in which they were handled. That individuals can react badly to imposed change has been extensively noted, and specifically so in the case of the NHS (Ashburner et al.,1996). Coping with change is widely regarded as a key attribute for individuals in today's workplaces (Hall et al., 1996); less investigated are the consequences of changes which individuals experience as negative, badly managed and destructive of what they valued about the organisation. The over-riding image that emerges from the majority of interviews is organisations becoming inhospitable, even hostile environments.

In several cases participants were actually quite satisfied with their organisation up to the appearance of a specific factor which challenged that feeling. In these instances, stories are told of the intrusion of unwelcome change which forced a decision. In other cases the disillusionment grew more gradually.

7.2.2.1. The new boss

New bosses figure in several stories most prominently in those of John and Steve. John, for example, was operating a self funding training and career development service as a trading agency, within an organisation. He drew his salary from the organisation as before but was expected to generate it through the work of the agency. All was going well until a new boss was appointed who had other ideas. He veers between deriding her actions and seeking to understand them, being flattered and being hurt by her decision to close the agency down:

"By now I had a new boss with different ideas, not as rich. Others could have coped with having some bits of their organisation self-funding, others about strategic influencing. But she said, its great, its useful, but I don't want it to be part of my organisation. She didn't like to deal with this rough edge, this strange shape of the organisation she was managing. I don't criticise her for it, but she didn't like a confused outline in her organisation. So she said look 2 choices, either make it yours and take it with you or stay here and help us be better at being consultants... which had been a previous idea of mine. All quite flattering, I suppose, but at the time it felt like a slap in the face, an unnecessary need for neatness."

Steve, a late entrant to the organisation, had long had difficulties with the culture of the NHS. His first boss, whom he greatly respected, had warned him: "just be careful in the sense that if you go up to people and say good morning, some of them will think that's suspicious." He never really attuned himself to how work should be done in the organisation but, in telling this story, he constructs his tendency to keep his distance as a positive response to a bureaucratic, secretive and slow moving culture. He believes that he worked at too quick a pace for the organisation to accept and did not watch his back as he went. Incidentally, a very similar picture of the NHS culture emerges in most of the stories of people who entered the organisation later in their career. When Steve's manager left he was suddenly more vulnerable and sensed that a new boss was giving him a "jump or be pushed" decision to make:

"I worked with him (his ex boss) for about a year and a half and he said, right I am leaving, you are going to have to take on the whatever it was budget, £ 55 million for the department and he handed this stuff over to me but within a week I had had an interview with the new regional general manager who said I've been thinking about this, not sure you are the man for this job, going to give it to this woman, I still want you to be there, you are very important, and so on, it was a 2 pronged attack and basically for about 3 or 4 months I was frozen out and in the end I went to see him and said this is crap and he tried to give me some bullshit about how the thing wasn't working and how things had changed and basically I wasn't suitable for this job and crap and I just said how much are you willing to pay me to go and within the day he had made me an offer which I accepted and I left within 2 weeks...(laugh), so that is the story of that."

So, Steve and John both tell a story of a strong push from the organisation to leave against their will which triggered strong emotions in them. But, in both cases, pull factors were also implicated in their decisions which will be discussed in more detail below.

7.2.2.2. Organisational culture change

Organisational change associated with the NHS reforms is a feature of many stories. A couple of people implicate specific changes, for others it was a slow cumulative process through which they came to feel alien to the new organisation. The NHS was not the

only organisation implicated: others talk of Local Government and the private sector. Anne left the private sector disillusioned by the profit motive only to find it alive and well within the NHS. Two women - Carole and Julia - had come to feel significantly at odds with the value base of the large consultancy companies with which they worked. Julia, in particular felt that she was so out of step she might get sacked:

"I felt again that marketing and consulting and the world of work was changing and I was not prepared to be involved in selling these huge consultancies who I didn't sincerely feel would do good by or provide benefit for and with the client. I couldn't do it. I could sell you something if I genuinely feel it will be good and the big consultancies- and it is no criticism it is the way the world is now to survive - they are getting into things and I thought I can't do this...because behaviour begets behaviour and it came across when I was talking to people and I wasn't selling as well as I was and I thought Julia, you are going to get the sack. You are not just responsible for selling you but also the team, you have to make a decision."

It is interesting that Julia does not blame the organisation for changing: she sees it as inevitable in the current world of work. The NHS reforms engender more critical appraisal from interviewees. Many people were not opposed to several of the changes in principle, accepting the discourse of the need for some change, discussed in chapter 2. For example, Judith talks about her frustration at those who buried their heads in the sand; Steve recognises that the market is not all bad; Val, very ostensibly committed to the service, insists that there was good in the reforms. Hence these individuals do not wish to construct themselves as incapable of dealing with change per se. Their complaints are about how it was handled.

Jim and Geoff, for example, had very similar experiences although Geoff's last job was in Local Government. Both men were involved with the implementation of organisational changes which neither of them particularly welcomed but both felt they could influence. Jim was charged with developing a strategy for training and development to ensure staff could deal with organisational change; Geoff with developing plans to reduce staff costs without compulsory redundancies. Both men described how they set about their tasks *"blind, stupid, just blind to what was going* on" (Geoff); *"with naive faith"* (Jim). Both came to believe that other *"less ethical agendas,"*

as Jim described them, were at play within the organisation and that their work was a smoke screen to deflect attention from that. Jim left voluntarily when an opportunity arose to do so with no future plans determined. Geoff became ill with stress and depression and left on an agreed ill-health retirement package, unable to accept that his contribution was no longer valued within the changed organisation and unable to change his way of operating. He felt that he had become a "dinosaur" in the eyes of some who did not care as he did for the welfare of staff and clients.

Joan and Suzanne highlight a specific change within their organisations which contributed to their decision to leave. In both cases the organisation was restructured in a way which changed their job and attempted to change the prevailing culture. Both women had been involved in the planning of the change but still were unprepared for the personal effect. Following on from the section above, it is notable that both also implicate a manager in the problem:

"I now had an unsupportive boss and I wasn't doing as well in this job as I had done in my previous. I was simply not allowed to do what I was good at. I was monitoring with a big stick when I wanted to work alongside. I wasn't really getting my own needs fulfilled." (Suzanne)

While Suzanne talks of not being able to work in the way which best used her talents and abilities, Joan points to a changed culture overall:

"I found that the business orientation took everybody's attention, and I think this was true of all the trusts, not just this one, took everybody's attention away from the people focus and although they were saying that people were important, and oh yes staff are important, we really value you but what actually happened was that staff were feeling very under-valued at all levels of the organisation up and down, including myself. The Chief Executive thought because he had got this new type of trust in place that somehow, that was enough in strategic terms, he wasn't really skilful enough or really interested enough to, and I used to think, although I was a good strategist and good at thinking strategically I did that best as a member of a team and I didn't feel like a member of the team, I felt isolated. I felt alienated from the values, not the spoken

values, but the behavioural values...oh, it was desperate, I felt absolutely desperate, I was utterly devalued, totally deskilled, completely lacking in confidence." (Joan)

Several issues are highlighted here which are pertinent to most participants: the move to a business orientation; the skills of the manager in dealing with change; restructuring resulting in the individual not being able to make their most effective contribution; the emotions engendered. At issue for most of these participants is that they felt they could no longer do the job to which they had been committed in the way that they felt was in the best interests of clients. In their stories, the organisation is constructed as a place which had lost it heart. Weick (1995) talks about the role of the organisation in individuals' identity construction. Believing that the organisation is being viewed negatively affects people's own self concept. Hence individuals are motivated to preserve a positive image if they can, repair a tarnished one or disassociate themselves from it.

I did find an intriguing difference between those who had been with the organisation a long time and recent NHS entrants like Steve, John and Anne. All three admit to a sense of shock on entering the organisation as it did not live up to idealised expectations:

"The mistake I made was thinking, the NHS cares for sick people, it must have caring people in it and that was the lesson I learned. Some of the people I met in the NHS were a bunch of ratbags." (Steve)

However, for these three people leaving this organisation was not so much of a wrench in that they had less personal identity investment in the organisation.

7.2.3. The organisation and the family

Organisational refusal to accommodate participants' family responsibilities was the trigger for exit in two quite contrasting cases:- Monica who wanted to job share to care for her children and Andrew who asked to reduce his hours temporarily to care for his dying mother.

Monica had joined the NHS straight from university on the fast track management scheme and had reached a senior position when she put together a job share application

with another senior woman after having her first child. It was turned down without due consideration and she left immediately "in high dudgeon" taking them to an Industrial Tribunal:

"it was such a slap in the face when I was supposedly, I mean I had won all sorts of things as being one of their fast track people who was going to make it to the top. They had sponsored me through doing a Masters degree. I had been on foreign secondments and I was very disillusioned by the fact that because I wasn't prepared to act like man anymore and follow a traditional career path, then suddenly I was not even worthy of being treated in a reasonable way." (Monica)

Monica had expected the organisation to value her services sufficiently to attempt to retain her. She was happy and successful on the male career path, as she calls it, until she had cause to question it in her own life. As with other studies of successful (in the traditional sense) career women (Marshall, 1995), a minority of women in this study had children. Carole and Liz complain that part-time working was not regarded by their employers as compatible with careers, but other than that, the notion of gendered organisational cultures (Mills, 1992; Green and Cassell, 1996) and gendered career paths (Marshall, 1989; Fletcher and Bailyn, 1996) scarcely arise as significant for most of the women in their decisions to leave. Where women do leave the organisation to spend more time on child care, the relative strength of push and pull factors can be blurred as will be discussed below.

Unlike Monica, Andrew was not happy at work before he made his request to reduce his hours. All his working life had been spent in the public sector as nurse and social worker and then in managerial roles. He was head hunted to his latest position and attracted to it by the influence it appeared to afford him. However, in this role, much more so than in any other, he felt that his personal values were compromised by the business orientation of the organisation. This feeling was gathering pace when he asked for time off to deal with his family crisis. The refusal was based on their need for him to generate a certain amount of income and it proved to be the trigger that brought all his lingering dissatisfaction into sharper focus.

7.2.4. Organisational push: summary

Again and again the theme of being alienated from the organisation, to which they felt a great deal of personal and career commitment, permeated the stories. Participants told of lost organisational integrity and warped values. What is at issue here is that the individual tells a moral tale (Baruch, 1981) of their own exit. In essence, for many participants (except those who made a more voluntary decision to go, (of whom more below), the story unfolded in this way: this organisation which I joined because I believed in it has become a bad place to be and I feel undervalued and upset in it, so, as a good person; as a worker who can make a useful contribution and one who has retained the values the organisation has lost, I will opt to leave although (in most cases) I am under no obligation to do so.

As such these responses can be linked to the debate on the public sector ethos discussed in chapter 2. Recognising that concept to be evolving and socially constructed, Pratchett and Wingfield (1994) conclude from their research in Local Government that those who seek to defend a public sector ethos "are more concerned with protecting their own interests than with analysing the changing values that constitute the public service ethos" (1994: 32). Hence, an alternative reading of the decision to leave would be that the participants themselves could not cope with change - that the fault, if it needs to be attributed, is with them. They are not unaware of this way of making sense of their decision as evidenced, in part, by the concern of many to stress that they did, in fact, welcome some of the changes that were being made and pragmatically accepted others. Most people did not want to leave the organisation, not least because identity as a public servant was tied up in it. Many also feared the financial implications.

The notion of violated psychological contracts (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau, 1996) appears to be applicable here, bearing in mind the caveats I discussed in chapter 3 about the analytical difficulties with this concept. What is clear, though, is that many participants felt surprised and let down by organisational actions - not just in terms of their own career development but also in terms of what they believed was the nature of the organisation. However as Rousseau (1996) points out, violation of the psychological contracts is far from rare and does not necessarily result in organisational exit. I will move on now to direct attention to what could be seen as the pull factors

which allowed people to contemplate the drastic step of organisational exit and entering portfolio working.

7.3. WHY GO PORTFOLIO?

In this section I will look first at why people did not seek alternative employment in the external labour market. The extent to which they planned this move will be discussed and then I will move on to look at the specific reasons identified for opting for portfolio work: recognising the limitations of hierarchical career success; seeking autonomy and independence; prior experience; balancing personal and work matters.

7.3.1. Looking to the external labour market

Riley (1995) suggests that labour market perceptions are always salient in career decisions, even if individuals' perceptions could be regarded as objectively incorrect. In this study, participants, in general, showed either a distinct lack of optimism about their chances in an external labour market (Hirsch and Shanley, 1996) or a curious lack of attention to it. Those people who talked in most detail about external labour markets pointed to salary levels elsewhere, assuming that they would be lucky indeed to find such a well paid job in another organisation. Some people had looked for jobs before leaving the organisation without success. Judith for example, had applied for many jobs within the NHS but felt that her last job as Chief Executive of a small and specialised trust had taken her out of mainstream and she would not get back in. Julia, at age 48, was seeking to re-enter the NHS but had been advised by an NHS careers counsellor that her chances were slim unless she found a Trust willing to make "a zany appointment." Understandably, she was upset and undermined by this assessment and gave up making job applications at that point. Gillian, as a Chief Executive, could not see any opportunities in the external labour market which would present an interesting challenge to her. Her reasons for leaving were framed positively but several other people also felt that other employment would be less satisfying than work for the NHS (or the public sector generally):

"the thing is the NHS, is it is vital, and there is something about being with an organisation which helps millions of people a day. It is not like helping a company which sells soap powder" (Jim).

However a corollary to a life time in the public sector, as perceived by some participants, is reduced chances of finding work elsewhere.

In general, detailed attention to the possibilities of the external labour market were rare. Hirsch and Shanley (1996) argue that managers with sunk career investment in any one organisation will feel nervous about their chances in an external labour market with which they have had little or no contact and to a large extent this data bears out that concern.

7.3.2. Planning to go portfolio

Several people - Steve, Joan, Suzanne, Andrew, Helen, Bridget, John, Wendy, Claire - had freelance work already arranged before they made the decision to go portfolio. Three of these people were already doing private work while still employed. In Bridget's case this was a planned move done in conjunction with her manager, as she progressively reduced her employed work and built up a freelance portfolio. Helen describes herself as *"always moonlighting, always having a scam on the go"*. Steve was already doing some private work, as he calls it, with permission, before he left. His experience of this suggested to him that there might be money to be made. He went on to set up another couple of contracts while still employed that he only put into action when he secured a redundancy agreement:

" *I had paved the path, if you like to out the door, I was very careful and that mitigated the traumatic effect."*

These three cases then fit Birley's (1989) notion of moving from black to grey in self employment starting off with limited self employment while still employed and easing in to the transition to full self employment.

Other participants took steps to set up contracts that they could move on to when they left. Several factors featured in this decision. Firstly, a few people noted that an urgent need to move out of an organisation could be more speedily fulfilled by finding freelance work rather than through the long haul of finding a job. Joan, for example, was frustrated by her lack of success in finding work and realised that she had saleable skills. Her concern was to be able to go on utilising the skills she had developed and to

maintain the contact with the NHS. A few tentative enquiries with friends and colleagues convinced her idea was feasible. She set about securing (or so she thought) a couple of contracts before she left:

"I would have found it very difficult to leave without some sense of security about the amount of work I could get, so if I hadn't had those 2 contracts, or thought I had, I couldn't have, I wouldn't have left without some sense of security about the level of income, I wouldn't have had the courage." (Joan)

Like several other participants she resisted what she saw as the push of an untenable work situation until she had established a viable route out which built on existing skills and contacts.

The idea to seek portfolio work was suggested to participants in several cases by friends and colleagues. Andrew, for example, was smarting from his organisation's refusal to allow him to reduce his hours when a chance remark from a friend that the organisation's clients appreciated him personally not the organisation he represented, set him on the path to finding freelance contracts. He left, having secured £48k worth of work within a short period.

7.3.2.1. Leaving organisations with no plans

A number of participants, as discussed above, left the organisation before any plans were made for future work. In their cases the push factors seemed too strong to resist. In the cases of Judith, Jim and Geoff, (as well as Henry, who was made redundant) the initial work which set them on the portfolio path came from personal contacts. The portfolios which started off as stop gap arrangements became more developed ways of working. Anne who also left without other arrangements in place took her time to survey the options open to her. She was offered a freelance contract doing very much the same job as she had left in a different trust as her skills were much in demand. It seemed, initially, too good an option to turn down.:

"I was doing a job but they were paying me consultants fees so I only had to do three days a week." (Anne)

Robert was, in fact, offered a freelance contract to do the very same job he was doing as an employee. This offer followed his attempt at resignation which was prompted both by a need to look after an elderly parent and by a general disaffection with the culture of the NHS.

In two cases, the decision to be portfolio rather than employed, was imposed as a condition of contract, by an employer who offered work only on a self employed contractual basis. For Jim, this arrangement proved to be a spur to find other similar work. In a way the decision was made for him. Carole, however, was uncomfortable with this arrangement insisting that she never wanted to be self employed and did not want to think of herself that way - a theme for chapter 9. She did, in fact, go on to develop other freelance work before finding part-time employed work.

7.3.2.1. Seeking advice and guidance

Hence, the decision to become portfolio, in very many cases, was a mixture of chance and planning. What was striking, though, about this data was how few people had sought advice in any formal way. Only two people - Helen and Laura - had taken the practical help (and funding) available from their local Training and Enterprise Council to set up a business. This option had not occurred to most participants. In later chapters I will discuss changing career identities, but can say at this stage that this lack of practical preparation seems to be symptomatic of a general ambivalence about the status of being self employed.

However, four people took more general career and life planning and, interestingly, three of them - Helen, Gillian and Bridget - are people who construct the decision to go portfolio as positive and not connected with organisational problems. The fourth is Laura who learned from earlier experiences that she needed more formal guidance. She pays for two mentors as she calls them - one to help her deal with business matters and one for discussing personal and career development. Giddens (1991) suggests that planning for major decisions- "fateful moments" (p.112) -increasingly involves the use of what he calls expert systems. In the case of these participants, few people sought help in advance but several found a need for it once the decision was actually made.

Gillian was a Chief Executive and had been for several years. A merger approaching between her organisation and another concentrated her mind on future plans (she insists that she would have been appointed to the role of Chief Executive of the merged Trust). She sought the advice of an executive coach, available to her through the organisation. The coach reassured her that, on the basis of discussion and psychometric tests, she profiled both as a manager and as a consultant. This advice was central to her decision to leave and go portfolio. Gillian insisted that her exit was planned and voluntary and as such she constructs it as different to the haphazard or forced decisions made by others:

"I thought hang on I want to do something else now so I planned to do everything. I wasn't forced to do it, I initiated it...I had become if you like someone who was in charge of what they intended to do. I think that you have to work out what that means and I had to look very hard at all the options and I don't think people do that enough."
(Gillian)

Gillian stated this early in the interview and returned to the theme many times. As I will discuss below, she was well aware that there were alternative interpretations of her decision to leave. She was at pains to disassociate herself from those for whom, she thought, portfolio work was a cover for incompetence or redundancy- this theme is explored further in chapter 9.

Helen also disassociates herself from other people - but in her case the problem is with those who remain "cocooned" within an organisation. In this she is criticising herself as, now outside organisational employment, she cannot believe that she remained in it for so long. Her interest in career and personal development was sparked only when she did an MBA course and she went on to set up a career development forum. Helen is a keen advocate of career and life planing advice and self help - despite her recognition that plans never work out the way she sets them. However, she strongly supports the notion of liberation, inherent in much of the literature on new careers. Here she talks about a career planning session she attended which began to crystallise her developing idea to go portfolio:

"oh it was brilliant, and it was just such an amazing way of looking at things, the skills you have got, because you look at the skills you have got and the ones that you like

using and then you start thinking about where you want to work, how you want to work and who you want to work with and developing that as a package of yourself and then go out and find the employers as in my case, or the employer that you really want to work with, but it is actually taking control yourself." (Helen)

In his model of work role transition, discussed in Chapter 3.2, Nicholson (1990) argues for the functional benefit of planning for transitions both by realistic self assessment and by finding out as much as possible about the new job in advance. In this case, participants did more of the former than the latter but really very little of either. The work role transition model presupposes the movement from one employed role to another and therein lies one of the problems with applying it in this study. Participants were very unclear about exactly what they were moving on to. The question occurs about what scripts they could draw on to learn the lines in advance for their new context. Even those who had private work already set up had only a vague idea of how it would unfold (and were proved wrong in several instances, as I will discuss in Chapter 8). Others left with no plans in place at all. For most people, the primary motivation at that stage was organisational exit. Those who did plan in any detail were all people who talk about a positive decision to move on, unrelated to any traumatic experience in the workplace.

Gillian insists that she left to go portfolio *"for all the right reasons."* She thus implies that there are wrong ones and worries particularly that it can be seen as a cover for redundancy or lack of competence - which is further debated in chapter 8. Such a perception of public opinion about portfolio working (indeed an alternative discourse) emerges as a significant issue in the study. Similarly, Margaret says *"I know this might have looked like redundancy but it wasn't, I've always wanted to work for myself."* Wendy has already thought of how she can present this period out of organisational employment as a positive move having conceded that, *"in all honesty its probably happened now because I have been a bit depressed."* Hence, the participants themselves acknowledge that alternative interpretations of their stories could be constructed. In talking about both push and pull factors, they are actively engaged in the project of making sense for themselves and relaying that sense to others.

I move on now to consider what participants identified as the pulls of portfolio working as opposed to alternative organisational employment. As indicated above the push and pull factors are linked and dynamic. As such two significant factors which could be interpreted as pull factors have already been introduced above in the discussion of push factors: namely the desire to preserve a sense of personal integrity and a desire for a better balance of home and work. Hence they will be reviewed here only briefly and will be followed by a discussion of other pertinent factors: the limits of hierarchical careers and the desire for enhanced freedom and control.

7.3.3. Preserving or regaining integrity

An intriguing issue which arises from the data is the desire of several participants to move out of organisational employment in order to have the freedom to work in a way which preserves their integrity and value base. They feel that integrity is threatened within organisational employment. At the point of going portfolio - prompted primarily by organisational issues - many participants sense that portfolio working will allow them to operate in a way the organisation does not. Hence push and pull begin to blur. As Barley (1989) suggests actions may precede the motivations that are mobilised to explain them.

Barley argues that analytical interest lies in looking at the interpretations that are made by participants, and how they articulate with the surrounding social order. It could well be argued that these participants are making sense of their situation against the grain of dominant discourse, which favours a more instrumental, entrepreneurial, market oriented, individualist and managerialist approach (du Gay, 1996). However, it could equally be argued that a value based or collective orientation to working life, such as these participants articulate, remains a strong alternative, although less hegemonic, discourse (Casey, 1995; Hutton, 1995; Pahl, 1995; Marshall, 1996; Sundstrom and Kleiner, 1992).

Several participants tell stories which construct themselves as upholders of values that are still socially ratified, if out of step with the dominant organisational mood. For example, Andrew tells of an incident, not long before he resigned, when he was approached to do some work for a voluntary organisation who could not afford full fees. His instinct was to say yes and proceed; the organisation refused. His strong feeling is

that most decent people would have agreed with him. This incident demonstrated to him that as an independent he could make this sort of decision according to his own value system.

The issue of personal integrity linked to a perception of public sector ethic emerges in this study as a key issue which will be debated in forthcoming chapters. The point I want to make at this stage is that integrity and values are implicated - albeit in a rather vague and ill-defined way- by many participants in making sense of their reasons for going portfolio.

7.3.4. Balancing home and work

Granger et al. (1995), in their study of freelance workers in the UK book publishing industry, identify a category of people they call "trade offs" who "take a break from employment in order to accommodate the constraints of some non-work priority which may or may not be permanent" (p. 509). Many people in this study incorporate such concerns in their decision to leave, but in no case are they presented as the only or even the major reason for this career move. Even Monica who left when the organisation refused her job share request, did so as much out of a sense of violated psychological contract (Rousseau, 1996) as the need to look after her children.

Other participants invoke personal reasons not related to organisational actions (or inaction) which are salient to their decision. For example, Judith's mother had recently died which prompted her take stock of her life: what she saw was an unhealthy preoccupation with work in her own life. This fed into her dissatisfaction with the organisation and came together in her impetuous decision to leave:

"My mother had died in the October and I think that just hit me very very much, in as much as I think if you lose someone very close to you, you start to take stock of your own life and think well if I am that unhappy in what I am doing, isn't it crazy to continue doing it and I think, unfortunately, I am single, I have no dependants, my outgoings are low, so I could make that step and I thought perhaps if I had been married, or the major bread-winner of a small family, I would have just had to go on and see that job out and I probably then would have actively looked for other posts. But I just felt that I needed to run away actually and just take stock of myself and what I was doing."

While Judith constructs her single status as influential in her decision, Suzanne places her family at the centre of her decision: both in terms of having to return to work after having her child and in terms of being the family breadwinner. Given that she was unhappy at work for a myriad of reasons, she felt she had to leave and calculated that she could earn more money as a freelance than employed elsewhere (which seemed to me to be a risky choice, given the need for steady income, but she did not see it like that). Her reasons for leaving all poured out in one long speech- the job, the organisational change, the boss, the lack of obvious careers moves and:

"then, I had to go back to work when my daughter was only 11 weeks. Going back was such a huge wrench. That made me so unhappy and going back to that huge management responsibility and change." (Suzanne)

Suzanne later comes on to suggest that the biggest benefit of portfolio working is the time she can spend with her children but even then she is defensive about *"admitting that."* Likewise, Judith comes to celebrate the time she has had with friends and to develop some interests outside of work although she too is hesitant about how that side of life can be compatible with career.

I find the example of Gillian the most interesting in this regard. As I discussed above, she is very sure that she left the organisation only for career development reasons. Late in the interview, though, she hinted at alternative (or additional?) reasons. She began to talk (unprompted) about her parents and the limited life chances they had had. It thus seemed incumbent on her, as their only child, to live her life to the full. What is more, a few years ago she had had a serious health scare. Insisting that this did not make her a "victim" she went on to say:

"so you think, my god, you only have one life, so I think it has probably given me more drive to actually not to want to do just the same, to enjoy and I suppose some of what I was doing in the Health Service was becoming a bit like being on the treadmill and not getting off, a bit suffocated and I thought well I need more space now to explore me and to explore other possible talents and skills which doesn't mean I am turning my back on it because I am very committed to it but perhaps I can do it in other ways." (Gillian)

It is interesting that she disputes that she is "*turning her back*". She seems hesitant about her right to claim other values in her life using disclaimers like "*I suppose*" and "*a bit,*" and "*probably.*" It seems that it is incongruent with an image of oneself as a successful career person to talk about the intervention of home and personal based concerns. Gillian's apparent defensiveness about any acknowledgement that factors other than career development lie behind her decision could be regarded as congruent with achieving high managerial office which mitigates against admission of doubt or weakness. As Fletcher and Bailyn suggest, in a discussion about the boundaryless career, "nothing in the new employment relationship challenges the underlying sense that work and family spheres are adversarial" (1996:257).

7.3.5. Reaching the limits of hierarchical career success

Gillian, Helen and Bridget had all pursued their careers within the NHS alone, enjoyed them and achieved a high position on the career ladder. Yet, they all made what they describe as a considered and well planned decision to leave to go portfolio (and they all used that term to describe their new work). As a Chief Executive, Gillian had reached the top and so could be said to have reached a plateau (Nicholson, 1993) as there were no linear moves ahead of her within the organisation:

"*I decided that once I had got past 40 and had been 18 years at the top, 10 years at the top in that organisation and had 4 different roles. I actually had finished virtually our agenda ... and the last thing I wanted to do was go on working for another big organisation as it would have felt like more of the same.* (Gillian).

It was important to her early in the interview to establish that she was in charge of this decision. For example, I asked if the pending organisational merger was a catalyst to move on. She replied, startled and, I felt, a little cross: "*No! What do you mean? I left of my own free will*" before softening and acknowledging that a date in the future when the shape of the organisation would change was:

"*a clarifier I suppose, it enabled me to plan for it, I suppose, it would have been inappropriate to just resign, it wouldn't have felt right, I would have needed to see it through to the next phase and because we were a changing organisation, it would have to have had a next phase, so yes I suppose in that way it was a catalyst for me, being*

able to take off and do other things, without.. it meant it was the end of an era if you like, and it enabled me to start a new one."

Helen and Bridget both had potential rungs to climb on their organisational career ladder but both decided that they preferred to work outside of it. Bridget, for example, had attended a management training course essentially designed for aspiring Chief executives which included career and life planning. This led her to re-evaluate her career aspirations:

"This led me to think I really don't want to be a chief exec, thank you very much indeed, I wanted to look at a broader career, not being under the stress that Chief Execs find themselves in terms of workload and pressure...I think I am more of a change agent than you can be very successfully as a CE. The leadership role you have to take can make it hard to be the innovator and I prefer to be the innovator." (Bridget)

Helen, as a highly specialised medical professional, had started to feel rather more trapped within the organisation:

"the pay was bad and I was getting bored with it. I had done all the research, been there, done that, been around the world." (Helen)

The rungs she could see ahead on the ladder seemed "no great shakes." Describing herself as an opportunist, she told of how she "manoeuvred" herself into a different job within the hospital in quality management. For reasons about which she simply would not be drawn in the interview, except to say that her appointment had caused some aggravation with one of her managers, this job did not satisfy her either. She concluded it was time to set up her own business as she had always been "a portfolio person" and what she liked best was variety and "winging it."

All three women felt that upward movement was either no longer available or not an inspiring aspiration in this organisation or any other. Hence they would look to move out. What is interesting about their stories is the manner in which they construct moving off the career ladder as a positive step: their subsequent experience of that decision and how it affected their view of career will be reviewed in chapter 10.

7.3.6. Independence, control, autonomy

Much recent literature argues that individuals will find freedom and autonomy outside of organisational employment (e.g. Golzen and Garner, 1990; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Participants did indeed talk about finding autonomy and independence but in very general terms. While I recognise that retrospective accounts do not proceed in a linear manner (Weick, 1995), it seems a useful endeavour to attempt to separate out the threads of expectation and subsequent experience (which is dealt with in Chapter 8).

For many people the advantages of portfolio working only began to emerge once they had made sense of the world they had moved into. In talking about why they opted for portfolio work, their accounts focused in much more detail on the organisational push factors than the more uncertain and unknown worlds they were moving on to. Hence, it is not surprising that push factors are privileged in the accounts of all except those few people who construct the decision as wholly positive. However, certain themes emerged with some regularity.

7.3.6.1. Taking control

Many participants, even from the vantage point of senior roles within the organisation, felt somewhat out of control in their work. A price was being paid in long hours and high stress for the high ranking posts that many of them held. Echoing the advice of new career literature David argues:

"This is about taking control for yourself, so many people let other people take control. I think I controlled it well but if you are not careful, you work long, long hours and you start to lose control of your life, not your career and you have to say hang on." (David)

Many interviewees favourably compared themselves - who had had the courage to leave - with those who felt they had no choice but to stay behind. Anne, for example, argues that people find excuses for putting up with situations at work even though they describe them as unbearable:

"It's a matter of choice. The choice is always there. If no one tells you there is a choice, the I suppose you might not realise it. But of course there is a choice. The things they say: "I have got to stay in this job because of my mortgage or because my children want

to go to University." OK well go and ask your children if they think you have a choice. Go and ask your children if they want you to kill yourself, if they want you to be supremely unhappy for 3 years so they can go to university." (Anne)

In a similar vein several people talk about how others thought they were brave to make this decision:

"Some thought gosh isn't she brave and others thought, God I couldn't do it and others thought how liberating. A lot of people thought she is in control of this and God, I'm not. There are a couple of people who have confided in me and said I wish I could do it too, but got the mortgage and got the kids and you know we just can't and I say well if you actually got yourself into a situation where you didn't have all of that, its choices at the end of the day." (Wendy)

There may, of course, be some significance in the fact that neither of these participants have children and both are financially secure - Wendy because of her partner's income; Anne because her redundancy money paid off her mortgage. Hence they perceive no structural barriers to pursuing their independence.

7.3.6.2. Interests and personalities

The decision to go portfolio is described by some participants as rooted in long standing interests. John, for example, faced with the choice of staying with the organisation and going freelance perceived his interests to triumph over large financial hurdles in the way. John recalls an earlier decision in his career when he had let material issues dominate a career decision, to his lasting regret, and he does not want to do that again:

"We had just had a baby, I'm not one for saving, it was not a good time to go freelance, so I hesitated and then I had a conversation with an ex member of my staff, a half hour chat, impromptu career counselling. She said tell me your options and said so you have chosen to stay and I said, yes probably. And she said, well it sounds just up your street in terms of capability, but unfortunately there is no enthusiasm in your voice. Dong!, just the right thing to say. Its a mistake to stay." (John)

Other people point to aspects of their personality which have always resisted being controlled within an organisation. It may be that people are disinclined to describe themselves as bureaucrats or risk averse within the current discursive climate of entrepreneurialism and self fulfilment (du Gay, 1996b). However, a couple of the participants are prepared to suggest just that. Geoff and Henry, for example, describe themselves as organisational men who needed to feel in the thick of organisational politics. Brenda calls herself risk averse, "probably a bit boring." The majority however sought to identify aspects of their personality which accounted for the decision they made. It is noteworthy that they mobilise the notion of an enduring and stable sense of self which has been rather subsumed or at least challenged within the organisational environment:

"I was a very free wheeling, independent operator. I was someone who liked independence and always sought more independence than frankly some of the organisations in which I worked were comfortable with." (David)

"I never really was organisation man, well I suppose I was in that I did what was expected of me and more, but I never really wanted to feel that I was all about keeping my nose clean and working my way up the hierarchy." (Jim)

"I was the innovator at work, always looking at ideas and they couldn't control me, they wanted all the ideas but they wanted me more under their control. They couldn't have both though." (Claire).

I return to this theme in Chapter 10, in a discussion of change and continuity, through this career transition.

David left the organisation quite positively, following a restructuring, which he chose to interpret as an opportunity to go - he insists there was no compulsion. He left expecting to find work as an employed consultant. So he did not leave *in order* to become independent but in the event he was offered enough freelance work that he decided to follow that path. What was important for him - echoing the advice on new careers- was to take control of his own destiny:

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"So when faced with difficulties working against you, the message for me was to do something even if you do not succeed the fact that you are driving the car even if it might smash into the wall, you have a sense of, a good sense of, you don't have that sense of being totally powerless and waiting on your fate." (David)

What is interesting, of course, is that those participants who attested to a personality which craved autonomy, only put that into action when faced with difficulties rooted in organisational change. By contrast, Robert has remained free, as he puts it, of organisational employment most of his life. He had taken the job in the NHS for pragmatic reasons related to a family move. It had also sounded promising. Within 18 months he knew he had had enough. He passionately disliked the organisation for what he saw as its' *"petty bureaucracies"* and the *"bunch of shits"* he worked with and yearned to regain his freedom to earn his money on a freelance basis.

In general, then, the story is constructed not simply as organisational push, but push meeting some prior desire for freedom, creativity and autonomy which had been hitherto been subsumed in work. What is more, many of these participants make sense of their response to organisational change by comparing themselves, who attempt to wrest back control, to those ex colleagues who continue to endure organisational life.

7.3.7. Prior experience of portfolio working

Contrary to the literature on self employment which implicates prior experience of it as implicated in making that career decision (Carroll and Mosakawski, 1987), very few participants had any prior experience of self employment or anything else associated with portfolio working. Judith's parents were the only ones to have run a business; David had had a short period self employed in a creative capacity and Laura, whose story was told above, had been in and out of freelance work. Otherwise their personal and family background has been in employment.

7.4. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter set out to answer the question about what why people opted to leave organisations and opt for portfolio work. It has found that the primary reason for exit is organisational dissatisfaction which provides an element of push. However, in the majority of cases that push mobilised other personal pull motivations to leave. In the context of an awareness of new career discourse and a lack of confidence in the external labour market, people made the decision to leave. A minority of people cite positive reasons of career development only for leaving.

However, that decision to leave is taken with a great deal of reluctance in most cases. Again and again participants talk about weighing the potential loss of organisational employment against what they construct as more elevated desires to escape *"organisational oppression"* (Geoff); to give rein to a *"creative adventurous side "* (Helen) or to *"play in the big world out there"* (Julia). Several people compare their own "bravery" in doing so with the lack of it in those they leave behind. Most people however recognise that complex and overlapping factors of push and pull issues are implicated in their stories. Yet, through all of this, it is the organisation and its changing ways which come across most strongly as the primary prompt for this career transition.

These ideas are developed further in the conclusion to chapters 6 and 7 which follows.

PART ONE: CONCLUSION

This conclusion to the data analysed in chapters 6 and 7, which dealt with the participants' careers up to the point of leaving, has two aims:

1. to highlight the contribution made to existing literature so far
2. introduce themes for theorising the transition which will be developed further in discussion of the theoretical contribution of this study in chapter 11.

7.4.1. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERATURE.

As discussed in chapter 3, this study aims to add to literature on organisational exit; to career transitions and to portfolio working.

7.4.1.1. Career transitions- taking account of previous careers

Contrary to assumptions in the literature on changing career forms (Kanter, 1989; Golzen and Garner, 1990; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996), the individuals in this study did not have stereotypical traditional careers. As such this study confirms the views of Nicholson (1996) that the paradigmatic thinking of much new career literature is not helpful in analysing either individual or macro transitions. The participants had all made major career moves at some point in their recent past, with only a few exceptions and so the notion of managers on the move, discussed in Chapter 2.3 is quite pertinent (Nicholson and West, 1988: Inkson and Coe, 1993. However, for the majority, those moves were within the confines of large bureaucratic organisations - and primarily within the public sector. So, while it is unreasonable to stereotype them as having traditional, managed, planned, steady and predictable careers (again with only a few exceptions, like Gillian), it is reasonable to say that the move into portfolio work represents a major, even radical (Nicholson and West, 1988) career change out of organisational employment.

This study thus contributes empirical data to the debate on changing careers about the career patterns of individuals prior to moving out of organisational employment. Theoretically it endorses the calls to consider such career transitions in the wider context of an individual's career and life history (Granger et al., 1995).

7.4.1.2. Labour market factors

The research also suggests a more limited role for the impact of involuntary job loss in the decision to switch career paths than that on which much of the literature is based (Kanter, 1989; Peiperl and Baruch, 1997; Granger et al., 1995). Only three people in this study moved to portfolio working because they lost their job. Given that modest data, the literature which focuses on the limiting and demoralising effect of job loss (Latack et al., 1995) is endorsed. These participants have a pessimistic or undeveloped view of the external labour market as Hirsch and Shanley (1996) would expect. Riley's view on the salience of external labour markets in individual's intentions to make career change echoes strongly in this study. It is noteworthy how little attention other labour markets were given in their decision. It may be that this is further evidence of the need to provide more guidance to individuals making career changes (Collin and Watt 1996). Furthermore, there was little evidence that participants felt that opportunities for upward mobility within the labour market were being denied them. So often the underlying assumption in new career literature is that people will move to new career forms because their expectations of organisational employment have been undermined- the notion of a violated psychological contract (Herriot and Pemberton, 1996). However what this study has shown is that the situation is a good deal more complex than that. It was not blocked promotion, a sense of being plateauxed (Nicholson, 1993) or job insecurity that threatened the basis of their expectations of organisational life, rather it was much wider issues about life within organisations.

7.4.1.3. Dissatisfaction with organisational life

This study found that the primary factor which prompted people to take the decision to leave organisational employment and move to portfolio work was indeed dissatisfaction with organisational life. In this respect the study endorses other research which suggests that managers are increasingly dissatisfied with organisational life and its career opportunities (Goffee and Scase, 1989; 1992; Hecksher, 1995; Marshall, 1995; Herriot, 1992). These participants cite, as significant factors, organisational structural and cultural changes and managers incapable of implementing those changes. However, they are generally careful to assert that they are not necessarily against change in itself, but rather how it is handled. These individuals draw heavily on a discourse of the negative effects of organisational change to explain their decisions to leave.

They articulate their dissatisfaction by comparing their own enduring sense of values and integrity with the changed and in the views of many - corrupted - values of organisations in recent times as discussed in 2.2. The notion of a challenge to a public sector ethos is thus mobilised as significant in these stories given that the majority worked within the public sector as a positive choice. Hence this study suggests more attention be given to this factor in studies of people's decision to exit public sector employment.

Again and again participants suggest that the changing organisation was not the one they made a positive choice to join. In other cases, individuals expected better treatment from the organisation than they received, as in the cases of people who wished to reduce working hours to deal with family care matters. I indicated in Chapter 3 my reservations about applying the notion of psychological contracts, although in many ways it is intuitively appealing as a means of analysing why people leave organisations (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). The concept is recognised to be underdeveloped theoretically as yet (MacLean Parks and Kidder, 1996; Morrison and Robinson, 1997) and furthermore it has been shown (Rousseau, 1996; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994) that violated psychological contracts do not necessarily lead to exit. Hence this study does not claim to add to the psychological contract literature as such but does endorse the need for further study into the role of changed perceptions of the organisation in decisions to leave.

7.4.1.4. Exit for career development

The fact that such a limited number of people left for career development reasons would, in general, support the contention within the careers literature that people's original impetus to portfolio working and other boundaryless careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) is less to do with personal choice and more to do with circumstances. However for the majority of people in this study, their exit was based on a number of factors.

7.4.1.5. Exit as combination of organisational change and perceptions of changing careers

Most individuals in this study took their dissatisfaction with organisational life to the point of exit unlike managers in other studies who have similar concerns (Hecksher, 1995; Goffee and Scase, 1989; Casey, 1995; du Gay, 1996a). What prompts these people to leave and remain outside organisational employment is generally some combination of push from the organisation coupled with the pull of the lure of portfolio work.

Few people had planned their exit from organisations and their entry into portfolio work in detail. This is not surprising given the relatively unknown world at the other end of the career transition. Hence reservations about the decontextualised nature of Nicholson's (1990) transitions model were borne out. Indeed, participants in general articulated much more clearly what they felt was pushing them out than what they hoped to find in portfolio work. The discourse of organisational change resounded more than the discourse of new careers. Hence they talked more of organisational "brutality" and lack of care than they did of freedom and autonomy. Indeed freedom was often constructed in opposition to what they had experienced at work.

However, participants did identify appealing factors about portfolio working: the ability to regain or retain integrity outside of organisational employment; to balance home and work; to find more freedom and autonomy; to give rein to their "free-wheeling" personalities or to develop their careers beyond hierarchical success. As such, their views on the benefits do resonate with the prevailing discourse on new careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Their high level of reflexive awareness about this discourse is discussed in forthcoming chapters. However, in the majority of cases, these latent desires were mobilised only when the organisational push became intense. Hence, this study reaffirms the need to consider not only the objective facts of some-one's career, in this case the move out of organisational employment, but also how individuals have made sense of that decision (Weick, 1995) within a recognition of prevailing social conditions.

Burrows and Curran (1993) argue that, in looking at moves to self employment, the debate on the economic restructuring of organisations needs to be read alongside the

developing discourse of enterprise. So, this study argues that the debate on changing labour markets for managers (and indeed in general) needs to be read alongside the prevailing discourse about careers which stresses the liberation and independence inherent in moves outside of organisational employment. The Nicholson model (1990) of career transition pays insufficient attention to either contextual factor.

7.4.1.5. The reluctant independent

Taking the push and pull factors together this study suggests that an important grouping to consider is what Handy (1994) calls the reluctant independents and Kanter (1989) calls the reluctant entrepreneurs. That reluctance to leave organisational life and embark on a portfolio (or other boundaryless career) demands more attention than is accorded to it in the Granger et al. (1995) model of moves to self employment. They include in their missionary category those people who were drawn simply by intrinsic merits (as individuals perceive them) of self employment and those who, like the majority of participants in this study, declare they have had enough of the organisation and "boldly go" into portfolio work. This study suggests that the latter category warrants more attention and adds data about why such people entered into portfolio working and subsequently how they experienced it.

This research, therefore contributes data to the literature on organisational exit (Rosin and Korabik, 1995; Marshall, 1995), providing a study which focuses on what individuals did and the sense they have made of it. As with the other studies, organisational mismanagement of change, culture and attitudes to family are central, providing more depressing evidence about the experienced realties of organisational life (Noon and Blyton, 1997), even for those who may be seen as among the most privileged within the organisation. Overall the decision to go portfolio hinged on a growing level of dissatisfaction with the organisation, a limited view of opportunities in the external labour market and a sense of potential benefits to be gained in terms of enhanced freedom and integrity.

7.4.2. INTRODUCING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES USING THE BARLEY MODEL

The model proposed by Barley (1989) is central as a sensitising device in this research and I propose now to consider how it can be used to theorise the data thus far generated. Recognising that not all participants worked for the NHS, nonetheless I will take the NHS and its managerial career as the Institutions for illustrative purposes.

7.4.2.1. Reading the scripts for career in the organisation

As was seen in Chapter 6, individuals knew well, had internalised in many cases, and acted on the script for the unfolding of a career within that organisation. Several others (e.g. Val and Andrew) knew the scripts very well but explicitly chose not to use them as the framework for the development of their own career. For those entering on the management training scheme the script was the most clear and an end point was noted. For those moving up the nursing managerial career ladder, some shift in the script for nurses careers was being noted as more (although still a minority) were moving into general management. Hence the scripts were enduring, although to a degree, evolving, through individual enactment.

Some individuals were following the script, like Monica, Carole and Liz. Their assumption was that the managerial career was able to evolve to accommodate the needs of women who wanted careers and a family. The background to their career building in the 1980s and 1990s was a slow, but nonetheless significant increase in the numbers of women combining home and careers (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). However, when they attempted to act on that script in their own ways, they felt the full force of extant norms and sanctions of building an NHS managerial career. Their personal identities as working mothers clashed with their identity as NHS career managers. I will say no more about identity at this stage as it emerges as a significant issue in forthcoming chapters.

Their experience of career is similar to that of women in many other studies (e.g. Marshall, 1995) where the pace of individual change is seen to be much faster than that of organisations. Hence, these people found a much more constraining effect of organisational structures than enabling (Giddens, 1991). It may also be that many others

had internalised these norms to a significant degree as no-one indicated the desire to look after family as a primary reason for giving up organisational employment, although, as I will come on to discuss, many people later attested to being able to enjoy family life once they had moved outside of organisational employment.

What is interesting, of course, is that the organisation should not be anthropomorphised. It was not the "organisation" which turned down Monica's request for job share for example, but specific individuals, whose place within that organisational hierarchy, accorded their reading of the managerial career script more credence than Monica's.

7.4.2.2. Institutional change

In most cases the issue that affected participants' enactment of the career scripts was top down imposed institutional change (Ashburner et al., 1996): what Casey (1995) would call a material change in their working world. Clearly, there is an accompanying discursive element in the debate on the need to make the public sector more enterprising, but the impact of this, for participants, was real experienced change in their organisational world. Hence the scripts for a managerial, NHS career encoded by the institution began to change as the institution itself changed. For many people, the new scripts were uncongenial; the new norms unpalatable and the sanctions too much to resist. And so, they exited the organisation.

Those individuals who had acted against the grain of the dominant career scripts within the organisation tended to be drawing from other interpretative schemes on politics, community action, "the liberal, 1960s student ethic," the public sector ethos as they interpreted them (Pratchett and Wingfield, 1994). For the most part they had found that the two could co-exist in their lives. What appeared to happen in their cases is that organisational changes brought stronger sanctions against "maverick" behaviour than had previously been the case (recalling the literature on the homogenising force of corporate culture change (e.g. Willmott, 1993). These people (and here I am talking primarily Val, Andrew and Jim, but not exclusively as similar themes threaded through other stories, like that of Geoff and Laura) found that it was becoming less and less possible for them to act according to their own dominant value systems within this changing institution. Identities which had previously been bound up with being a public

servant were called into question by the actions of the organisations. To preserve that cherished identity, they left.

7.4.2.3. The subjective and objective career

A further means of conceptualising this transition is to think more specifically about the issue of subjective and objective careers as discussed in chapter 3. According to the Barley model, the objective career can be seen when individuals act out the encoded patterned scripts and the subjective career is about how they fashion and enact those scripts. In the case of the majority of individual careers prior to this transition, there is a strong sense from participants that the subjective and objective career felt like one and the same thing. They acted out scripts, followed the organisation's opportunity structures which were perceived as real and prior and for the most part did not consciously reflect too much on the unfolding of their career.

Other people, like John and Steve were acting out more complex managerial careers across more than one organisation. For those people who had a personal value base to their career, the subjective career was more consciously known to them and the gaps between what they wanted to do and the norms of the objective (normative) managerial career were apparent, although not particularly troubling to them.

The majority of people have made sense of their career transition by suggesting that, while their subjective view of career remained the same, the organisation had changed, so the institutional world intervened in their realm of action and challenged it. Their response was to hold on to what was important to them about their careers and that meant exiting that institution. The theme of continuity in change, which becomes central to this study, thus begins to emerge in exploring the decisions for making the career transition.

On the other hand a number of people have less to say about the changing institution and more to say about their changing views of their subjective career. They begin to see less congruence between the objective managerial career path and the needs they have developed for their own career. Gillian, for example, wants to develop broader skills and try out new challenges and believes she cannot do that within the organisation. So she leaves in order to put into practice her developing views on careers. In these cases

personal change is implicated and what was coming to matter could not be accommodated within the organisation. To that extent these people echo much of the literature on new careers.

Certainly individual's interpretations are open to other explanatory schemes and most recognise this themselves. The issue for this study though, is the very fact that they do choose to interpret situations as they do and how that spurs them to action (Barley, 1989).

7.4.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

A significant factor in the decision of most participants to leave (although much less strongly articulated than the notion of organisational change) was their parallel awareness of the wider, shifting social landscape of changes in, and\or discourse about ways to develop a managerial career outside organisational boundaries, i.e. there was potentially, a new or evolving institution of managerial careers to which they could orient (Barley, 1989). Alternatively, it may be that they feel they are moving on to become a member of a more established institution, like that of self employment or perhaps management consultancy work. The next chapters look at their experience of their new world and so further development of this theme will be reserved for chapter 11.

It could be argued in the light of Structuration theory, that these individual actions in leaving the organisation - and most critically for this study, returning to it under different conditions, to be discussed below, could affect the institution itself. Such theorising is beyond the scope of this study which is concerned with the conduct of individuals. However it is interesting to use Monica's case as an illustration. Initially refused to be allowed to job share, she is now back working with the organisation on a job share board level post combined with consultancy work and writing. She was mentioned to me by a couple of other participants as her story is well known within the organisation. She acts as a role model for others hoping to job share and it is now less likely that a request like hers will be turned down. As the following chapters will show, most other participants retain a working relationship with the organisation under a new guise.

PART TWO: THE EXPERIENCE OF PORTFOLIO WORKING

Having discussed the participants' previous careers and the decision to make the transition out of organisational employment in the preceding two chapters, part two of the analysis turns to their experience of the portfolio context they encountered. As previously stated there is a dearth of empirical evidence about how people experience new career contexts including portfolio working. This study aims to add some valuable data to the emerging career debates by exploring how these participants actually experienced this career transition.

Part two of the analysis sets out to explore the following research questions identified in chapter 5:

- **3. Is the concept of portfolio work meaningful to participants?**
  - **a. What is the pattern of work and what are the implications of working portfolio?**

- **4. How is portfolio work experienced?**
  - **a. What are the highs, lows and significant features of portfolio working?**
  - **b. How is training and development experienced**
  - **c. How are social networks relevant?**
  - **d. How does this way of work differ from organisational employment?**

- **5. What is the new relationship with the organisation?**
  - **a. Is there any scope for mutual approach to training and development?**

The chapters also introduce data which will be further explored in chapter 10 to answer the question:

- **6. How are they now construing career?**
  - **a. What do they draw on to fashion their portfolio career?**

Part two consists of chapters 8 and 9. Chapter 8 begins by setting the scene for the analysis to follow with an exploration of the portfolios the participants actually operate

The focus is on the composition of their portfolios and introduces issues which are pertinent to how they construct them: specifically issues about returning to work, the level and unpredictability of their work and financial matters. The early weeks of the transition are also considered.

Chapter 9 is in four parts. Using the DeFillippi and Arthur's (1996) model of competencies for new careers 9.1 - 9.3 concentrate on "knowing how", "knowing whom" and "knowing why". Hence 9.1 will consider issues to do with personal and skills development in portfolio working. 9.2 will consider issues to do with social networks, relationships with the organisations they left and ways of developing new contacts. This section looks specifically at how they find their work. 9.3 looks at how they have come to understand what is important to them in this career choice.

The chapters together seek to understand what participants see as the highs and the lows of their new form of working and the extent to which they polarise portfolio working and organisational employment. The theme of change and continuity emerges as central in the analysis as their new context is explored. While significant changes are identified it is also noted that many of these participants attempt to recreate an employment context in some ways analogous to the one they left. As discussed in the previous chapter, in embarking on portfolio working the majority of participants were rejecting organisational employment. Hence, their expectations for their new work contexts could be seen as representing escape from certain aspects of organisational employment. For some people that rejection was based on the changing value base of the organisation which they left because they felt personally compromised; so for them, the move to portfolio working implied an ability to work within their own system of values. For others the decision was based on the organisation's refusal to countenance more balanced working arrangements and in their case their new context should be expected to allow that dimension of their life to be accommodated. Other people felt that their professional integrity was being undermined in a changing organisation and what they wanted to be able to do was develop skills in a context which appreciated it. So there were a variety of potential hopes for the new context. In so far as they expressed fears about the new context at the point of transition, the issues of loss of identity and financial insecurity were raised. These chapters move on to look at the extent to which their hopes and fears of the new context were realised.

CHAPTER 8: EXPLORING THEIR PORTFOLIOS

This chapter is concerned with exploring how individuals put together their portfolios. It begins in 8.1 by considering how they dealt with the initial transition and goes on to explore the composition of their portfolios. It moves on to explore how they feel about those portfolios highlighting some benefits and problems.

8.1. MAKING THE TRANSITION

In his model of work transition processes as discussed in chapter 3.2. Nicholson (1990) talks about the period of preparation before an individual makes a move and the importance of this preparation in the early encounter period with a new work context. This section looks at how participants experienced their first few months in the light of their general lack of preparation for it identified above.

Indeed, having left their organisations, many participants described their feelings of sheer terror at the apparent limitlessness of their new situations. While for some, this panic was expressed through their early frantic attempts to find jobs others described their exhilaration at this new found freedom. Several participants relate memories of their acute concerns in the early days. Not surprisingly they surface most poignantly in the stories of the two of the people who were made compulsorily redundant. Henry talks of how he spent over eighteen months applying for jobs and regrets that now:

"I made the mistake of applying for hundreds of jobs when I was first redundant, up in that office every day that put lots of strain on the family, and stopped me getting on with what I should have been doing, which I now know was setting up a consultancy... I should have just taken some thinking time, But, there is all the shock, hurt, bitterness, you have to give time to get that out of your system and I didn't. You should get a mentor or get counselling even a friend. But I didn't- much too proud."

Even several of those who had made a more voluntary decision to leave felt a desire to flee back to the known quantity of the workplace was evident in the early months:

"Certainly for the first 6 months, any job that I thought I vaguely fancied I applied for and once I got an interview, I went along and a little voice in my head was saying what on earth are you doing here and the more I got into it the more I thought this is appalling, and if I am honest the applications were more out of fear rather than doing what I wanted. But it wasn't until I got my act together that I stopped because for the

first 6 months I was panicking about work. It was like, it is Monday, why isn't somebody phoning me, I am not useful."

The challenge to one's sense of self identity and what Giddens (1991:36) calls the feeling of "ontological security" attendant on a radical change in circumstances was raised in chapter 3. Some participants attempted to minimise the separation they felt by taking a period to acknowledge and deal with this transition. Six participants took an extended break. For example Geoff, who had been ill, used the time as *"essential rehabilitation, some rethinking, a bit of time out."* He continued to work on his market stall and doing odd jobs but deliberately did not engage in the type of personnel work he had just left. For a couple of people this was the opportunity to travel more extensively than they had been able when in work. One woman moved home and re-discovered the simple pleasures of spending time with friends. Another used that time more constructively in terms of future work by entertaining possible work contacts in her garden in the hot summer. Another woman had negotiated an international sabbatical as part of her leaving package suggesting: *"I was turning my life upside down. It was very important to have a complete switch off."*

Others took practical steps to cope with what one man described as "a complete psychological challenge" (echoing Mirvis and Hall, 1996) which, for many, was coupled with down time before work started to come in. A few people signed up for training courses. Some spent some time arranging their finances and setting up some of the trappings of their new business - although only a minority of participants took such action. Judith was so ambivalent about the impulsive move she had made that she sought the advice of an executive coach. Clearly for the majority of people, the transition was experienced as problematic and/or as a break from reality as they had previously experienced it. What had been most important for very many of these people was to quit the situation they were in. Plans for what was going to happen next were given rather less thought. Soon, though, the new realities of portfolio work with its attendant pleasures and pain as they experienced them became apparent.

8.2. DESCRIBING THEIR PORTFOLIOS

As Table 2 and the pen portraits in Appendix 7 indicate there is a wide variety in the types of portfolios they operate. Following Handy (1989) I will consider their portfolios in terms of their wage work, fee work, gift work; home work and study work.

8.2.1. The wage work

Eight participants had now, or in their portfolio past, employed work with an organisation.

Portfolio including full time work	Job share/ part time	Lecturer	School inspection
Anne	Liz Carole Monica Geoff	Jim Helen	Henry

Table 10. Wage work

Combining an element of paid work was thus a minority portfolio form. Two participants who had included part time work - Liz and Geoff - had given it up by the time of the interview: Liz to return to full time work and Geoff to concentrate on the self employed element following a bout of ill health. For Monica and Carole it remains the central element of their portfolio providing a sense of identity and security. Henry plans the development of his portfolio around his occasional employment in school inspection as it fulfils many of his affiliation and status needs. However Helen and Jim take a more instrumental view to the employed part of their portfolio, viewing it as a relatively steady way to earn some additional income. Neither regards themselves as regular employees of the organisation.

8.2.2. The unpaid element: gift work and home work

Guided by the literature which argues for a broader definition of career to encompass paid and unpaid activities (Mirvis and Hall, 1996; Bailyn, 1993), I am including the unpaid activities as elements of the portfolio where participants expressly see them as such. The activities they include are:

Community work	Running professional organisations	Parenting
Val	Henry and Helen	Margaret, Claire, Suzanne and Carole

Table 11. Unpaid work

Val, who has always been involved in community activities, doubts if she will continue to do so as her paid portfolio develops. In an interesting contrast to the literature which suggests that portfolio working will embrace all aspects of an individual's activities (Mirvis and Hall, 1994) she has come to see unpaid work as a luxury for the fully employed. By contrast, Henry finds in his unpaid activities, as well as his paid role, the status and prestige he misses. Of the ten participants with young children, only four people discuss them as a relevant factor in how they operate and manage their portfolio working lives.

8.2.3. The fee work

All participants are self employed[1] for some or all of their portfolio in the capacity of various types of freelance consultancy and training and development. The majority of participants operate under their own name, to which several attach "and associates". Only four people operate under other business names:

- Helen uses her surname as a clever pun.
- Monica operates in a four person consultancy partnership.
- Geoff has recently established a partnership arrangement with three other people that trades under a business name.
- Steve, who has been self employed for four years now, operates three companies.

Steve acknowledges he has a choice about how to describe his portfolio. If he was being *"honest"* in he would say that he is basically a one man band who has joined up with another man for one business. If he wanted to impress me about his *"business empire"* then he would express it like this:

"I would say that I have 2 companies that I run in my own name, Steve Smith Associates around Human Resource Planning and Training and Development and another company called SSA, you get the idea! and that is about developing computer software, out of which I hope to make significant amounts of money. (laugh). I am also a partner in another company called x x Partnerships."

The notion of impression management was not lost on the participants (Goffman, 1959) It is their reason for adding the associate tag. One woman, for example, has recorded her

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[1] The problem of definition of self employment was raised in chapter 2. Here I am adopting the widest definition (Labour Force Survey,1997) which allows for self ascription and can include those who are both employed and self employed.

business telephone answering machine using her husband's voice to give the impression it is a bigger and more established company than the one woman band it actually is.

The self employed element of their portfolios was quite diverse as table 2. and the pen portraits in Appendix 7 demonstrate. For the majority of participants, the contracts were short term generally lasting a few days or a few weeks. Some participants had long term ongoing contracts. For example, Joan had been working with one organisation for over six months on the equivalent of a day a week, on a team building programme. Julia had also had two six month contracts where she worked for the organisation on average one or two days a month. One such contract which she described as Organisation Development was concerned with organisational structure; another was dealing with the development needs of nurses. Suzanne had one contract where she was with the employer two-three days a week on a training research project. Steve had just secured a rolling contract with a large organisation, with his partner, to revamp their payment systems; prior to that his longest contract had been five days. Jim works on a long term basis for a training organisation, running courses, developing training packs, doing in-house consultancy. In many respects he is like a part-time employee. He has a similar arrangement with another company who run NVQ centres and he also does brief one off projects. Helen has an ongoing contract to run advice surgeries with a local GP.

Many people have regular contracts with particular employers, being called back for further projects. In general though, most work was based on short-term contracts with a variety of different organisations but often within the wider boundaries of the NHS.

8.2.4. Study work

Few participants were studying for qualifications. Only Anne saw study as a major part of her portfolio as the psychotherapy course was central to future plans. Claire started her portfolio by leaving her organisation to enrol for a masters course and has gone on to secure a four month contract with a University. Several other people hope to do masters course or PhDs when they have established their portfolios.

8.2.5. Combining the elements
- 2 people are fully employed only
- 13 people are self employed only
- 10 combine employment, self employment and\or unpaid activities in some combination

Their portfolios were varied and diverse, some more than others as table 2. shows. Monica for example combines employment, sole trader self employment, self employment within a partnership and writing. John is self employed only, but as a management consultant, careers counsellor, software developer, and is involved in computer repair and establishing an Internet based property letting company. By contrast, Andrew is self employed only in training and development, however, he has a wide ranging base of clients and types of projects across the public sector.

Of the people who are self employed *only*, four describe their portfolio as consisting only of management consultancy and \ or training and development activities. (Andrew, Bridget, Wendy, Suzanne) The remainder combine that with some other self employed activity from the list below.

This list shows their various other self employed roles - including here all 23 participants with self employment in their portfolio:

- writing (3)
- coaching and careers advice (4)
- software development and information technology generally (3)
- dietetics (1)
- nursing consultancy (2)
- non executive director role (1)
- financial management (1)
- market trading (1)
- research (3)
- computer repair (1)
- property letting (1)

8.2.6. Returning to work

As explained in chapter 5, two people had returned to full time work by the time of the interview, having only been portfolio for a short period. I decided to include them in the study as their more negative or sceptical stance on portfolio work seemed to be potentially illuminating.

Liz was made redundant from a job share post. During the year which followed, her portfolio was a temporary acting up course leadership role at a University combined with some lecturing; her studies for MA in Human Resource Management and working from home on a variety of small scale freelance projects, provided by ex-colleagues. However, this proved not to be the world for her. What she craved still was the

challenge of senior management and the opportunity to continue to develop a linear career. Portfolio working was, for her, an alternative to unemployment while she waited to find the kind of job she wanted in another NHS Trust. Once she did, she dropped all the portfolio work and returned, happily, to organisational employment.

However, what was important in the new job as Director of Personnel is that it continued to offer developmental opportunities and a chance to consolidate all the various strands of her skills and interests. She believes, notwithstanding her work arrangements, that she has always been a portfolio person. Her happiest times are when she has several projects on the go at once. She doesn't rule out future freelance work. For Liz then, portfolio work was an episode (Carroll and Mosawskwi, 1987)- a gap between two periods of *"proper employment."* Time will tell to what extent it proves to be thus for those other four people in the study who have worked this way for a year or less.

Brenda was made compulsorily redundant and was shattered by that but she did eventually find another job. Unlike Liz, who simply preferred organisational employment she had a distinct antipathy to portfolio working:

"I couldn't bear all the hassle, couldn't see the point, didn't feel clever enough, I was just too lazy to do all that tax, all that National Insurance. After all that had been done for me for 25 years. I just didn't want to slog my guts out to set up a business. In fact I have more time now in this job than I ever had and I don't want to lose that. It just was not for me."

In fact her material circumstances were such that she would rather have done nothing than set herself up as fully self employed, although she did do a variety of small scale projects as well as voluntary work.

Laura also swapped portfolio work for employment on two previous occasions, although she is now poised to go portfolio again. Her reasons for returning to work were two fold- the loneliness of portfolio work which has already been discussed and concern over her career; she worried about her lack of operational experience and the effect that would have on the sustainability of her business. As such, her concerns echo the issue already raised of negative perceptions of labour market status. Both times, she was disappointed with what emerged as the reality of organisational employment: she is sure she is not going back.

However, other people have a much more positive view of including paid work in their portfolio- specifically Monica, Robert, Carole, Anne and Geoff. What made them return, at least partially, to paid work? Geoff was offered a part-time post through the efforts of a friend of his concerned for him after he left his job and appeared to be opting out of the working world. He felt that he had to take it - after all, he reasoned, you don't turn a job down nowadays. He stayed with the job for a while and used it as the platform to start his portfolio, more confident now that he was earning money. However, it was all too familiar to him - he had returned to a highly structured organisation, locked into what he saw as its own destructive culture, just like the one he left. What he liked, though, was the income but also the sense of once again *"being in the thick of it."* He only left when he needed to restructure his working week following a heart attack.

For Anne (like Robert) what became apparent was that her employment contractual status was less important to her than the circumstances of her working life. She was operating a portfolio including consultancy work with a trust doing almost exactly the same work as she had done with her previous NHS Trust but as an employee. The organisation had agreed to take her on in this way as it was the only option she offered and they wanted her skills. Slowly but surely they started to treat her more and more as an employee, expecting that she work from the office, that she came in when they required. So she left. What had motivated her to leave employed work in the first place was to develop some additional quality of life. The self employment part of her portfolio at that time was simply recreating the conditions she had found intolerable in employment. She had discovered that what she wanted to do was to be a psychotherapist- a distinct change:

"so I sat down and designed a perfect job while I was on the course. I thought I am fed up with numbers, bit bored with setting budgets and playing with numbers and wanted to work with people and said right I wanted a job that was on my doorstep where I could build my local networks and those networks might be useful to me when I started as a counsellor or as a psychotherapist. But I could work when I liked, more or less what hours I wanted so that I could still do my course work. It was local networks, on my door step and virtually my own boss and enough money to pay the bills."

She saw the very job advertised, took it and still maintains a small financial management portfolio and her training course. Hence, she would reject any idea that self employment is inherently more balanced and autonomous than paid work. Her approach is as instrumental as the more bullish literature on new careers prescribes (Golzen and Garner, 1990; Waterman et al., 1994). She has not returned to work for social networks,

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an easier life nor for linear career development, but because the circumstances suit her more long term plans for herself.

Conversely, for Monica and Carole, the return to paid employment within the Health Sector felt like coming home:

"because as I have said it was a very positive decision of mine to have gone into the NHS when I graduated and despite everything the interest was still there. It had never gone away." (Monica)

Even though there was a certain wariness about being employed by the organisation again both women talk now of how they have their affiliation needs met there and they no longer want to move wholly out of organisational employment.

8.2.7. Naming themselves

I enquired how they would describe themselves if asked in a social forum. A couple of participants indicated objection to that kind of question:

"I'd say what do you mean? Do you mean what do I do for a day job? Do you mean, how do I live my life?" (Steve)

A few answered by reference to their job - the employed part of their portfolio. Participants tended to use the terms "portfolio", "consultancy" and freelance interchangeably throughout to describe their new work. However, in response to that direct question, most people - the variety of their portfolio notwithstanding - answered management or training consultant. The definition of what constitutes consultancy is open to debate (Schein, 1988) and it is not my intention to ascertain whether or not they are "real consultants." I am interested in is self ascription and the impact that appears to have on their developing career identity. This notion is expanded in chapter 9.3.

8.3. PORTFOLIO ISSUES

The participants comment on the breadth of their portfolios in various ways. Monica is concerned to establish that it is *"legitimate"* for her to work in this way as all the various strands are connected and work together. By contrast Helen cares little about the balance except in so far as she is enjoying herself and earning a living. She will, she says, do anything for money. Like those other people who have a number of distinct strands, *"half a dozen hares running,"* she relishes the mix. Several participants talk

about trying to develop their portfolio, being aware that it is growing. A couple refer to the portfolio feeling *"more real"* as it diversifies or adds a wider range of clients.

8.3.1. Fun and creativity

There was a impression of fun about their new work context, bound up with an enhanced sense of freedom - expressed often with surprise, even conspiratorially:

"The freedom is wonderful. this is work as it should be done and you can make time for other things. It's my big secret. It protects me against all those people who think I have committed career suicide." (Judith)

"It's a secret! It's liberating, it's fun, its smashing working like this." (Bridget)

Participants talk of feeling that they can "play" in their work role. It is a *"a big adventure, the chance to have some fun, even to be a bit ridiculous."* The variety inherent in short term contracts with a number of clients is generally experienced positively:

"I set my business up precisely because I am a portfolio person, I don't like doing just one thing." (Helen)

Others talk more practically about how being involved with a variety of clients challenges their creative abilities and hooks their entrepreneurial side. The buzz of the new is compared with the predictability and routine of the old:

"My fear is that if I went back into an ordinary NHS job, I will be overwhelmed by the routine and I will get bored." (Carole)

8.3.2. Freedom and autonomy

Linked to the sense of fun is the notion of enhanced freedom regularly cited in the literature as an espoused benefit of self-employment. What is interesting about many of the participants in this study is that they had been in senior managerial positions where it might be expected that they could set the tone for the conduct of their own working life as well as that of their staff. However, as discussed in chapter 7, the constraints of the workplace were felt even by those at Chief Executive level. Several people complained of specific problems like the expectations of long hours or the organisation's reluctance to allow more flexible working; others had felt themselves marginalised by structural and cultural changes or simply bored by a lifetime in one

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organisation. What they hoped to find in portfolio working was the antithesis of what had been so troubling to them in the work context. They too had high hopes of enhanced freedom and the majority of people celebrated, in the interviews, a sense that they had achieved it.

This is expressed both in terms of freedom *from* certain aspects of organisational employment which they felt controlled and subdued them and freedom *to* live their life in a certain way. They talked of feeling free from the draining grind of office politics and pressures, the expectations of working long hours and satisfying the demands of unreasonable bosses:

"the biggest advantages of self employment is you can walk away, you don't have to put up with the day to day petty rubbish politics and personal relationships. If someone irritates you, well OK, you know you are going to be working there for another 2 weeks, so irritate away! But if you know you are going to be there for another 10 years it is a different proposition." (Steve)

"If you're not careful (at work) you end up working such long hours, but now, no, I don't want to work weekends, so I don't. I don't want it, that lifestyle I left." (Jim)

The freedom *to* is expressed in the ability to pattern and plan their daily life more in tune with personal and family needs. Hence, those people with children or other caring responsibilities appreciate the enhanced ability to organise their day more as they please. A couple of people talked about the beneficial effect on their marriages now that they had more time for their partner. Others talk of how they can take advantage of quieter times in shops and leisure facilities, enrol for evening classes or get involved in social groups, free from the expectation of being available for evening and weekend meetings; appreciate a sunny day or simply make more time for self and friends; enjoy their home environment - all but one of the participants work from home.

Granger et al. (1995) describe the "trade-off" category of self employed people who are taking a temporary break from the full time rigours of the organisational world to devote additional time to other concerns - mainly family. In chapter 7, I remarked that few people implicated this concern in their intention to leave as work remained central to the lives of all these participants. However, from the responses of several participants it would seem that the potential "trade off" pleasures have become apparent *since* they have been out of organisational employment. Claire and Margaret for example, feel that this way of working from home and with reduced hours enables them to keep a distinct foot in the career world while enjoying their young children:

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"I'm happier now than I've been for a long time. I can enjoy my delightful little boy and nobody can really say I am not being successful. I've got the OD project now and I can go around dropping the names of people I have met for this project."(Claire)

Other people express more ambivalence about the "trade off" locating it as a site of struggle with partners and more personally with their own shifting view of their professional and personal identity. Such matters are discussed below in the discussion of the drawbacks.

Moving beyond these more pragmatic considerations, several participants spoke of how they were now able to live out their working lives within their own value systems free from the demands and cultures of the employing organisations- a topic developed further in 9.3.

8.3.3. Unpredictability of work

However, participants expressed concerns about the unpredictable nature of their workload. Being so absorbed in the contracts on which they were actually working - but which would soon come to an end - they felt that they were unable to do the necessary marketing to ensure future work. This erratic stop and start approach to their working life was a source of considerable anxiety for some people. The reliance on others and the time lag between expressed interest and the reality of any work contract had taken some participants by surprise:

"There is one thing that has been a bit of a surprise to me - although I did know to a degree that it would be that way- but the extent of it surprised me, is that people would phone you up and talk and say brilliant, phone me in a week. then it would be, oh dear, my senior manager has changed his mind or we will put it on hold for the time being. So, I find that people are very interested on the one hand but the work they talk about has been much longer in coming in than I imagined. So, just keeping in with people takes a lot of time and effort." (David)

One woman contrasts her new situation with her previous employment where as you walk in through the door the work hits you like a wave and carries you all through the day.

Handy (1994) and others advocate a portfolio of work which includes paid and self employed work. The boundaryless career literature talks of more permeable work, home and leisure boundaries. However, the experience of participants in this study suggests that such advice may be glossing over some real dilemmas. People talk about their

predicament about accepting fixed term contracts. Such work would reduce financial concerns at least in the short term and promote a sense of belonging but the downside is the risk that all their self employment contacts would wither and the whole process would have to start again when the fixed term expired. For a few people, job sharing posts have seemed to promise the answer. Three people are (or were) operating part-time and three others indicated that they felt this arrangement might be an ideal, allowing for a mixture of steady income and more freelance work. Once again however, all but one of these participants see structural barriers in their way, perceiving a reluctance on the part of organisations to countenance part-time work or job sharing at any kind of senior level.

Finding a rhythm to their life proves difficult in light of the ebb and flow of work. They can be overwhelmed with work or find themselves enduring really fallow periods:

"I am anxious on two levels. I need to be busy and I have no difficulty being busy if I knew I didn't need to work, but keeping myself free to work means that there are some vacuums when I feel quite bored, and I like to have a kind of rhythm to my life, but then I will get contracts and I want to work all out on them which means I wont put my energies into chasing other contracts so I end up again later with the fallow time. Chasing contracts takes up a huge amount of time." (Joan)

8.3.4. Level of work
Linked to this concern is a worry, expressed by many, that all too often their freelance work is at a lower level intrinsically than the work they were doing when employed:

"I want to exploit my expertise but find that my actual options are more down there. Since leaving there has been something missing even though I am still an extremely busy person." (Henry)

They use terms such as *"absolutely trivial", "mundane and boring", "banal", "incredibly low level"* to describe some of their contracted work and express amazement that organisations see a need to contract people in to do such work. For a few participants this is simply a case of the rough with the smooth, part of their new context:

"As a freelance I think it is crucial thing to be able to work at any level whatsoever. A lot of it I do dislike but I am not one of those people who say this is the work for the secretary. It actually feels different to be self employed doing a tedious job than it does to be an employee." (David)

"you just have to roll up your sleeves and get on with it. People are testing you out as well, I guess, and you have to build up your pedigree again". (Geoff)

For others the decreased level of work remains an abiding concern. A parallel regret is that this type of working does not allow for the satisfaction of seeing a job through to the end. Of course this situation can be experienced as a positive pleasure in some consultancy roles.. Indeed these participants have expressed their sense of freedom and fun in having a variety of work and a sense of pleasure in hands on work. At the same time, however, they also construct this as a limitation of their new role. It appears that their measures of job satisfaction remain rooted in what they had previously known. Carole, one of the longest serving portfolio people, acknowledges that while she gets high quality work to do, it does not suffice to satisfy her:

"I have been doing it for 8 years and it is a bit wearying. Because every time you have to sell yourself to new sets of clients new relationships and there is no continuity. The frustrating thing is you do not see the results of your work implemented, not usually. So, I suppose what I am really thinking is a job I can believe in, and that I can actually implement change over time." (Carole)

8.3.5. Financial matters

It was my intention to raise the issue of finance in the interviews, recognising both its centrality in the literature on self employment, as discussed in chapter 2, and the (limited) acknowledgement of finance as a factor in boundaryless careers (Hirsch and Shanley 1996). In the event every participant raised the issue, often unprompted and usually as a concern. Worries about present and future income were endemic: several admitted it was what kept them awake at night. Deep anxieties were palpable in the interviews about the need to earn sufficient money for now and for the uncertain future. Several participants recognised that they felt a pressing need to maintain the lifestyles consistent with the rewards of the traditional successful career (Pahl 1995), which included, for some, holiday homes abroad and private education for children.

Within the general area of finance there are several specific points that emerged worthy of exploration: loss of financial benefits associated with work coupled with financial planning for their changed circumstances; and the significance of partners income.

8.3.5.1. Losing the financial benefits of employment.

Outside the relative comfort of regular salaries, PAYE and company pensions, several people experienced worries from which they had previously felt free. The issue of the

incompatibility of boundaryless careers like portfolio working and rigid public policy on pensions, mortgages and other financial matters has been raised (Mirvis and Hall, 1996) and was experienced by these participants. Pensions were a particular area of concern.

One man, aged 45, who was very happily and successfully- in financial terms- operating his portfolio remarked:

"if the NHS came to me at 53 and said come and do this job for us, I would go and do it for 3 years and put all my personal pension back into the NHS superannuation scheme and then I would retire at 55, because I have lost that benefit. It is a massive problem, sick pay, paid leave and superannuation. I had 23 years service in and it is frozen and I can't, no matter how well I do, afford to pay a personal pension plan that would pay me what I was earning as an NHS manager, because you have to pay both sides and personal pensions are hopeless. That's my Achilles heel." (Andrew)

As such he raises interesting structural issues which will be explored more fully in the conclusion to part two. He was not alone in this concern. Those people who were prepared to talk explicitly about their financial planning explained how they were attempting to generate income well in excess of their employed salary to enable them to set up a worthwhile personal pension. Conversely, Bridget, who entered the NHS in her thirties, is aware that her pension will be small anyway. This was a factor in her decision to leave and go portfolio: she had less to lose than many. Hirsch and Shanley (1996) talk about the perils of boundaryless careers for those with sunk career investment with one company. To this can be added the peril of sunk pension investment.

The case of Geoff is interesting because, although he was receiving an ill-health pension worth several hundred pounds each month, he still felt compelled to earn, in addition to that, the level of salary he was achieving prior to his retirement. His sense of success was, at least in the early days of being portfolio entirely bound up with the level of income he could earn by his own endeavours. On the issue of health, its precariousness and direct link to loss of livelihood in portfolio work became apparent to one participant when she slipped a disc and could not work for some months.

8.3.5.2. Partner's income
All but four of the participants lived with a partner. It interested me that many of the women - even those in dual career families committed to contributing their share to the household finances- expressed the view that portfolio working was potentially more

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threatening to men who traditionally held the breadwinner role. Conversely a couple of the male participants - who were both, in fact, making a good living-discussed how they felt more free from the financial worries of being portfolio as their wives were working. Hence household bills at least could be paid, come what may in their portfolios. This was not so for the majority of the dual career couples (Sekaran and Hall, 1989) in the study for whom the need to earn good money remained paramount.

However, three women did acknowledge that their partner's income was sufficient to allow them the risk of leaving permanent, well-paid employment. Consistent with their previous identification of themselves as career women, they all experienced some discomfort with this arrangement:

"There has always been some competition between me and my husband but he earns so well now. I've fought against being the little woman, the little mother, I've always wanted my own money in the bank and I know I will in this role but.. then I think well why shouldn't I take some of the benefits and it will be for all our quality of life. I'll redress the balance one day." (Claire)

More generally, the problem of irregular earnings was highlighted -*"It does seem to be either feast or famine, I've had a couple of rides on those two."* Partner's income was seen as being crucial in those cases.

Hence the participants articulate what seem to be the very real concerns about finance in the more uncertain world of boundaryless careers which is under-estimated by much of the literature, leading Pahl to wonder if this world is accessible by only a *"small, self conscious- and lucky minority"* (1995:4). What they experience as financial hurdles to ongoing portfolio work rather negates many of the identified benefits- like the opportunity to walk away from work they do not want.

8.4. CONCLUSION

Chapter 8 has provided more detail about what participants do on leaving organisations. They have relatively diverse portfolios arranged encompassing the various types of work that Handy noted (1989). The majority rely on fee work, however, and many of them have clients only within the NHS (although across different departments). Contracts tend to be short term but are often repeated. Certain problematic issues concerned with the level and unpredictability of work and finance were raised; while participants also attested to an enhanced sense of fun and freedom in their new work.

CHAPTER 9.1. "KNOWING HOW": PERSONAL AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This section begins in 9.1.1 by considering the hopes individuals have for development in portfolio work but the relative lack of action they take to enhance their skills and abilities (9.1.2). Reasons why are considered next in 9.1.3 which highlights the difficulties of development in isolation. 9.1.4 explores their ongoing reliance on skills, confidence and abilities they developed within the organisation and considers the implications in terms of their ongoing portfolio.

9.1.1. PORTFOLIO WORK AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP

Participants point to opportunity to grow, develop and expand one's repertoire of personal and professional skills in portfolio working, echoing the literature (e.g. DeFillippi and Arthur 1996; Bird, 1996). Several people found learning in the ability to stand back from the *"crushing external demands of work."* As one participant expressed it: *"There was no room for learning at the top; you can't make a mistake. It was all too constraining."* A certain buzz from the new situation was experienced as an opportunity for development.*"It really is exciting and because everything is new and fresh and strange; you feel a lot sharper and challenged."* (Wendy)

Other participants commented on the pleasure of finding themselves using their dormant professional skills which they had needed less as they climbed managerial hierarchies. The sense of being "hands on" again proved refreshing. Some participants stressed the learning inherent in their new context - the practical matters associated with setting up and running businesses, the skills of marketing oneself and approaching organisations on a consultancy basis.

9.1.2. LIMITED PLANNED TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Focusing first on planned and conscious development, for all their hopes, there was only relatively limited evidence of it. Only eight participants had attended (and funded themselves) on training courses recently. Neuro-linguistic programming was popular, as were coaching and counselling skills, running Myers Briggs inventories and becoming

an Investors in People assessor - all skills deemed saleable in the market by these participants. Others had similar plans; for example, Claire wants to work towards developing her personal employability more widely than the NHS. To that end, she will do Investors in People Training and will explore other related options. In the case of these people, there was an explicit link made between developing their own skill base - their "know how" (Bird, 1996) and the continuing development of their portfolio career - their "employability" (Kanter 1989):

"I am an accredited Myers Briggs associate or whatever one calls them and that was very hard work, but it means you are starting to build up some tools, some proper tools to help with what you do. It is no use being a coach relying on your chief executive experience, you have to learn some coaching and counselling skills. I quite enjoy it, my aim last year was about learning some of those new skills and putting them into practice this year. I took the exams for that last October, so I was able to start using that in my business. It enabled me to become an Executive coach rather than just a coach." (Gilian)

"I think that is just the way I am, I am just always bouncing ideas, developing. I went on a course recently, and it was absolutely brilliant, on appreciative enquiry, it is a whole philosophy, a way of thinking and I can use that in my work. And I am doing a degree at the moment, so I am bouncing off people all the time. How else can you be portfolio?" (Helen)

Val, echoing Mirvis and Hall (1996), claims that her life work has been personal development, a theme that runs through her story. However, she takes few practical steps to learn new skills. Margaret views the success of her new venture as an additional piece of the patchwork or mosaic which is her career: something that will be added and be for ever useful:

So, I think portfolio, patchwork, I paint my career as a range, a mosaic, and now more by doing different consultancy projects in different geographical areas... I am interested in personal development, e.g. that's why I have taken on a role as school governor."

A few participants, then, are attempting to attend to their own employability (Kanter, 1989; Bridges, 1995; Hakim, 1994). However, in general, there is little to suggest that most of these participants are viewing themselves as "entrepreneurs of the self" (du Gay, 1996). I might have expected to find that individuals had moved into portfolio working specifically to enhance their development and hence these findings point to interesting analytical possibilities. The relative lack of attention to personal development is a significant finding given the essential link made in the career literature about self development and career, and the central supposition in "new wave" management theories (Ezzamel, et al. 1994) about the self fulfilling impulses of individuals (du Gay, 1996a; Fournier, 1998).

9.1.3. WHY SUCH LIMITED TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT?

Outside of organisational employment there were more difficulties in accessing and funding training opportunities. Many people expressed good intentions which were overtaken by the pressing concerns of money and time:

"As a freelancer you have to think harder about lost opportunity costs, even about buying in even mentor or consultant time to think. You tend to get too focused on just getting on and doing." (John)

"one of the things that I have as a principle in my work is ensuring that I invest in personal development on an annual basis. I try and do it at this time of the year, because this is when all the conference happen but it hasn't happened at all this year as I have been too busy working... just like last year in fact." (Bridget)

In the light of anxieties about the general shortage of training and development at work, it is interesting that these people acknowledegd the development opportunities inherent in operating within an organisational community. Participants had ambivalent feelings, however, about the development they received when in work indicating significant variation in the type and quality of training that they were able to access. Most found that even in work they had had to fight and plead for development opportunities and they were all quite sure that they had managed their own careers. Now, outside

organisational employment, even that flawed system is missing and several people recognise, as Jim does:

"Self managed learning is difficult without connections and some kind of institutional parameters. You do need to have some support. "

Handy (1994), the very proponent of portfolio working, shares the concern that skills can atrophy in isolation. Mirivs and Hall (1996) are also concerned about isolated and lonely development focused on the plethora of self help guides (e.g. Bolles, 1997). However, only one participant was an (enthusiastic) proponent of that method of development, although most insisted that they kept up to date by reading. One man, recognising that he had had no planned training since leaving his job 5 years ago did not see himself as disadvantaged because:

"I take all the journals, Health Service, Personnel Management and I read them all, well I wont say I read them avidly! but I do and the computer press I read that."

Participants recognise that there are many other ways to develop other than training interventions and many give examples. Geoff talks about a contract to develop a personnel system in which he felt stretched and energised him and sent him, also, back to his books. He was, he said, *inspired to grow outwards and inwards."* John has benefited recently from working with an associate:

"I feel very energised by working with him. Its not managed learning but it is a mutual exploration, it has energised me to go back to the books, to watch the programmes."

In line with Giddens' (1991) discussion of the impetus towards "expert systems" in a time of change and uncertainty, four people have taken advantage of the services of coaches and mentors, partly to help them deal with the general anxiety of this new context. Two women also have personal therapy for this reason and for developmental purposes, to have some-one available to talk through ideas.

Many participants felt that the simple fact of carrying out a variety of assignments promotes their development. However, it may be questioned to what extent this will be

effective without some more conscious reflection on that learning. (Mumford, 1995; Daudelin, 1997). The literature on learning within organisations emphasises the day by day learning that can occur in the natural and\or or planned interaction of colleagues (Argyris and Schon 1978; Garvin, 1993; Nonaka, 1991; Pedler et al., 1997). In the absence of that interaction, development suffered. One man mourned the lack of what he called the "blue sky" time he had had with work colleagues when ideas could be aired and concepts explored. As an independent he felt he could afford neither the time nor the money to do this. Other people said they needed to have an organisation to support them as they play with and develop ideas.

There was some surprise expressed as to how little direct feedback is available in this role. Several people sought it but were less than impressed with the quality of the feedback they received. Steve sums up a common view:

"I am getting developed within the project, I suppose but one of the things I thought would be valuable about working this way, is all the feedback I would get but you don't really get it. I am detail conscious but, you occasionally miss things and if you worked in a big consultancy company, you would expect your work to be checked but I never get my work checked except by the final client and then not at all about the process. That bothers me a bit, but people employ me, as a subcontractor maybe, as an expert, OK, that is fine, but how do they know I'm still an expert? Whereas, when I was in the NHS, it would be, well I have written this, will you read it and give feedback."

The loss of development opportunities in the paradoxical situation of having to learn a whole new way of operating was the cause of much anxiety. One woman, for example, has been having therapy to *"contain the anxiety"* of the financial pressures and the steep learning curve:

"I have been really stretched, as I didn't have much experience, I have had to dig deep. I've learned a lot but I've made a lot of mistakes and people have been very charitable. " (Suzanne)

Hence this data endorses the view that self development is more effective when carried out within some framework with specific objectives in mind and, crucially with support

(Megginson and Whitaker, 1996). Those who did consciously plan for and then enact their development were in the minority. It may be that the uncertainty of their new situation was also a factor. The requirement for learning but tendency to avoid it under complex and turbulent conditions has been noted (Bird, 1996: Weick, 1996). Giddens, Giddens (1991) argues that too closed off a view of the present can make one fear the future. The participants in this study suggest that this concern is relevant. The tendency of some participants to equate development with what they simply absorb from their assignments or from reading which many other identified as their primary development mechanism concerned me given the strong message that boundaryless career development is founded on ongoing learning.[1]

My disquiet was echoed by several participants who did see that their skills may decay outside the organisation if they did not take express steps to update them. Some people, including those very attuned to the notion of training and development, like Jim and Geoff, for example, express some concern that they have not learned any new skills in recent times. In this approach to development, they are not heeding the advice of the new career theorists to keep the package of skills as up to date and ratified as possible. One man expresses his understanding of the consequent implications but with a certain fatalism:

"I need to make as much money as I can because I don't know how relevant the package of tools, techniques and toys I can develop will be in 10 years time which is fantastic if they still want you but they may say well that was good but the world has moved on and we are looking for something different." (David)

While a few participants are taking conscious steps to develop (and they include two of those who made a specific and positive decision to go portfolio, Gillian and Helen), the majority continue to rely on the skills they brought with them from organisational employment as the next section explores.

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[1] On going learning is, in fact, at the heart of most contemporary discussion on individual and organisational success, even survival in the current workplace (e.g. Argyris, 1990; Pedler, et al., 1997; Senge, 1992).

9.1.4. USING THE SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE ACQUIRED WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

In spite of their manifest disillusionment with their organisations and their rejection of organisational employment, what emerges very strongly from the data is the extent to which these people feel that their experiences within their organisations prepared them for portfolio work (recalling Cooper's (1981) image of the *incubator* organisation). They emphasise in particular the skills and professional competencies they acquired, as well as the social and professional networks established in those contexts. Also implicit in participants' stories is a sense that their organisational experiences gave them a certain self-confidence which enabled them to meet the challenges posed by portfolio work.

Several participants had become very aware of the extent to which they had developed not only a marketable package of skills but also the confidence and credibility that comes with career success. They remarked that they could not imagine how anyone could be a successful portfolio worker without first acquiring a solid base of skill and confidence within an organisation:

"Because you have to develop that competence and that skill and that confidence that comes from doing that and if you have no track record in an organisation where is your credibility, how can you convince someone that you could get it to work in another organisation?" (Gillian)

Many people referred to other portfolio workers they knew with some concern and by comparison judged themselves to have the ability to succeed:

"They haven't got the confidence that I have got or the wherewithal, or the cred to go out there and do it, but they are told to go out there, or go solo, or whatever you want to call it and they are frightened because they don't have it." (Monica)

Some people recognise that it is their particular combination of skills and experience that gains them the work. The "know how" competency (Bird, 1996) for boundaryless careers, stresses the need not only to be technically proficient and knowledgeable but

also to have a wide, cross functional experience. Many people in this study offer precisely that. Consistent with the NHS's own research into managerial exit (IHSM, 1994), which suggested that leavers tended to have made more eclectic career moves than those who stay, many of these ex-managers had had varied careers, moving across functions and in some cases, across organisations. Several participants reflect back on moves they made, even within their NHS career, which colleagues at the time thought were maverick and not linked to a successful upward journey through the ranks. They now feel they have their reward for taking those opportunities that the organisation did, in fact, offer to people prepared to manage their own career:

"I get the work because of my broad mix others who don't have it are not as successful. I know that as they come to me for work. I have positioned myself well in the market." (Margaret)

Those participants who made a move outside the NHS to gain wider experience feel that employers value the skills and learning so attained. Monica talks here about an ex-colleague offering her a consultancy contract:

"With your entrepreneurial skills which you got from running your own business and having worked in the private sector, plus I know you are very robust on the HR side, very practical. Would you consider taking on a consultancy assignment to move us over to an arms length company?"

Other participants come to see that through their diverse work experiences they have developed an integrated package of skills and an enlarged sense of their own occupational identity:

"I have specialised in what I thought were totally opposing skills but I now see are integral and I have to knit them together. One is the people, behavioural type stuff - all the nursing and managing and the other is Information Technology and I might be being thick but it has taken me a long time to click onto that. Not only are they connected, but they are integral but the fact is that people don't always see them like that...my strength is keeping a broad base. and I think that is the beginning of portfolio isn't it? At one time I used to lose jobs because people thought she is not an expert and

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the only thing they could pin me down to is she is just a little nurse, ooh just a little nurse, discard her, but now its all helpful." (Julia)

The sense of consolidation of experience is discussed further in chapter 10 as it emerges as integral to participants developing sense of career identity and success.

Conversely, those people who had a long, more managed career within the NHS exclusively, recognise that, while it has given them much in terms of confidence, contacts and credibility, they are rather less sure of their hard skill base. Some people fear that they have become a *"jack of all trades"*: with employer specific managerial skills or professional specialism that do not translate too easily outside that context.

Most participants perceive a need to draw on dormant skills. In particular they referred to what one man called the *"mothballed"* professional and technical skills they had less need to use as they had moved higher in the managerial ranks. As independents, they were required to *"reach way down, way back in the skill tool kit bag and haul them out."*

9.1.4.1. Translating skills learned in the managerial world to the portfolio context

In line with both Kanter's (1989) and Savage et al.'s (1992) assessment of the general marketability of managerial skills, participants felt more comfortable and saleable describing themselves as a trainer, or an accountant or a workforce planner than as a manager. Both analyses, emerging from career theory and sociology respectively, cast doubt on the continuing labour market value of individuals sunk career investment (Hirsch and Shanley, 1996) in managerial skills rooted in an employer specific context.

What constitutes managerial work is open to debate as already discussed. Indeed it *can* be seen as the exercise of a specific set of skills transferable beyond a single context (MCl 1991). However, in the studies mentioned above and indeed in much emerging career theory the career of managers within large hierarchical organisations is seen in opposition to that of professional (or the entrepreneur- -that debate will be discussed in chapter 10); what constitutes a professional is no less argued (Freidson, 1994). However, acknowledging such debates, both Savage et al. (1992) and Kanter (1989) offer a distinction based on the notion that professional skills are those internalised in the knowledge of the individual practitioner which can transcend the organisational

context. As individuals look to operate beyond the organisation's boundaries, it then becomes imperative to identify what skills they have in their managerial kit bag which are likely to have currency outside their employing organisations.

This data suggests that while some people make this leap, both in looking at their "dormant skills" and actively seeking to add additional skills to their repertoire, many other participants continue to trade primarily on what they know about managing in the specific context of the NHS. Emerging career theory about the skills needed for survival in the boundaryless career world would suggest that this is a short-sighted view likely to lead to a failure to thrive in their new world.

However, the managerial legacy is not necessarily wasted in the view of many participants. Working now on a daily basis without the support structures of an organisation, a range of those previously acquired managerial skills became valued and their relevance noted in the new context. Several people referred to how experience gained as manager in an organisation, preparing budgets, examining tender documents, producing marketing strategies etc. had proved extremely valuable when they had set up independently.

9.1.4.2. Learning to be a consultant

Five people - Robert, Carole, Laura, Margaret and Julia - had been employed at some point in their career by large consultancy companies where they learnt the ropes of consultancy work. Others had developed some such skills working in an internal consultancy role. How one becomes a consultant and if it is legitimate to simply assign oneself that title is a question raised by a couple of the participants. Such questions are also raised by commentators on the huge growth in the consultancy market in recent years (Clark, 1995), particularly in view of the low barriers to entry. As discussed in chapter 8, several participants raise criticisms of others operating in this consultancy market, fearing that the conduct and lack of ability of such people casts doubt on their own. However, few people made any reference to a need to develop more skills in the consultancy process or to understand the dilemmas, complexities, models etc. of the role (Schein, 1988; Margerison, 1988; Sturdy, 1997; Bianco-Mathis and Veazey, 1996).

9.1.5. SUMMARY

The majority of participants have high hopes of and good intentions about development that are less commonly translated into action. Participants cite the isolation of portfolio work as one reason for this and the lack of development assistance from organisations. Nevertheless there was surprisingly limited evidence of development self management. Some participants are explicitly associating the development of themselves with the development of their portfolios: many are simply relying on skills learned within the organisation, even long dormant technical skills. Hence there is some division between those who are most attuned to developing and looking forward and those who are more backward looking and concerned with the consolidation of their skills and experience- an issue which continues to thread through the data to be explored. It will be considered in detail in chapter 10. In focusing on continuity it may be that they close off to the growth potential of change.

Hence, the experience of these participants suggest that the literature on careers (and wider literature, e.g. Giddens, (1991)) which assumes an individual desire to learn and reskill to deal with change may not capture the complexity of their situation.

CHAPTER 9.2: SOCIAL ISSUES IN PORTFOLIO WORKING

This chapter focuses on the "knowing whom" competency (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996) for careers and so explores issues to do with social relationships in portfolio work. Developing the theme of the incubator organisation (Cooper, 1981) introduced in the last chapter it begins, in 9.2.1 by looking at the importance of previous organisational relationships in terms of support and the allocation of work. 9.2.2 explores what they miss about no longer being fully employed by an organisation and 9.2.3 looks at the various strategies for dealing with relative isolations: specifically attempting to secure long term contracts and associating with others. However, the issue of balancing networking with rivalry for work is raised. In general participants continue to be individual operators but with reservations. The chapter then moves on to explore their changing relationship with organisations in 9.3.4.

9.2.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVIOUS ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In addition to the skills which people were able to translate to their new context, discussed in 9.1, for many people, relationships established within their organisations greatly facilitated and enhanced their experiences of portfolio working. Most people continued to rely on the strong relationships they had established within their organisations for support, professional development, and some structure in their more uncertain working life. They continued to receive practical support from ex-colleagues, for example, in the form of passing on confidential information about the organisation to enable them to keep up to date with developments. These long-standing relationships provided them with continuity that was extremely beneficial during the period of change and afterwards. For such participants, reputations and relationships established within their organisations were central to the success of their ventures, most particularly at the start.

Notwithstanding the traumas many experienced before they left their organisation, few people felt any ill will from colleagues on their departure: on the contrary they perceived some envy, a willingness to help and a desire to follow in their wake. Gillian particularly articulates how important she felt it was to make a "good exit" as she was aware she was likely to need ex-colleagues' help and good wishes in the future. For many people it was that very sense of continuity which sustained them:

"My existing contacts are the key, that keeps the continuity with my past career. It helps with the isolation." (Bridget)

In several cases, it was the offer of a short-term contract from a friend that got people started - including Judith and Henry, two of the most "reluctant independents" (Handy 1994).

9.2.1.2. Ex- colleagues as main source of work

Indeed, it was notable that the vast majority of people were awarded their work contracts by ex-colleagues once they went independent, as is widely assumed to be the case by several authors (Kanter, 1989; Peiperl and Baruch, 1997; Handy, 1994) and is indicative of the social content of contracting relationships (Clark, 1995; Granovetter, 1985) When asked to talk about measures of portfolio success- which is explored in the next chapter, most participants cited repeat contracts as a sign of employer satisfaction with their work. Only one woman, Laura, who was experienced in consultancy work, suggested the alternative interpretation, that repeat work was as likely to be offered because of a general lack of desire on the part of employers to move out of the "comfort zone" of people they already know than it was as proof of a job well done.

Whatever the motivations, it is clear that the portfolio careers of most of these participants are dependent, at least in the early stages, on the contacts and reputation they acquired while in work and most people continue to miss the closer social ties they had in employment

9.2.2. LOSS OF AFFILIATION

Heralding the putative arrival of the post bureaucratic organisation, Hecksher (1994) advocates that people learn to live outside the close friendship circles engendered by long service within large organisations and develop more of a series of weak ties to others (Granovetter, 1973). The literature on boundaryless careers recommends that people let go of their attachment to organisational affiliation such as the identification of self with company like "I'm an IBMer" (DeFillippi And Arthur, 1996), and learn to see themselves as both the company and the product (Bridges 1995). What is much less discussed is how people used to the relative social warmth of the workplace will actually experience its loss. The data in this study suggests that the issue cannot be too glibly glossed over. In entitling this section loss of affiliation, I am referring to three concerns raised by the participants: the loss of colleagues and the associated factors of no longer belonging to a being a member of a workplace and team; the loss of identity

as member of a larger organisational entity and third the specific issues associated with working from home.

9.2.2.1. Missing colleagues and the daily workplace

Consistent with research on home working in general (Huws, 1994), most participants acknowledged ambivalent feelings about moving out of the daily life of organisational employment. Alive to the benefits and alert to the irony (in some cases) of missing a situation which was in fact becoming intolerable to them before they left, all but a couple of the participants expressed some sense of loss:

"OK you do get to know people but it is a very transitory thing, you meet people, they become acquaintances and then you move out of that organisation and on somewhere else, so therefore, it can be quite a lonely, well, lets face it, it is a lonely profession." (Judith)

In acknowledging that loss, however, it does seem from this data that the majority of participants appear to be able to deal with it. Joan, for example articulates a fairly common view:

"I like having work colleagues and I don't have them now. But I also like my own company and quite like being on my own. So, the fact that I don't have work colleagues is something that I miss but it doesn't make me feel devastated or anything, it is not a big problem, but it is a loss."

For the two participants who returned to work, the loss of work colleagues and that sense of belonging did not diminish and was instrumental in prompting them to return. Similarly, Laura who has been in and out of work and self employment admits of her first period self employed:

"in all honesty, it was very lonely. I would have preferred to work with a small group of like minded people which is what took me back to work."

Their experiences aside, it seems that the loss of that daily contact in the workplace is something the participants can learn to do without albeit with some regret. The following chapter discusses some of the ways they have found to compensate for this loss.

9.2.2.2. Loss of organisational membership

Most pertinent for the majority of these participants was the loss of the organisational role umbrella. For Henry, who was made compulsorily redundant, the fact that he has lost his role is what makes his new work context difficult to bear. He has recreated some role for himself in taking on school inspection work and frankly admits that "*I like the warrant card as an inspector, I've got some role to play other than just being me.*" Bridges (1995) advocates that people learn to look at themselves as a business, de-coupling their identity from job and work based role (Mirvis and Hall, 1996). The data in this study suggests that people may experience considerable difficulty with the concept. Again and again participants expressed concern about the loss of the organisational attachment in terms of how they viewed their new work context. A sense of chill exposure is evident in their stories. Some examples:

"*I didn't realise how much I liked being Health Sector Manager with a computer and a car and the trimmings and could wear the smart clothes and suddenly I am only Julia Routledge and what lies behind that?*" (Julia)

"*I liked the name Guys because of the kudos it gave me. It said I was good if I worked for Guys. I liked the affiliation with something like that and then I was on my own, and you are just a one man band, you don't have anything behind you.*" (Helen)

"*I had a distinct drop in status in the eyes of some people. I had been "somebody" with a big pot of money at my disposal. People I knew then, who had been happy to work with me, will scarcely acknowledge me now.*" (Suzanne)

"*I do miss the work, the title, the job to do, the position, they give you an authority, but now you are just expected to get through as yourself. Before you could ring people up and you could expect to be put straight through, but it is not like that now when you are ringing to sell yourself.*" (Joan)

Their difficulties recall the anecdote related by Handy about the experience of the author Anthony Sampson who works from home and expresses his frustration when asked by receptionists and telephonists whom he represents: "I am tempted to say I represent the human race - the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but it won't get me through a switchboard" (Handy, 1994:41). In the case of these participants who had long experienced that sense of organisational belonging, this new sense of distance from a world that sustained their career and sense of identity for many years feels like a real loss.

9.2.2.3. Working from home

Issues of professional concern about working at home arose. As a management, training or health consultant, one is most likely to work on client's premises, so an office seemed less necessary than it might in some occupations. Several participants, though, had private clients for career counselling and executive coaching. With some reservations they had decided to do this work from home. For Gillian and Joan, who both owned beautiful homes with a separate office, the dilemma was less intense than it was for John, for example, who wondered what this said about his professional identity:

"I operate from home now, its do-able but I often wonder, as many of my clients are richer than me, they come to this modest house, what is their perception? They are coming to a homely, lived in atmosphere with young kids, does it feel business like? I've asked some of them, their answer is we come to see you John."

As with homeworkers in other studies (Huws 1994), the ability to be at home with family, particularly children, is experienced as double edged for some participants who feel that their professional identity is somewhat undermined by an assumption that they will be there to deal with all household matters. In the case of one participant this is the site of much conflict with her husband.

Suzanne articulates a dilemma of how to enjoy the potential pleasures of a new world without judging oneself by the stringent norms of the old. She is the main breadwinner and, for her, work and earning an income, have lost none of their centrality. She is torn by a recognition that she loves her time at home and an awareness that such sentiments still do not sit easily with a self and public image as a successful career woman (Bailyn, 1993):

"I love being able to work from home with the children around. It refreshes, replenishes and re-energises me. Of course I can't admit that, not as a working mother, its just not the thing to say, and I do always get my work done and I know that really is the most important thing but then why not, why should I not enjoy them?"

As Fletcher and Bailyn suggest: "nothing in the new employment relationship challenges the underlying sense that work and family spheres are adversarial" (1996:257).

In a similar vein, Julia who works with her husband veers in the interview from talking about how she will grow and develop the business to a celebration of the simpler

pleasures of this way of life, while, once again, applying to herself the workplace judgement codes:

"And suddenly now if we haven't got a busy day and it is a hot day, my husband and I, we look at each other and say lets go for a swim for an hour... oh but of course that hardly ever happens and we are never unprofessional and we do try to work a proper working day."

This guilt at not working a "proper working day" surfaces in the stories of many participants, so working from home or not, the scripts (Barley, 1989) of the professional, managerial organisational world are still internalised and acted upon.

9.2.3. ESTABLISHING NEW WORK BASED RELATIONSHIPS

All participants were keen to establish some form of professional credibility for their fledgling portfolios as well as some form of social network which, in a sense, compensated for what they had lost by the move from organisational employment. Some of the participants commented explicitly on the lack of structure in portfolio work:

"what organisations give is a structure, when you don't have a structure, you have to make one yourself or you can have problems, like you can spread yourself too thin." (Helen)

"I get a bit bruised and battered, we all do, so what we need is some kind of structure for looking at ourselves, for thinking about our continuing skills and the environment." (Carole)

Such a perceived lack of structure and boundaries can be, as Hirsch and Shanley (1996) suggest, just as constraining in its own way as the more known boundaries of the organisational career. Gillian cautions that, without some level of structure, people *"can become very insular and inward, they sometimes get ill, they lose, they forget boundaries and they don't have any references points."* In a similar vein other participants talk about the problematic relationship between freedom and constraint. An open ended employment context can be threatening to people's sense of self and collective identity. Strategies were mobilised to deal with possible resulting anomie. Three such strategies were apparent from the data: 1. direct employment within organisations, already discussed in chapter 8. 2. becoming embedded in the organisations in which they carried out their freelance work. 3. networking and

association with other freelancers. I will look here at the second two strategies. In pursing such strategies, participants began to create what they saw as structures which could contain their volatile new world (Tolbert, 1996).

9.2.3.1. Being embedded in organisations

The aim for most of the participants was to secure longer term, relational contracts (Rousseau 1996) within organisations. This was partly due to the pragmatic consideration of regular income but was also rooted in that desire to belong. Some participants returned for certain short term contracts to the very organisation where they had previously worked- the same department or even section. Recognising that this was a *curious experience*, the majority of people nevertheless experienced it positively.

Much relief and pleasure was derived from those situations where the individual could once again - albeit part-time and temporarily - feel part of an organisation. A couple of people talk about having a stake again:

"I go for 2 days input and I have an office and I must say I am loving it, Having a stake, its good to be part of a group, to have colleagues, to get the stimulation, learn, bounce ideas and most important to be plugged in to what is going on, without that you don't really develop." (Margaret)

"Having a stake, having a secretary, being part of the team, and that is what I have been missing being out on my own. I have never worked in a small organisation before, only huge organisations and I had totally and utterly under-estimated the culture shock." (Julia)

Others talk of *"digging in"* trying to make themselves *"indispensable"*. Andrew thoroughly enjoys having an unconventional consultancy relationship (as he sees it) with certain clients where they can ring him up when they need to and he does certain work where he does not charge them. What he gets in return is a sense of belonging and a workplace he can come to as if it was his own. Steve, who has a developed portfolio, nevertheless wishes he could gain more longer term contracts partly for the financial consideration but also partly to be able to get to know an organisation - although he admits that the one long term contract he has reminds him of the relative cosiness of the workplace. Monica, who feels she has got a balanced portfolio sums up the diverse wishes of many of these participants:

"well the ideal is the one that I have had since 1989, whereby you have the foot in the door, job share and long-term consultancy association with somewhere, because that

fulfils your belonging needs, your affiliation needs, which are quite highly developed I must admit in me, but the creative part of you and the entrepreneurial part can be more satisfied by one-off consultancy but the affiliation needs which are quite high otherwise to satisfy I get through my job."

The balancing of those needs is an arena of struggle for several of these participants. The majority have found some ways to achieve it even with a more limited portfolio:

"you get your buzz from setting up your little groups, your teams who you get to do things for you, the way I have worked with all these little projects now is to create a sort of team so I do the short term assignments and we have a real buzz and we meet our deadlines, so I suppose in a way I have reinvented those times at work. And then the nice thing is, you then move on to another one, but I think I need that buzz and I need the deadlines, and I need other people to feed off." (Gillian)

That very few people express any alternative view about the desire to be embedded to some extent with aspects of organisational life attests to the strength of these needs in the participants. One woman only - Anne- positively celebrated the fact that she was a *"hired gun"* and that organisation could no longer get at her soul. All the rest wanted to feel some sense of being part of something bigger than themselves. However, there was also a parallel recognition of a need to develop wider networks.

9.2.3.2. Marketing

Although many people expressed a desire to secure work with a wider range of clients, the majority continued to rely on the wider boundaries of the organisation they had just left. Just over half the participants had secured any contracts with other organisations - for some they were minimal and occasional; for others they formed the majority of their work. It is noteworthy that it was those with the least NHS service (particularly Steve, Jim, John and Anne) who moved most quickly away from dependence on the NHS for work. Those people, like Helen who feel that they *"naturally network"* have also developed a wider portfolio. Thus it would seem to be the case in this study that those with the widest networks are able to move the most quickly away from their last employer into what one man called a more *"real portfolio."*

In absence of personal contacts the majority of those people seeking wider contracts found themselves in the uncomfortable world of cold calling or competing for tendered work -*"beauty parades"*- as one participant called them - with variable, but more usually minimal success. Wendy who was just embarking on this world expressed bewilderment as to how individuals could possibly access and win such work outwith a

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friendship circle. Little wonder then that the participants tended to fall back on the NHS where the work emerged more freely.

Few people had engaged with the practical aspects of marketing. Some found it an uncomfortable business. Gillian, for example sent out a letter to all her contacts when she set up her business address but insists that *"this was not a marketing ploy,"* simply a way of keeping in touch. Joan has joined forces with a new contact who is in marketing and for the first time - after two years - has produced some marketing brochures that she is sending out as cold canvassing material. She feels very edgy about this departure, sustained only by the expertise of her associate. Many others say that they have no need to bother as all their work has come through word of mouth. Andrew, operating a very successful business, still after two years has not had letter heads or business cards or any of *"that fuss"* done. He doesn't see the point: he is selling himself - an issue developed in the next chapter. Christmas cards seemed to be a popular mechanism for keeping in touch with potential clients. For example John is quite calculating:

"there is work from a small stream of NHS people who know others. So a Chief executive will say to another, I worked with John Ramsey about 3 years ago, why not get him. I keep the connections alive with Christmas cards, that kind of thing. It is all word of mouth, I have never advertised, not anywhere and never."

Those few people who have developed a specific product, such as software packages or NVQ assessor validation or Myers Briggs training, felt a sense of relief at having a tangible offering and thus demonstrate an optimal congruence between knowing how and knowing whom competencies (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996).

The complex issue of social capital (Raider and Burt, 1996) and the social nature of market relations (Granovetter, 1985) was raised in chpater 3.5 along with the ambiguous advice about reliance on one organisation for work (Clark, 1995; Burchall and Rubery, 1992; Hirsch and Shanley, 1996).

What does emerge from this data is a recognition by the majority of participants that existing contracts are the key to survival and a sense of continuity in the short term but the sense of security this engenders could be self defeating. The net result for the others of remaining so closely attached to their previous organisation (albeit to its wider boundaries, not just the department or trust they had left) was a continuing and, in fact, dependent relationship in many cases, with that organisation. A couple of people were aware that this was a dangerous position to be in should rumours that they had both

heard come to pass of an incipient tightening up of the award of NHS work to outside contractors. They were taking active steps to find other clients

This apparent trend for organisations to give work to those who were recently employed by them also raises some fascinating issues, beyond the scope of this study, but worth briefly highlighting in passing, about how work may come to be packaged and awarded. du Gay (1996b) in his defence of the contingent nature of bureaucracy remarks on how the system was designed to minimise patronage. He raises the question if its supposed demise will herald in a world where opportunities remain closed again to all but an inner few. The potential gaps between those who have the contacts and those languishing on the outside could be a real social dilemma. Hirsch and Shanley (1996) remind us that the dawning of boundaryless careers could well exacerbate the divide between the skilled *and* well connected and those thrown more on their own resources.

9.2.3.3. Networking and Association

Some participants suggest that the need to network is integral to the development of a boundaryless career. Furthermore, they think that clients expect you to be able to access a wide networks of contacts who may be useful to them.[1] However, networking with other portfolio workers is judged not to be without its risks:

"I detect a professional wariness of other consultants about each other. I think there is intellectual jealousy and you always wonder how reciprocal any links really are. After all we are rivals and so you need to be wary. I'm worried that people might want something from me for nothing, pick my brains and give nothing back." (Joan)

Such sentiments were echoed by those who were running successful portfolios who were regularly approached by other people to associate with them:

"I get a lot of people wanting me to take them on and I don't want to. I seriously feel why should I? So I say you can set up yourself, I'll associate with you if you are any good and we share the same values, but there is no way I want a team of people who would just want me to look after them, give them work. Sadly quite a lot of people who say they want, pretend they want portfolio careers they are the people who want me to help them to do it. They just see me as useful to them." (Gillian)

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[1]Theorists of boundaryless careers suggest that the links that boundaryless workers can bring into the organisations are integral to the way in which boundaryless workers can cause career effects within organisations, not just the other way around (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Raider and Burt, 1996; Miner and Robinson, 1994).

In expressing such sentiments, participants are echoing the concerns of DeFillippi and Jones:

"The pitfall of boundaryless career systems may lie in their emphasis on social capital, which can lead to treating all social interactions as means to gain personal ends. This dehumanises not only others but life" (1996:97).

For some people networking does come at a high price of concern about people's motivations and their own, but one they are generally willing to pay. Andrew, for example, networks with a group of people who in many ways are very different to himself and whose company he does not find particularly congenial, yet he recognises the business benefit to him; rather like Suzanne who acknowledges:

"There are so many consultants now, all needing a little bit of the action you have to network and to market you have to expand your networks."

Yet, many other participants do feel a sense of fellowship with other portfolio workers - experiencing trust, a willingness to share and a sense of being in this together. Many have, as an aim for their developing portfolios, to work more closely in association with other people as junior or senior partner. In fact, several people were happy to be the *"junior partner"*, as it were, and associate with other consultants or more established companies for some or all of their portfolio. Jim, for example, was associating successfully and happily with two other organisations and gaining most of his core work from them. They sought the clients and did the marketing and he was passed "ready made" work- in effect a sub-contracting arrangement. Other people also appreciated the benefits of this type of arrangement which seemed to offer some of the potential benefits of self employment (particularly more control over working time) without some of the more obvious pitfalls and drawbacks, notably having to sell oneself. In the main they felt that the relationship was symbiotic notwithstanding some concern that dependence arose upon a continuing relationship with this organisation.

9.2.3.3.1. Professional groups.
Several people made efforts to network through professional groups- although they were in the minority. Some of them remarked that the groups to which they belonged tended to be much more geared up for employed professionals but that inroads were being made. Not only were such groups a source of support but they were also a place to meet contacts and develop their social capital. However, mere membership is not enough, active networking is needed. Ironically, Henry, probably the best connected of all through his high profile role in a prestigious and influential national body, was much

too proud to ask his contacts for any work and allowed them to assume that he was happily early retired.

9.2.3.3.2. Portfolio "Clubs"

Handy (1994) suggests the establishment of, what he calls clubs for portfolio people, facilitated by the organisations that contract with them. There was no evidence of this happening within this data, except in so far as one woman referred to the experience of her husband who included work with a University Business School in his portfolio. He works alongside permanent staff and a number of freelance workers. His wife describes his experience there thus:

"and they all love it and they all trust each other and the person there who manages them is a very sane lady and she does it with such a light hand. If anyone starts competing she knocks it out of them and says, the success is us as a team and so they have such a lovely relationship and he can go in there now even if it is not for an assignment, to have a natter and to use the library and so of course he is going to put more in, far more." (Julia)

It is perhaps gratifying that Business Schools which might purport to be at the leading edge of thinking on staff management appear to be getting it right, in this instance at least. One woman talks about how her vision of how portfolio workers could be managed to engender a sense of common purpose. Echoing the views of Handy she says:

"I suppose my vision to get back to Charles Handy would be to have networks of people coming together, who were independent and perhaps did other things but in the work they were doing collectively for that organisation, they contracted to come together 2 or 3 times a month, that would be very healthy." (Margaret)

9.2.3.3.3. Community of portfolio workers

John refers the notion of the development of a wider community of self employed and portfolio workers (Mirvis and Hall, 1996; Raider and Burt, 1996). In his area of mixed housing, he has become much more conscious of just how many people around him make their living from some form of portfolio work. He finds parents' meetings and other community meetings an excellent place to network and feels a developing sense of community and common purpose. Other people have met very useful contacts in a similar way e.g. Steve met his current partner when that man was on a training course with his wife. Joan met a potential partner through church. From this data can be drawn, perhaps, the notion of the developing seeds of a community - a reference group -

beyond the organisation and beyond the occupation, in which to network and learn just as Bird (1996) and others predict. Portfolio working could thus be viewed less as simply a way of generating an income and more of a way of life, particularly for those who combine several aspects of their life within it. This topic is debated further in chapter 10.

9.2.3.3.4. Partners

Consistent with the apparently huge increase in the number of small businesses which are sole traders (Stanworth and Stanworth, 1995), everyone in this study initially set up on their own, except for Julia who linked in with her husband's company. Only three participants have subsequently entered into formal partnerships: Monica who attributes this to her affiliation needs; Steve, who has set up in partnership in one of his three companies is more apparently business minded. He finds a synergy between his skills and the skills of his partner. He regards his partner as *"great at bringing the work in"* leaving him to *"get on and do"* which is what he particularly values about his new role. Geoff wanted to feel some sense of working for an organisation again. He had been a sole trader but missed having the day to day links, the energy and ideas and companionship of others. A consistent motivation of his is to *"feel in the thick of it"* - more difficult on your own.

A couple of people only discussed how they thought they would end up in a partnership arrangement but had decided not to pursue that option, judging it to be *"too solid, too tying."*

I find it interesting that so few have explored partnership arrangements especially given their concerns about isolation and loss of affiliation. The data suggests some wariness about other consultants. I also sense from their stories that it may be attributable to the ambivalent stance many of them have towards being self employed. To be in partnership would be to articulate clearly to self and to others that their new work context had stabilised and solidified into something that was indeed of self employment.

9.2.4. NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH ORGANISATIONS

Most of the people in this study generally work with organisations on short term contracts, but many have - and most are seeking - more long term, ongoing relationships with a particular organisation where they can expect to be a regular visitor. I have already discussed how work tends to be awarded on the basis of contact networks and reputation - often those acquired in work, not necessarily since. I have also raised

the issue of the comfort factor whereby organisations are likely to keep returning to those they know best. The question is raised by the participants themselves as to how organisations actually know that they are keeping their skills up to date. Many remark that organisations are very bad at contracting with freelance staff. Contract specifications are either too vague or simply impossible; the criteria for knowing if a contract has been carried out satisfactorily are often not written and agreed; consultants are often not vetted. In that context, the organisation is running a risk with its money and its work: the individual is running a risk with their reputation. A salient point for those responsible for HRM is that most such contracts were usually awarded with no reference to the function.

In general, most participants felt that the organisation benefited from using them in a consultancy capacity. For example, as a consultant (now doing almost the same job on a consultancy basis as she did as an employee), Anne is frank that she can take a more robust approach with the GPs, a client group, than she ever could before. The organisation benefits from this:

"They got all my expertise in GP fund holding budgets and an approach that said what is in it for the patient and a skilled accountant that could sit opposite a GP and say yeah, I have heard all that, now what is the truth. And the GPs would look at you to say, I'll complain, and I would say, "look I am a consultant, there is nothing to be alarmed about. I am not going to go back in there and tell them. Now you tell me the truth and tell me what you really want to do for your patients. Sell it to me." So, the Health Authority got something completely different and my authority was top rate at controlling GP budgets, It was all because I didn't have the fear that I would be fired which let me be free to work this way."

A particular issue which regularly arose was about the organisation's role in their ongoing development, an issue I began to focus on in the interviews as I began to be aware of the limited training and development the participants were getting. I asked the question if they felt that the organisation with whom they had ongoing or regular contracts had any reciprocal role in their development. All participants felt strongly that development was their own responsibility (although as indicated some people are not fully discharging it):

"I think if you really opt to be a consultant, then you opt not to be core. Part of that responsibility is for your own self development." (Monica)

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However, they offered some interesting perspectives that organisational HRM managers might want to consider. Participants gave examples of situations where they were contracted because of their organisation specific knowledge but lacked some of the necessary technical skills or knowledge to fulfil the project. A couple of participants had had experience of the organisation supplying or funding the necessary training to bring them up to speed on such matters. For example, one man was contracted to develop a software concept within the organisation. They paid for him to get the relevant training from the manufacturer. They needed his general software skills and they needed his knowledge of operating within the NHS. It seemed to them an appropriate investment that would yield an immediate pay back. The benefits were mutual.

Conversely other participants had experiences of managers being unable to contemplate such an arrangement and potential contracts had fallen through that way even though the manager concerned was convinced that the participant was the right person for the job. A certain knee jerk response to the very idea of being involved in the training of an independent operator was noted. To do so would be perhaps to violate extant scripts for the delivery of training within the organisations:

"I was asked to do a piece of work by a member of staff within that organisation which would have required me going on a day's training and the Chief Executive said no, I don't see any reason why we should pay a consultant to be trained to do this piece of work, although it would have been of benefit to the organisation because the contract I had with them was such that it wouldn't have actually cost them anymore, I wasn't charging them for a new piece of work, it was within an existing contract that I had... I felt a bit sad because that bit of work didn't get done which they needed, I would have benefited, I would have been quite happy to talk about splitting the cost of the training because there would have been benefits for me longer term, but that did not even arise." (Bridget)

The transactional contract was being rigidly applied here even though this participant felt they had a more relational and ongoing relationship with the organisation (Rousseau, 1996). Some participants have managed to come to informal arrangements with managers about training in return for reduced fees for example. A measure of reciprocity was appreciated.

As a couple of participants argued, organisations should acknowledge that such regular visitors could wreak havoc in the organisation if not managed properly or if their skills

and expertise have been over-estimated, and should consider them when devising development plans. The issue of cost could be dealt with separately:

"what I am saying is if I have a long term relationship with the people who are contracting with me then it is quite important that they involve me in their development plans and ensure that me and other colleagues are working to the standards that they want and if that involves investing in us a bit, well lets talk about it, come to some arrangement." (Gillian)

There was certainly no reluctance from these participants to pay for and arrange all their own training and development. What they would like from those organisations with whom they have regular contact is an update on the part of managers about their policy and practice on the development of all peripheral workers i.e. they would like the scripts to be updated to accommodate the changes in the organisation's deployment of human resources. Julia notes a difference in employer attitude based on how well individuals are known to the managers concerned:

"I get the best out of being a contractor because, I still know the people there
but on an official basis, I see this with others, they exploit you, expect time, don't do
anything to help, it is all a one way process and that is silly.

Hence, the link made in some careers literature between portfolio work\ boundaryless careers and the transactional contract is debatable (Herriot and Pemberton, 1996; Rousseau, 1996; Mirvis and Hall, 1996). Mirvis and Hall (1996) talk about how the transactional contract can boost an individual's self esteem as they have a less dependent relationship with the organisation. Herriot and Pemberton (1996) and Rousseau (1996) make assumptions (not empirically grounded) that freelance workers will want contracts based on their heightened needs for freedom and autonomy.

Any false dichotomy between these contracts should be resisted (Rousseau, 1996). People appear to be able to accept a transactional contract in the sense of working on a "short-term, demarcated, monetizable exchange" basis, but also want to feel a more relational sense of belonging and mutual trust and commitment while they are with the employers. This is all the more the case with those who left employment because (or partly because) of a growing disillusionment with the culture and structure of the organisation but who wanted to continue to do the same kind of work within it with their personal integrity once again intact. What many would like is a more long term relationship with an organisation but still on transactional terms i.e. they are not pining

for the employment relationship they had, although they may mourn the loss of certain of its features.

This data has raised some interesting analytical possibilities which will continue to be developed in the study. One such point is the notion of partnership in new careers. No matter how they might view their new relationship, it cannot develop as they might wish if organisational managers continue to construct them as outsiders. It is apparent that other people remain involved in shaping and negotiating their new career world: it is not just for these "pioneers" to design. Links can be made with the last chapter about their relative lack of development activity and their new relationship with organisations. The normative literature on organisational survival and growth advocates an engagement by organisations with the self -fulfilling impulses of staff (du Gay, 1996a). These people have no less impulse to develop but, as discussed in 9.1, seem to find it difficult to enact. A couple of potential explanations arise. Is it that individuals themselves need some sort of organisational structure and reason to develop, like a view of a path ahead (Collin, 1990)? Or, is the barrier their exclusion, by organisational managers, from a place in the ongoing development of the organisation, because of their non core status. It is reasonable to hope, I think, as many of these participants do, that if an organisation can change its HR policies in terms of being prepared to contract where they once would have employed, then it can also review its attitudes to the development needs of such non-core staff (Walton, 1996).

9.2.5. SUMMARY

Consistent with the findings in Chapter 9.1 most participants rely more on established contacts than on the development of new networks for the pursuit of their portfolio career. However, contrary to the literature which suggests the need to develop widely dispersed networks (Raider and Burt, 1996) these participants do not seem to be disadvantaged - as yet - in their reliance on previous organisational contacts who themselves may be awarding contracts to those they know for reason pertaining to social relations (Granovetter, 1985). However, their reliance on old skills and old contacts raises concerns (echoed by a few participants) that their portfolios may not be sustainable. Longer term studies would be required to explore this notion.

Although most are willing to network, they point out a dilemma which scarcely surfaces in the (very optimistic) literature about networking in boundaryless careers that the people they network with may well be rivals. They also struggle as DeFillippi and Jones (1996) identify with a desire to balance the need to network with genuineness in their

social relations. This study thus suggests that the issues of networking in portfolio careers be recognised as more complex than much of the literature suggests.

People are generally missing the social world of the organisation, although they do seek ways to recreate it, specifically in attempting to secure longer term contracts or to work in association with others. Ideologically, many find that they continue to judge their own conduct by what they have internalised as the norms of organisational work. As with the issue of skill development it seems that individuals are in need of support in developing wider social networks and marketing themselves to others.

Finally, they are developing more complex relationships with organisations than the literature on psychological contracts tends to assume (Rousseau, 1996; Herriot and Pemberton, 1996). The majority of people are seeking a relationship which can be long term and ongoing, although, as will be further discussed in chapter 10, they have little desire to return to contractual employment.

CHAPTER 9.3 : "KNOWING WHY": UNDERSTANDING THEIR CHANGING CAREER

This chapter focuses on how participants have come to understand the employment context they have adopted and the areas in which they have experienced change or continuity. Ideas raised in this chapter will also be carried forward to chapter 10 which seeks to understand their future plans for their portfolio. 9.3.1 begins the chapter by considering issues involved in how they make sense of their new situation. 9.3.2 acknowledges that their sense making is taking place within a high degree of reflexive awareness of the discourse of new careers and in 9.3.3 their advice to other would-be portfolio workers is highlighted The theme of continuity dominates the next section- 9.3.4 which analyses the ways in which individuals look back to their previous careers and even to aspects of their personality to identify the roots of this transition. Finally, 9.3.5 introduces a concern which is fundamental to developing identity as a portfolio worker - their worry that it has a poor public reputation and their own concern about other portfolio workers.

9.3.1. NAMING THEMSELVES

In this section, I consider how they name themselves- a key factor in identity formation (Mead, 1934). I explore four specific issues: being a management consultant; an entrepreneur or a "downshifter" and recognising that the product they sell is, in fact, themselves.

9.3.1.1. Management consultant- with a difference

In chapter 8, I indicated that most participants identified themselves as management consultants. However, they did so with a couple of regularly expressed corollaries. Firstly many comment on how other people tended to misunderstand their role:

"I would say I was a management consultant and they would say, what the hell is that?" (Geoff)

"lots of people don't understand what that is and my friends just laugh and say when are you going to get a proper job." (Judith)

"I say management consultant but no-one knows what that is unless they have been in it." (Julia)

A number of people were troubled about this, particularly about the prevalent view that it is a job any one can do: their professional standing is undermined. The anxiety of consultants about the public image of their occupation has been documented (Tisdall, 1982; Sturdy, 1997; Baxter, 1996; Clark, 1995). However, Laura finds that people also had a view on what it is to be an NHS manager. Asked if she felt at all defensive about being an NHS manager, she replied:

"I'm not as defensive about it as I was about being an NHS manager. Because, everybody, from my sister onwards, could tell me how to do my job. What they didn't realise is just how difficult it is to be a manager and to be an NHS manager is even more difficult"

Thus Laura appreciates the rather more mysterious status of being a consultant. It is worth remembering, though, that Laura has been in and out of employment so she has had several chances to figure out what label suits her best (and when).

The second corollary concerns their sense that they are not *"mere consultants"* but part of a pioneering trend, or at least, located in a specific social moment:

"I feel like a pioneer, although hasn't this been happening for decades? But something has changed hasn't it? There are certainly larger numbers now." (Bridget)

"I was at a course at Ashridge Management College and there were 30 people at Director level, my sort of seniority, age and I was the only one with a portfolio career. I was one of about 20 people (and this was 30) working outside the NHS but I was the only one, the only portfolio. But it won't be long before there are very many more of them with me." (Carole)

9.3.1.2. An entrepreneur?
I asked the question to what extent they felt like an entrepreneur, following Kanter's (1989) suggestion of taking a more entrepreneurial approach to careers and allowed them to interpret that concept as they wished. Most people did not apply it to themselves, with a few exceptions. Some reject it outright: for Bridget, the *"aggressive entrepreneurial streak"* she perceived in other management consultants had been a disincentive to join their ranks; Jim saw *"shades of Thatcherism"* echoing some comment on the enterprise culture (Ritchie, 1991; du Gay, 1991; Burrows and Curran, 1993). Carole and Henry both declare that they are not entrepreneurial and do not, under any circumstances want to be. Even Monica, who has been entrepreneurial in the sense of setting up her businesses, attributes that urge more to her husband.

David, who had also previously run his own (small) business, is prepared to accept that he has an entrepreneurial streak and Margaret has no trouble describing her self that way. Geoff has run a market stall for many years and he accepts the label. Others like Claire and Andrew sense now that they were entrepreneurial in the risks they took in managing their careers and their service at work but that they are not in the sense of needing to make a lot of money. A few people had begun to embrace the idea with some bemusement. Laura for example had been described thus by a family member and that image of herself was just beginning to take hold. Others take the concept but prefer to express it differently: John will describe himself as a *"dabbler"* following his interests, Helen says she *"scams."* So, there was evidence that it was not an alien concept to the majority of them: they were familiar at least with the discourse even if it does not sit easily with them. Some dawning awareness that the language of enterprise might apply to their new situation is evident, particularly here in Val's response. Appropriating both the language of enterprise (du Gay, 1996) and new careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996b) she rejected others' description of her as unemployed:

"I am over my head in work, it might not be all paid work, but not unemployed. I am a company and I am overworked. I do all the roles I am the director, the communications person, the marketing manager, how many people in the NHS running a business service see themselves like that. I am a boss. I do financial statements, I do the sales pitch, the lot and it is all me. It took me a while to understand this, but it is me. I am Me Unlimited!"

9.3.1.3. Downshifters?

Contrary to the developing discourse on downshifting (Sundstrom and Kleiner, 1992; Ghazi and Jones, 1997), there was little evidence that people were content to live on less money. Only three people appeared to exemplify this trend to any degree. Indeed one man - Robert, the IT professional - had decided to live his life from an early age in a way in which level of income was not central. Jim acknowledged that he liked to believe he would be happy leading a less material life and finding more time for other activities than work. But in fact he found this far harder to live with than he imagined and he eventually began to look again at ways of maximising his portfolio earnings. Anne had made a conscious decision to reduce her earnings on going portfolio, by taking a less stressed and elevated job to allow her to follow her dream of becoming a psychotherapist. This she was able to do- as she herself admitted frankly - because her mortgage had been paid off with her redundancy money. From that privileged standpoint, she commented that the issue should be less about money and more about making life choices. But this sentiment is also echoed by others who still feel the effects of financial insecurity. For example John hesitated to go portfolio previously because

his family's financial situation was precarious. Now, six years later and earning about the same amount of money as he previously did he remarks:

"All my anxieties are about money, but then I think- and this is what I discuss with my clients- what can you afford to lose, what is it that you really need financially and what more have you got to lose if your only pursuit is to maintain what is probably an unnecessarily high level of income? In achievement terms, then of course, money in the bank is tangible, but the feeling of not doing what you want is the worst thing, you feel it in the pit of your stomach."

However, as Pahl (1995), suggests, income level is a tangible badge to others of success in life as measured by the parameters of the traditional career. The potential loss of that badge can bring its own psychological concerns, related to professional pride, identity and self esteem (Mirvis and Hall, 1996).

9.3.1.4. "The product is myself"

For many participants the need to market their business had raised the uncomfortable issue that they themselves are the product they are selling. Some people struggle to identify precisely what it is about themselves that they are selling. The most reluctant portfolio workers have the most trouble:

"But it is all about having a product to sell. It is very difficult when people say what have you done and what do you specialise in and I find it very difficult to say I specialise in anything really, I just have 22 years of health care experiences in a variety of fields, in a variety of jobs, so I just feel that I could turn my hand to anything really, given the chance and so, well that is difficult for me to understand and difficult for others to understand. If you say you are in risk management or something like that at least people can put you in a box." (Judith)

"There were too many aspects to my job, what would be the segment I could offer? I try to convince myself, write aide memoires to myself about this, saying it is this or that aspect that I will push. Is this being a management consultant?" (Henry)

The problem of naming oneself was a live issue for many participants. Where that was a problem, there appeared to them to be no role to take (Barley, 1989):

"For various reasons we have had to change our stationary and we said how do we describe ourselves. My husband said I have put you down as Health Business Consultant and I thought oh, ugh and he said if you don't like that I am open to

suggestions and I couldn't come up with much more. So we brainstorm, well I do Information Management but if you say that they put you in the IT bracket, I was a nurse but that is fatal to say that, otherwise you are just a nurse, I do management in the professions but we haven't got much further than that. People never understand what we do. No wonder, we have trouble ourselves!"

Without a clear role with a concomitant role identity they felt exposed as discussed as discussed in chapter 9.2. As Laura, who feels sure she knows the rules of *"real consultancy,"* explained:

"What you're selling is yourself and that is all a bit too close to home. Its tough when they reject that as what they are rejecting is you."

However, other people experienced this naming and laying claim to themselves as a product much more positively. It engenders a sense of self worth:

"I am what I sell, I am known to be reliable, I have integrity and can deliver, can do difficult tasks to time I've proved myself inside, and that is what has brought the business in." (Bridget)

Andrew is proud of the package he sells:

"I sell myself as an ex senior manager, as an ex Head Office head hunted person, but also as a person who started off their career wiping people's bottoms, cleaning up their sick and I am still rooted in that because that has been my last 2 years experience as a personal carer. People want me for all that."

Several intriguing issues are suggested here about the nature of portfolio working, particularly the extent to which it represents a means of consolidating the various strands of ones life and maintaining a profound sense of continuity through this change- a topic to be discussed in chapter 10. Their comments, reported in chapter 9.2 about the loss of organisational affiliation are recalled. DeFillippi and Arthur (1996) suggest that people should move away on from describing themselves as an IBMer (for example) and begin instead to describe themselves more by what they do. Clearly this has proved problematic for some participants who remain deeply unsure how to describe themselves in their new role.

9.3.2. THE NEW CAREER DISCOURSE

The process of making sense of their new situation takes place within a great deal of reflexive awareness of the discourse on new careers. What was most notable was the level of knowledge about the works of Charles Handy, expressed vividly by one woman who declared:

"the imprimatur of Handy rather legitimates for me what I am doing." (Bridget)

She - like almost half of the participants and like Comfort (1997) - invoked his views as salient to her circumstances.

Handy was not the only future gazer whose works were known. A couple of people referred also to Tom Peters and others to the work of Bridges, who predicts the demise of the job. Helen, who was heavily involved in a career development forum, warned me in the interview that I could expect to hear people *"parroting back to you all that stuff about how careers are changing."* Without adopting her judgmental tone, I was struck indeed by the resonance of the new career debates in their stories. Moreover, they were expressed in just the normative and prescriptive terms that I criticised in the literature. Individual career makers and those responsible for careers in organisations, they suggested, must come to realise that the world of work has moved on. Here are just a few examples from different participants:

"the job for life has gone." (Geoff)

"people care less about organisations now, they only owe an allegiance to their craft." (Val)

"we must stop training people in skills to suit their jobs because all they will do is comply; we have to build people on their own skills and personal abilities." (Julia)

"the NHS is full of knowledge workers now and it must realise that." (Monica)

"it looks like we are going back to self employment and coming out of the days of corporate culture" (Steve)

"your career must be around developing levels of competence and skill for yourself." (Wendy)

They thus adopt what Wetherell and Potter (1988:180) describe as a repertoire of pragmatic realism in which "it becomes incomprehensible to turn the clock backwards." What they seem to be saying, in fact, is that they know the scripts and sanctions have changed, even if others are lagging behind in understanding the extent of change.

It is fair to say that the majority of participants locate themselves within a historical and social context of changing career discourse. Indeed, for many, the break with their organisational career past is at least discursively total (du Gay, 1996) even if they remained practically linked with the organisation. However, as the data has suggested so far, people's experience of portfolio working is ambiguous as, for example, many express dismay about the loss of organisational affiliation and fret about financial matters. Within their accounts can be heard the repertoire of liberation of new careers (Golzen and Garner, 1990) as well as that which suggests new careers are about marginalisation from the organisational and traditional career world (Hirsch and Shanley, 1996; Hutton, 1995). These repertories co-exist within the accounts of individuals (Potter and Wetherall, 1987), variously drawn on as they attempt to make sense of what has happened and develop their stance towards it. Carole's case illustrates this point. She talks very much in terms of the new career discourse about her career now:

"Well, I think of myself as having a collection of skills, rather than having a standard career, I have enough confidence in what I have done and what I have achieved to know that people do value what I can contribute."

However, echoing through Carole's account is her desire to return to a real job something *"I can believe in and that I can actually implement change over time."* Prior to her portfolio work, she worked part-time for many years. So her experience of full time, permanent and traditional career oriented work is long ago in her past. Nevertheless, she sustains a vision of it as desirable and achievable. Elsewhere in the interview she identified herself as a portfolio worker but her views of what constitutes a socially ratified successful career are still rooted in the world she left.

9.3.3. ADVICE TO WOULD BE PORTFOLIO WORKERS

This section highlights what they have come to see as the most salient features and thus exposes their opinions about the scripts and norms as they have come to construct them. A picture begins to emerge of the ideal and successful type and the way they should operate.

The ideal, successful portfolio worker then would be sure of their skills and competencies; have the necessary confidence to operate solo; have a good range of contacts; be a quick learner, sure of their motives and aware of their market.. For example:

"I think you have to be confident around your own level of competency and skill. Basically you have to be pretty realistic about just how good you are and you have to a more unique combination of something than anybody else to get work out there or you have to incredibly well connected." (Monica)

A successful portfolio worker needs to be anchored in themselves not needing to get their identity from their job. It is no use to be a victim nor to expect that the organisation owes you a living. Risk averse people will have trouble, as will those:

"more schooled into giving and receiving orders and all that authority base it is a nightmare for them So I think for those people might never see it as a natural fit." (Jim)

Planning is required particularly about your own skill profile and about the market for your package of skills:

"Right, my advice would be write down all the people you know. How many are there, what kinds of jobs, do they have discretion to hand out work or not, what could you sell, what is it you know and it is really easy to under-rate that. Then you have to actually define it and the other thing is to find role models. Who has done what you want to do successfully. If you can't find many then perhaps it is not do-able. So that if there are a few role models around then perhaps that environment has enough foliage to support other animals. Then you have also got to find from them if they feel they are eating less grass than they did last year." (David)

An interesting point is that, despite their concerns about the financial implications of portfolio careers no one suggested (as do Peiperl and Baruch, 1997) that people should save up for it. A few, though, recognised that a lump sum redundancy payment had been a useful bridge.

Of course, what is fascinating about this advice is that not all participants, by any means, followed it themselves as they launched into their new world. Taking this advice with their awareness of the new discourse, it can be said that they have learned the ropes and appropriated a vocabulary which they are able to pass on to those behind them (Barley, 1989). Some people however are more sceptical. Steve, for example, despite

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the success he has made of his portfolio in financial terms, recognises that it can be a marginalising experience (Hirsch and Shanley, 1996). He urges caution and sees it as an option only if the workplace is truly unbearable:

"I say don't do it, stick with the job. Unless you really hate the job, stick with it and if you do want to move out of it, stay there long enough in that employment to try to generate work you are sure will be there when you come out and don't take people's word for it, they either don't or can't deliver." (Steve)

9.3.4. CONTINUITY IN CHANGE

The data suggests, then, that participants perceive themselves to have made a major career change which they have some difficulty in describing and delimiting. In looking at the knowing how and knowing whom competencies, it was noted that participants drew heavily on skills and contacts they had already acquired. In bringing them forward into their new world, they felt a comforting sense of continuity. This section now moves on to look at the notion of portfolio work as a consolidation of various aspects of the self which arose as a major issue within the data.

In portfolio work, the individual feels more vulnerable than when they could wrap an organisational identity around themselves: now they are on their own. For many people, the key issue remains the operation of their professional skills and expertise, albeit in a different context. What appears to exercise them the most is the continuity of those aspects of the self that they are carrying forward, rather than the apparent structural aspects of the context in which they now operate. However, Arthur and Rousseau suggest that "people making sense of uncertainty enact a structure in which to work" (1996:21). As the "containing social structure" (Tolbert 1996:332) of organisations holds them no longer - at least in the way they felt it did - what do they turn to instead? Mirvis and Hall suggest that one of the way in which individuals may navigate the "shoals" of the boundaryless career is by an enlargement of what they call the "core identity." Far from enduring a sense of fragmentation, they speculate that people will look to incorporate into their sense of self a commitment to their whole life's work. It will be incumbent on individuals to "integrate these diverse work and life experiences into their larger sense of self" (1996:252). To do so they will have to accept the psychological and financial risks which now becomes theirs to bear outside of organisational membership. (Beck, 1992). The upshot is deepening the sense of self: finding "the path with the heart" (Shepherd, 1984).

This next section moves on to consider how individuals explain the transition in terms of aspects of their self. Many of the participants cited aspects of their personality and their approach to work as indications of a continuity between the two chapters (or more) of their story. Weick (1996) posits a link between what he calls "weak situations" and "tightly coupled structures." He contends that people's external guides for career action weaken as organisational boundaries loosen. To minimise any sense of discontinuity, people will become more guided by "tightly coupled structures such as "enduring personality dispositions." Several themes emerge as relevant: the explanations people see in their own personality; their approach to work, which focus particularly on an attachment to a public sector ethos; a portfolio approach to packaging together the several aspects of their life. Age emerges as concern for several participants, so it will be explored in this section. I will use the story of one man - David - throughout the coming discussion as means of illustrating the themes that emerge for many others.

9.3.4.1. "The way I am"

This study has not set out to consider determining factors from an individual's personality: indeed such an approach has been explicitly rejected (see chapter 4). The view of self identity adopted in this study is consistent with Weick's (1995) view which sees the self as an ongoing project, as "a typified discursive construction" (Knorr and Cretina 1981:10), while not denying that individuals will work to feel an enduring" sense of identity and personness that is socially acquired and recognised" (Casey 1995:23).

However, this study is concerned with what people appear to draw on to make sense of the situation they are in. Accordingly, I am interested in to what extent people do look to their personality and dispositions to provide a framework for understanding and reporting the story of this career transition.

The transcripts were peppered by phrases suggesting: "I have always been like that": *"I've always aimed to add value"; "I was always freewheeling" ; "I have always been a rogue"; "I've always known that you only have only life"; "I've always moved on every few years"; "Influence has always been the most important thing to me"; "I have always been successful in managing my own career"; "I could never tolerate decisions being made for me"; "I have always been concerned to make the best for myself"* and so on. There are many more such examples. Yet amidst such assertions of continuity also lurked instances of breach, fracture and at times the wounds from them were still fresh. For example Henry, finding it difficult to reconcile himself to the selling necessary in portfolio work wonders: *"and I have to ask, is this me?"*

Participants were actively engaged within the interview in telling a story that made sense to themselves and to me. Many people were able to construct their career in such a way as to render this career transition the most logical outcome, given their personality and approach to work. As a mechanism for considering the rich and complex data about the issues of personality and personal identity, I will use the story of one man - David- to introduce themes prevalent in several stories.

David left work in order to find employment as an employed consultant. In the event he found enough work very quickly to become self employed. It has been, he suggests, a positive move in light of his personality:

"I was always a very free wheeling, independent operator. I was someone who liked independence and always sought more independence than frankly some of the organisations in which I worked were comfortable with, so there were tensions between me and my managers. I felt I could get by quite well on my own thank you. I don't mind telling people what I was doing and having a few objectives but I didn't like to have, what I would perceive as, my career managed. Other people like to be given structure and direction and I could do that better myself. I'm somebody who is not a corporate type of person. "

Likewise John believes that he has only ever been really happy at work when he has been running his own show and he can do so all the more now in portfolio work:

"I do my career tricks on myself and think where was I happiest and it is when I have been doing my own thing, those few moments when it felt like my show were the best, why would I not want to feel that it is my show?"

What is intriguing about David's story is that he has spent all his working life within three large hierarchical organisations apart from one short period when he was working freelance in a creative capacity. (As an aside at this point, he decided to return to paid work and keep his creative side unscathed as it were by the realities of the workplace. When he has sufficient clients in his portfolio to relax a little, he will take it up again but on an unpaid basis). Many other people also lay claim to a personality more suited to the independent world, but belied by their long tenure in organisational employment. Helen, for example, who worked in the NHS for 22 years, suggests that she has always had a portfolio personality, which she tried to accommodate by being involved in several projects. She now wonders how she did survive for so long inside what she calls a "cocoon."

However, there are some contradictory responses which suggest other angles to this debate. Continuing using David's story as the basis for this discussion, the issue of appropriate behaviour is raised. He draws a distinction between what he sees as this free wheeling and creative personality and the behaviour he finds is expected of him in his new role. Talking here about his creative side he reflects on his "*natural approach*" which he was able to utilise while in full time contractual employment but which feels more risky in the world of short term contracts:

"*I tend to make jokes - some of which are quite funny but they are not the type a consultant should make especially if he is contracted by these people. So there is a part of me which likes to live on the edge and likes to be challenging and is creative and I think that needs to be de coupled from the work I do now... but I have always made jokes I shouldn't make and I am actually quite good at it, but its OK in work. But I do think it is something I ought to address because it is about a certain creativity which isn't being satisfied.*"

Others voice similar issues. Claire, for example, observes that she needs to be more "*obsequious*" than is her natural style. She feels more vulnerable in her new role than when she was on the payroll. The key to being able to express one's personality and approach is judged to be structural by some participants - the security of a full portfolio of clients and no shortage of work. In such a scenario there is less imbalance in the relationship between client and contractor. In the words of Andrew "*I can just tell them to get stuffed if they don't like it.*" This is not a luxury afforded to most of the participants who still feel a dependence on their clients. To some extent such views suggest that participants do feel themselves to be engaged in role taking - as if there is a script and some rules and sanctions already in place that they have understood they must follow (Barley, 1989). In line with Barley's model (1989), they are both creating and reproducing career scripts which then they act towards as constraining factors, as with David who feels that a consultant must behave in certain ways and voluntarily amends his own behaviour accordingly. Andrew, by contrast, sees enablement in the institution of portfolio working as he is defining it: in this capacity he can walk away from any job he doesn't like, although he could not do that in work.

Finally, the desire to find continuity falters only in the stories of those who are seeking to return to work or have already done so. Brenda believes that there was nothing in her personality or background that made her suited for this work. Nevertheless, she too is able to identify what she regards as a personal prerequisite:

"you have to come from an environment where people do jobs which are at least slightly risky. But me, well my husband is a policeman for goodness sake. None of my family, none of my intimates ever lead a risky life as I see it."

She feels no need to heal the rupture of her short period in portfolio: it was forced on her, it was not what she wanted and she has returned to her more natural environment. By contrast, Judith and Henry for example, desperate to return to work but fearing that it will not prove possible, strive to find those elements of their personality that could allow them to interpret this break in their career history as a continuity.

"When I was Chief Executive, I would not have assumed that I could flourish as a consultant, hadn't previously considered it. But my manager was driving me around the bend, I'm not a yes person and I do have a problem with authority figures if I don't see eye to eye with them so I suppose it is best that I am self employed. I can rationalise it and can figure it out, I have never needed a guiding hand."

Although they both try, they ultimately fail to convince themselves and their ambivalence continues to cause them both much personal unease.

9.3.4.2. Personal integrity and values and "the public sector ethic"

David attributes his organisational employment to "*a liberal, student, public sector, 1960s ethic*" which has also always been with him through his working life. Again, many other participants talk of their adherence to the public sector ethos. David now finds that, outside of organisational employment, he is better able to marry those two, apparently contradictory, personal needs. He is going to keep the NHS as a major client. Similarly, Jim argues:

"To me being connected with the NHS is vital and there is something about supporting an organisation which helps millions of people a day. It is not like helping a company which sells soap powder."

Many other NHS long servers remain committed to the values of the organisation as they thought they were when they first joined:

"I am still committed to a Health Service which still values the things that I came in it to do, that is to give of my best to people based on their needs." (Val)

What participants claim to have found is that they can continue to be public servants outside public sector paid employment with more sense of integrity than they had in their last years with the changing organisation (which raises interesting issues related to the Barley model about individual enactment of changing career scripts and the structuring process). Like David, several people - notably Andrew and Val had felt like mavericks within a service which had in fact appreciated their idiosyncratic way of operating until recently when they had begun to feel themselves increasingly at odds with it. Their ability to exercise influence on behalf of clients (or particularly in the cases of Andrew and Val on behalf of disadvantaged people) is enhanced in their freelance role. Participants find themselves unencumbered by organisational priorities which may clash with their own:

" I am finding that there is a quality to what I do which means it is personal, I don't have to owe allegiance, I don't have to keep my mouth shut and I can talk with clarity because I have time to think and to begin to see things from a perspective that I didn't have before, because when you are in the trench digging the hole, you can't see what you are doing, or who is filling up the hole above you, so now I can stand away and take a breath and then say, sorry, I don't build trenches." (Val)

The sense of being able to do one's work in the way one judges best without having to live within the imposed parameters of the organisational structure and culture was liberating to many. Andrew, for example, is doing very similar work to that in his last role, but now he brings in the clients for himself and he is able to charge them and treat them as he sees fit not within the rules laid down by the organisation which he disagreed with and disrespected:

"I prefer it now that I am running the show, I'm getting the money direct, whereas at xx I felt like a tart and I am not being disrespectful to tarts, because they do a good job, but you know what I mean."

The ethos of serving the public - which tends to be underplayed in contemporary career literature - is what brought many people to the NHS in the first place, as discussed in chapter 6. Such participants have found that portfolio working does not diminish - indeed can enhance - that sense of personal commitment. As discussed in chapter 7, many participants felt that their organisations had changed in ways which displeased and upset them. These changes were experienced most profoundly by those who had been in the NHS - or at least public service for most of their organisational life. Such organisational change had undermined the pride they had had in working for and being identified with the organisation. They felt intimately bound up with the decisions it

made and personally compromised when the organisation operated in ways which conflicted with the values they held dear (du Gay, 1996; Weick, 1995). Leaving was a fairly radical means of preserving their own personal and professional integrity. Outside of organisational employment they feel they can operate with integrity, embodying the values that they felt the organisation had had and still should have.

For others the benefits are more personal. Laura, for example, battered by her organisational experiences, has become convinced that working outside their boundaries is the only way she can have a career and maintain her personal value base. Like others she recognises that - financial considerations to the one side - she can walk away from jobs she does not want, bosses she does not respect or situations that she feels are *"abusive."* She insists that this way of working is about:

"being professional in a modern context, which is about being authentic and having integrity, knowing which battles to fight, being secure enough in yourself so that if they don't like you and what you do, then so what? They don't own you."

Even those people who had no axe to grind about a changing NHS, like Gillian and Bridget, feel that portfolio working is a means to enact a sense of integrity and a personal value base which had been a part of their working life with the public sector.

To my mind, there is much that is intriguing about this data. Firstly it suggests that people may have considerably less instrumental orientations to changing their career paths in this way than much of the literature on new careers might suggest. The second issue concerns the public sector ethos that several of them identify. The literature on changing public sector warns about potential pitfalls in importing business principles to the public sector (Jacobs, 1995; du Gay, 1996b; O'Toole, 1993) and indeed that has been a cause of concern to many participants. However, their own actions parallel this shift: they are also removing themselves from the institution of the public sector, as previously defined, and into the institution of independent operating and self employment which, arguably, enshrines the business principle. It is quite fascinating that they feel they can be self employed public sector workers. I have already indicated that many have an ambivalent attitude to the status of self employment, downplaying it in their accounts. No-one points to any dilemmas that might be posed by needing to be business minded while operating within the public sector.

There are interesting issues here, which will be explored further in Chapter 11, about the various interpretative schemes that individuals draw on, acknowledging that some

people appear to have always positioned themselves outside dominant discourse of careers, be it the traditional linear, or the new instrumental and enterprising

Of course, there are some exceptions to the attachment to the public sector. Many of those people who entered the NHS later in their life experienced dissonance in their careers at that point as they felt at odds with the prevailing culture: they could not find a role for their personality within it - as a "*rogue*" a "*plain talker*", a "*free thinker*". Now in portfolio work, there is more sense of freedom to be able to be that which they are and for many of them (and here I include Anne, Steve, John, Robert) the public sector is not a necessary context for their work. Several others who did have a long public sector background like Geoff and Claire are quite happy now to move away from it, disillusioned a step too far by their final experiences.

9.3.4.3. The Portfolio Approach

Many participants talk in a more pragmatic way about their approach to work and how that carries forward into their new context for example, seeking feedback, following interests, wanting to add value to any project.

Several people offered examples of a portfolio approach evident earlier in their careers. John for example had been involved in lecturing as well as working; Helen always had several projects on the go, paid and unpaid; Jim was heavily involved in local politics as well as work; Val was involved in a whole range of community projects. Margaret insists that her whole approach to her career has been portfolio:

"I never subscribed to the job for life, which I demonstrated with my early sideways move. There will be no burn out for me, why the rush. So, I think portfolio, patchwork, I paint my career as a range, a mosaic. My identity was always more dispersed, it was not bound up with work alone. The work and play boundaries get blurred."

Returning again to David's story, he traces his ability to be able to deal with portfolio work to a need to develop a multiple personality as a child for two reasons, firstly:

"Well, growing up as a child, I did not have a very firm identity. It is something I have created my self particularly being part artistic and part wanting to work in big organisations. And I also love sport although I was branded as an intellectual. The football team people used to ridicule me because I had books in my kit bag. So I was aware of not having a stereotype that people immediately buy into but having a portfolio personality which I manage so that there was a better fit . So that is a process I have had to develop and it took me a long time to learn from an early age."

and secondly because he was the child of immigrant parents:

"so that gives you a different perspective than if you were brought up in what would have been your own country, in terms of your culture and that of your parents and grandparents, the food you eat. So inventing and reinventing was something I had to do from an early age because if your parents speak one language at home- and it was German- and you live in the East End which was heavily bombed and you were born 4 years after the war and the memories of whole areas bombed flat do linger on quite long and coming from a background which was unpopular - although my parents aren't German, that was just their common language, so that was a double paradox really. So from an early age I had to learn how to manage different identities. It was like being at a fancy dress party and jumping in and out of 20 different costumes."

David may have a more extreme story to tell than some other participants and he is more reflexively aware than most of the shifting site of identity formation, but such themes about background and its role in forming an identity judged suitable for portfolio working resound in many stories. Helen feels more free now to give rein to a multiple sense of self which was more restricted in work. She demonstrates the playful, post-modern approach to identity:

"you have to think about what you are going to wear all the time, its fun, like today going to the surgery, I thought about my shorts and said well no! And, I have a very flamboyant jacket and I wouldn't wear that today but I will on Friday when I am teaching the students."

Several participants trace their more *"maverick"* or *"deviant"* or *"personal"* approach to work back into early childhood, rooted in some sense of being an "outsider" Being gay, being black, being brought up in a working class family where they were the first to achieve higher degrees and good jobs or where their parents life chances were curtailed by material circumstances, being the child of an RAF father and always moving school were all cited.

Mindful of the criticism of the entrepreneurship literature discussed in chapter 2, I am by no means claiming that such experiences necessarily forge a personality more inherently suited to portfolio working. Rather, what I find intriguing is the participants' desire to find traces in their childhood years, never mind their subsequent career, of a

decision they made in their thirties or forties. As Weick (1995) suggest outcomes develop prior definitions. In career story telling the beginning is the "verdict or choice" which the subsequent text renders sensible by constructing a plausible story that produced it (p.11).

9.3.4.4. The effect of age

It is necessary here to take a detour from the main argument to highlight an issue which did emerge as significant in the data: the issue of age. Of the five people in their mid to late forties age has emerged as an issue for four of them. Robert is the exception but he has never been prone to living his career by any timetable implied or otherwise. The issue is constructed as a problem by some of them.

For Henry, it is a problem as he feels the structural barrier of ageism. The one relief of his age, for him, is it means that he does not need to remain in the world of work for too much longer. Bridget hopes to take early retirement in a few years time and feels a need to slow down as work still fills up her life: not that she minds now but she can see ahead to a more mellow period. By contrast, John has decided that "I am not killing myself, I'm like I'm early retired but without the pension." He remains busy but satisfied with the feeling of consolidation he has achieved in his portfolio. He feels a sense of achievement that he can add value by incorporating all he has learned in his diverse career:

"I'm 50 now, and there is more sand in the bottom than the top so those at the top take on a golden glow and I don't want to waste them."

In John's mind returning to work and not taking advantage of the possibilities of the portfolio world would be to waste his sand.

Joan is saddened that she perceives her age now as problem: having received an early retirement pension she feels she has accepted a view of herself as getting old and is acting accordingly:

"The fact that my redundancy was an early retirement package has been curiously limiting psychologically, I have been really taken aback by that. I certainly never thought of myself as retiring, but I find myself sometimes behaving as if I am. I don't think of having a pension - and its not so much - but there is some psychological factor that makes me feel that I have stepped off the career path."

In her case, what others construct as consolidation, she sees as hitting a brick wall. Similar imagery is used by Julia who talks of her "train hitting the buffers." As she struggled throughout the interview to identify what was her new motivation and success criteria. She is inclined as I have quoted for consolidation as the (consolation?) prize.

However, evidence from other interviewees cautions against any deterministic argument about the impact of age on portfolio careers. For example, Geoff too, has a pension but is just as driven to earn as much as he did in work regardless. The sense of consolidation is also felt by those at a much younger age. Jim and Helen, for example, feel a sense of satisfaction at the exercise of their diverse skills and personal approach which felt crushed in the workplace. Gillian and Judith, (both ex Chief Executives), far from retirement age, nonetheless talk about the satisfaction of being able to put something back in recognition of all they gained from the organisation.

As I discussed in chapter 3, I have explicitly decided not to incorporate what I felt where the deterministic and overly structural approaches to careers which are based on ages or stages. The participants have not given me any reason to change my stance. A couple of the younger participants did acknowledge that they felt they had plenty of time in their career. Gillian wondered if - at 44 she had reached the top too young. Other than those instances, age rarely emerged as a significant factor. However, the experiences of these few people in their late forties does give rise to speculation (that could be addressed by further study) that those entering portfolio working later in their career may be viewing it as the last spiral loop of their career (Driver, 1982) and hence approaching in a different way to those who embark on it in their mid career who may develop a quite different trajectory.

9.3.4.5. Consolidation

Most participants point to long standing continuities, some others recognise that they have subsequently come to see the continuities in their new world. Even Henry, deeply troubled as he is by this new context, sees that what might lead him to make his peace with it is the opportunity to link all the strands:

"I suppose things do link back in, the new work is akin to where your skills originally lay and there are new ones too, so that is good and I have had time to turn round the xx society got it going again and I get satisfaction from that, lots of verbal rewards. Really I could live with that, people just saying 'well done Henry.'"

Monica, concerned to note the employed and self employed and writing elements of her portfolio all hang together in a *"legitimate manner,"* feels a rounded sense of self and achievement and something to special to offer ":

"As well as being a consultant with a lot of the people I work with I am also a fellow traveller. You know they cannot say it is all very well for you to talk, you don't have to implement it. You know I can say well, in fact, I do."

In a more abstract sense, participants see an opportunity, in portfolio work, to bring together other aspects of their life. For some of those people with children, it provides a mechanism by which they can have a challenging career (feeling that part-time working reduces such a chance) and look after their children. Julia sees it as opportunity to bring together a whole range of strands: skills, experience, beliefs relationship with her husband. Having recognised as discussed above that her skills are an integral package she goes on:

"I am learning that I cannot run my business unless it accords with my beliefs and my Christianity and my faith and I can now make all the three work together. I am getting more involved with the community and the church, which I never had time to before, you know you take a lot so give a bit and there is time to consolidate my husband and myself which is a great blessing."

People talk about an enlarged sense of self now that they have recognised that their identity is not wholly bound up with work: it is not a fixed asset (Mirvis and Hall, 1996). Some people have become aware that they can be both a manager and something else: consultant, mother, researcher, writer. Gillian, for example, after a lifetime in NHS management was delighted to be told by her coach that she also profiles as a management consultant. Her sense of occupational identify was heightened by this apparent revelation.

The sense of consolidation hinges on a feeling of having had a complex past life whose various strands have been incorporated into the present. Suzanne wonders if this is what Jung meant when he suggested that the first half of your life is a preparation for the second. In a similar vein, Helen is sure that:

"Settling in with ourselves is what it is all about and honouring what we have done in the past."

The data thus yield evidence of a strong desire to find points of continuity- in skills, experience, contacts and even personality- that link them to both organisational employment and the move to portfolio working. They seek to minimise the sense of discontinuity that most of them experienced at the time of transition. The significance of their interpretation is how it spurs them to action (Barley, 1989) which will be discussed further in chapter 10 when I move on to look at how they describe their future plans. The expression of such views led me to wonder if there is a sense here of battening down the hatches: of further development traded for a sense of having reached some end point-an issue discussed further in chapter 10.

9.3.5. THE REPUTATION OF PORTFOLIO WORKING

However tension arises in their attempt to come to terms with their new work. They embrace the discourse of new careers themselves but they are uncomfortably aware of alternative interpretations. Portfolio working, many fear, has a poor public image (we might want to say that there is an alternative discourse to understand it which focuses not on what if gained but on what is lost: security, stability, status etc.). Indeed, the extent of negative comment on fellow portfolio workers was striking. Many participants expressed dismay at the way in which other people approached portfolio working, seeking to distance themselves from their actions. However, in making the judgements they do, they are recognising, however obliquely, that others may perceive them in this very way.

Their concerns are about the variable quality of fellow portfolio workers, identifying the existence of many of those who were forced to do it by what Bogenhold and Staber (1991) call the "logic of economic necessity" or who are using it as a cover for redundancy, or incapability at work or early retirement. There was a great deal of frustration expressed at the extent to which these people are giving their new work context a bad name. They talk of people acting as "*victims*" being "*unable to change their approach to people,*" feeling that the "*world and the NHS owes them a living.*"

A level of sympathy was also expressed that people had been forced out into a work context that requires skills, confidence and credibility that these people - unlike themselves- may not possess. The implication is that the decision to go portfolio has to be borne out of some "free choice" to result in a successful outcome.

As I discussed in chapter 7, of the three people made compulsorily redundant, only Henry was subsequently unable to find other paid work. He is a most "reluctant independent" (Handy 1994) indeed. He feels that he has no choice but to be portfolio

but he is aware, as his fellow portfolio travellers fear, that he is ill equipped for it. Their condemnation of others who are not portfolio for the "right reasons" (Gillian) is intriguing given that many participants are all too aware that their own move out of organisational employment and into portfolio work could be interpreted as being forced by necessity or covering up redundancy. However, - with the exception of Henry, and to a lesser extent Judith who remains very ambivalent about this way of working - that is not the sense they are making of their circumstances. A more positive gloss is applied. Yet, a stumbling block to a full and satisfying construction of their new employment world as a worthy and positive occupational choice is the people they must share it with:

"The really worrying thing is that there is such a varying standard. There are people I have worked with and I have been ashamed that we have been on the same side of the fence. I mean, real cringe making. Also, because I've been associated with the NHS most of my working life, I know some of these people, I know how abysmal they were and now they are setting themselves up as consultants, you know, it makes me really cringe and they are getting work!" (Carole)

One man comments disparagingly on the *"armies of ex NHS people,"* now freelance who just continue on regardless still working in connection with the organisation and acting as if their circumstances have not materially changed. In doing so, he may well be casting aspersions on some of the people in the study. Monica gets exasperated with some consultants she knows (all ex NHS managers):

"I do get a bit cross with some of the consultants I network with who now think the NHS owes them a living. I say yeah but you can't have your cake and eat it. If you want your freedom and independence there are compromises around that ...I think if you really opt to be a consultant, then you opt not to be core."

Monica thus constructs the two scenarios, work and consultancy \ portfolio work (as she also describes herself as portfolio) as dichotomous with different scripts and norms.

A couple of people reflect on how they could have more happily acknowledged themselves as consultants some years ago, but now feel undermined by the criticisms they both voice and share about individuals trying to operate a portfolio in an overcrowded market. The perspective of Liz who was portfolio for a short time before returning to work demonstrates how real are their anxieties about their role and how it is viewed. She would not rule out portfolio work at some later stage but feels:

"really it is the thing to do in your fifties, when you really have something to offer -over thirty years experience and for you, it is a way of winding down to retirement."

9.3.6. SUMMARY

It seems to me that Monica's comments about having your cake and eating it provide a pertinent summary to this chapter. At one point early in the analysis I noted down a very similar comment myself. Of course, this phrase has derogatory overtones that I do not want to pursue, except in pointing out, as I have done, that participants themselves are aware of conflicting interpretations of the transition they have made. It is not surprising, I think, that participants will seek to have the best of both worlds, but they have more difficulty in achieving that. This chapter has pointed out some of their dilemmas: they want to be consultants or portfolio workers, but recognise that others might not view this choice with respect. They want to continue to work within the public sector but not to be employed by it.

Participants also seek to minimise the sense of change that they feel in their new role by looking for antecedents to this decision in their own personality and approach to work. Just as they drew heavily on past experiences and past contacts, they draw also on, what they identify, as long standing views of themselves. Personalities, approaches and values come to be constructed as less pertinent to the organisational world than to the new. Hence, through all the difficulties and ambiguities that they identify in portfolio work, it may be that they come to construct it as an apposite and appropriate career choice for themselves. Chapter 10 moves on to look at their future plans. The ideas raised in this section will now be subject to further analysis along with data from chapter 8 and the rest of chapter 9 in the conclusion to Part two of the analysis which follows.

9.4. PART TWO. CONCLUSION

Part two of the analysis set out to answer the following questions:

- 3. Is the concept of portfolio work meaningful to participants?
  - a. What is the pattern of work and what are the implications of working portfolio?
- 4. How is portfolio work experienced?
  - a. What are the highs, lows and significant features of portfolio working?
  - b. How is training and development experienced?
  - c. How are social networks relevant?
  - d. How does this way of work differ from organisational employment
- 5. What is the new relationship with the organisation?
  - a. Is there any scope for mutual approach to training and development?

The chapters also introduced data which will be further explored in chapter 10 to answer the question:

- 6. How are they now construing career?
  - a. What do they draw on to fashion their portfolio career?
  - b. Are they pioneers or following more established paths?

This conclusion to part two will consider these questions, highlighting the contributions to extant literature. It will do so by introducing a model of the transition and considering questions 3, 4a, 4d and in that light. It goes on to further theorise the transition (a major aim of the study as highlighted in Chapter 1) with the assistance of Barley's (1989) model and attends thus to questions 4b, 4c and 5.

Data on question 6 will be noted but discussion reserved for chapter 10 and 11.

9.4.1. A MODEL OF THE TRANSITION TO PORTFOLIO WORK

Nicholson's (1990) model of career role transitions (figure 3) conceptualised the career transition as a disjunctive move from one context to another, albeit with underlying

continuities. However, a significant feature of this data is the extent of the continuities between the two contexts allied to the ambiguity surrounding their new work circumstances - the portfolio dimension. Hence the following figure demonstrates the transition as a break, certainly, but also as more of a shading from one context to the other, with ongoing links, rather than simply as a disjunctive transition.
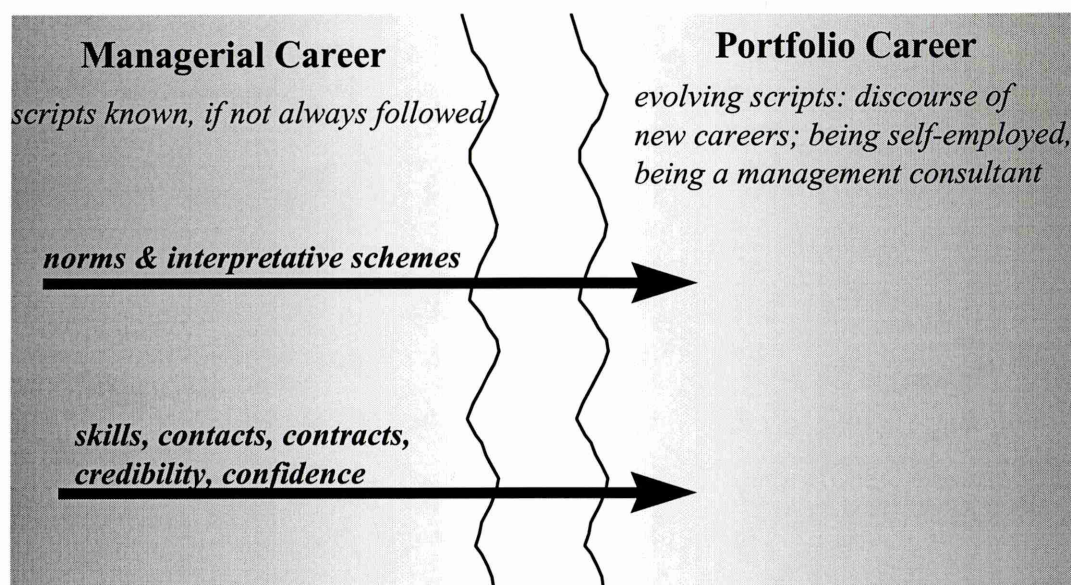
Figure 5. The transition from managerial to portfolio career

As chapters 6 and 7 dealt with participants' (quite heterogeneous) understanding of the managerial career, this section will concentrate on the portfolio dimension.

9.4.2. PORTFOLIO WORK AS A MEANINGFUL CONCEPT

A major aim of this study was to consider the analytical usefulness of the term *portfolio working* which has tended to be used in career literature without due regard to definition.

9.4.2.1. Pattern of work

Using the types of work suggested by Handy (1989): wage work; fee work; home work gift work and study work, it was found that fee work comprised the largest part of most people's portfolio. A further interesting finding was that most people's portfolios were arranged around the theme of their work based skills as they looked to separate the spheres of home and work, in contradiction to much of the literature about emerging

careers which assumes more permeable boundaries. The data suggests that there are complex issues involved in piecing together a variety of types of work which participants see as structural (like labour markets and employer policies). Exploration of such constraints is relatively neglected in much recent literature on careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Hence this study contributes empirical data about the under-researched area of the working lives of those who leave organisations and opt for a form of working which could be called portfolio working.

9.4.2.2. Naming themselves

The term *portfolio work* was meaningful to participants: there was an intriguing level of awareness of and belief in the works of Charles Handy. Many people referred to their *portfolio*, talked about themselves and others as *portfolio people*. However, no-one used the term in the way that Comfort (1997) suggests - as a label by which to explain their new situation to other people. Rather, the public labels they adopted to describe their new context were either by reference to the employed part of their portfolio, or were "management consultant," occasionally "career counsellor". There is little literature on management consultancy as a career choice and even less about independent consultants working on their own account[1] (all too often assumed to be a choice born out of necessity (Sonnenberg, 1997; Pahl, 1995). The need for further research is suggested.

Participants also talked about being freelance and more occasionally about being self employed. However, such labels, in fact, belied the variety of types of work in which they were involved. Within individual accounts a number of these words and phrases were used to describe what they did but participants were still far from convinced about their social acceptability. This uncertainty about the public image of their new world came together with their own concerns about how to name it and how to delineate it and was a significant cause of anxiety to many participants.

There was a limited level of recognition of themselves as self employed among the participants, even though every one in the study was (or had been in the case of Liz and

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[1] For example, Kubr (1986) does refer to the growing numbers of independent management consultants (he calls them "sole practitioners" p. 469) and suggests it is a career choice for those who have been employed consultants and\or have 8-15 years practical experience in management. He does not elaborate on reasons for entry assuming that they are known to the reader. Metzger (1993) writing about developing a consulting practice starts by assuming that decision already made.

Brenda) wholly or partly self employed. The very fact that these individuals in this study, who are all self employed by tax status (and usually by self ascription) have little to say about self employment is an interesting finding in itself. To that extent, this study makes some contribution to what is known about sole trader or small scale self employment (recognised as under-researched area, despite significant levels of growth in recent years, Stanworth et al., 1995). The ambiguous nature of the term self employment was debated in chapter 2 and shown to cover a multitude of situations from own account work (as in the case of these participants) to running a business empire or working for a pittance in routine home based work. Schein (1994) argues that the notion of real self employment and entrepreneurship be kept separate from studies into the growth of what he calls defensive self employment. However, recognising the inextricable link between social structures and human action (Giddens, 1984), the surge in sole trader self employment, which is commonly associated with changing organisations, suggests further avenues for research into the concept of self employment (Katz, 1994; Granger et al., 1995; Gibb Dyer, 1994: Baucus and Human, 1994).

In conclusion, the term portfolio working was found to have meaning to the participants notwithstanding that they conflate it with other terms in use. This study makes no claim to definitively delineate the boundaries of the term. Such an enterprise is hazardous even with much more well established and researched concepts like self employment. More research would need to be done with diverse samples to identify if the term appeared to have more widespread currency. However this study suggests that it may have value as a generic term that can encompass a variety of working arrangements, ranging from self employment only, utilising one's skills with a variety of clients to more diverse and varied packages of work. The key elements are contractual independence from any one employer and a portfolio of work arranged around a theme of the individual's (work-related, according to these findings) skills and abilities.

9.4.3. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MANAGERIAL AND PORTFOLIO CAREER

The findings discussed in chapters 8 and 9 presented an ambiguous picture, characterised at once by change and continuity. Many common views emerged about the experience of portfolio working. As the literature would suggest, participants cited

the opportunity for more fun and creativity in work; an enhanced sense of freedom and control over their own lives; the opportunity to learn and develop personally and professionally. However, in addition to those expectations participants also argued that portfolio working allows for the expression of personal integrity and values more so than does employment. The construction of self as a public servant even outside the public sector together with the theme of leaving organisations in order to operate with integrity outside them, in fact to carry their very purpose as an independent agent, is a major finding in the study and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 11. In so far as the literature holds out the chance of personal liberation (Golzen and Garner, 1990), the participants see that it is there.

What is interesting about their stories is that they invoke a number of what seem to be structural and \ or ideological barriers which militate against them taking full advantage of these opportunities. Each merit of portfolio working can be, and was, constructed as a draw back and vice versa. So, while there may be more variety, this leads to a loss of deeper attachment; while there may be a chance to grow and develop, this proves difficult outside the umbrella of organisational employment; while they are more free to pick and choose work, financial matters have to be considered; while they want to believe they have made a positive and successful move, the reputation of portfolio working, as many perceive it, rather taints and undermines them; while they feel they have more freedom, they still constrain their own behaviour by reference to workplace norms.

9.4.3.1. The incubator organisation

Figure 5 indicates that the participants bring forward much from their organisational employment: the notion of the incubator organisation.[2] Participants' reliance on existing skills, contacts, confidence and experience gained within the organisational setting proved fundamental in the transition to portfolio working, to the extent that consolidation of existing assets (Mirvis and Hall, 1996) emerged as a more pressing priority for them than personal and professional growth (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996).

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[2]Cooper (1981) took this term to refer specifically to the last employment before self employment. I have used the term more widely to encompass any previous employment which they felt was relevant.

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Ironically, participants have also recognised that some of the structures of the workplace provided parameters in which to work which offered more security and sense of affiliation than many of them recognised at the time. Now in portfolio work, they experience the lack of boundaries as a problem and seek to recreate them where they can (Weick, 1996). Seeking long-term contracts with organisations they hoped to re-embed themselves within organisational worlds. Networking with others they hope to gain a sense of common purpose and community.

None of this analysis is to suggest that these participants were in some way unimaginative, old-fashioned or unable to move on. They felt themselves to be in a pioneering role, articulating the discourse on new careers and seeing themselves as people prepared to embrace necessary change. But what is particularly interesting in this context is that in spite of the current negative take on organisational employment, (e.g. Scase and Goffee, 1989; Hecksher, 1995) participants had begun to recognise the enduring value of much of their organisational pasts. Thus, in contrast to a dichotomy between organisational employment and new career forms, in which one is seen as wholly good and the other as irredeemably bad, as suggested in much literature recently about careers, the experience of these participants suggest that the two are much more closely linked (and possibly more similar) than was previously acknowledged. Having rejected organisational life and anticipated a very different sort of experience, participants found themselves returning to aspects of that organisational world; indeed, they became central to their sense of identity and professional legitimacy. Giddens' notion of a desire for ongoing ontological security within change seems to be relevant here.

9.4.4. LINKING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A particularly interesting finding is the extent to which these participants do see their personal change as mirroring a social change (Giddens, 1991). To that extent, Kanter's (1989) contention that these micro career changes are indicative (and Giddens (1984) would add constitutive) of macro change in career is pertinent. The participants had a high level of reflexive awareness and indeed acceptance in most cases, of the discourse of new careers.

It seems that these people are claiming to understand what is really happening, unlike other contemporaries who have buried their head in the sand. Hence, they can construct the decision they made to quit organisational employment and go portfolio as apposite, timely and correct. Furthermore, they can do so notwithstanding their reluctance at the time nor the pain they feel about various aspects of it. A legitmatory frame of reference is provided in the emerging discourse about new careers with which they are very familiar.

Figure 6, overleaf, represents not only the material transition that these individuals have made but the evolving scripts for understanding careers. I attempted to map this transition on to the Barley (1989) model, aware that I was using the model only as a sensitising device rather than as a model to be tested. Nevertheless I felt that the endeavour could be useful as the linkage of social structures and individual career action is central to this study. In attempting to do this several questions were raised which proved problematic in terms of the model but which were useful in theorising this data so far. I set out the developed model below and move on to explain and explore in more detail by looking at the three components.

INSTITUTION

Family....Finance sector...Government...NHS...Labour Markets...Public Sector
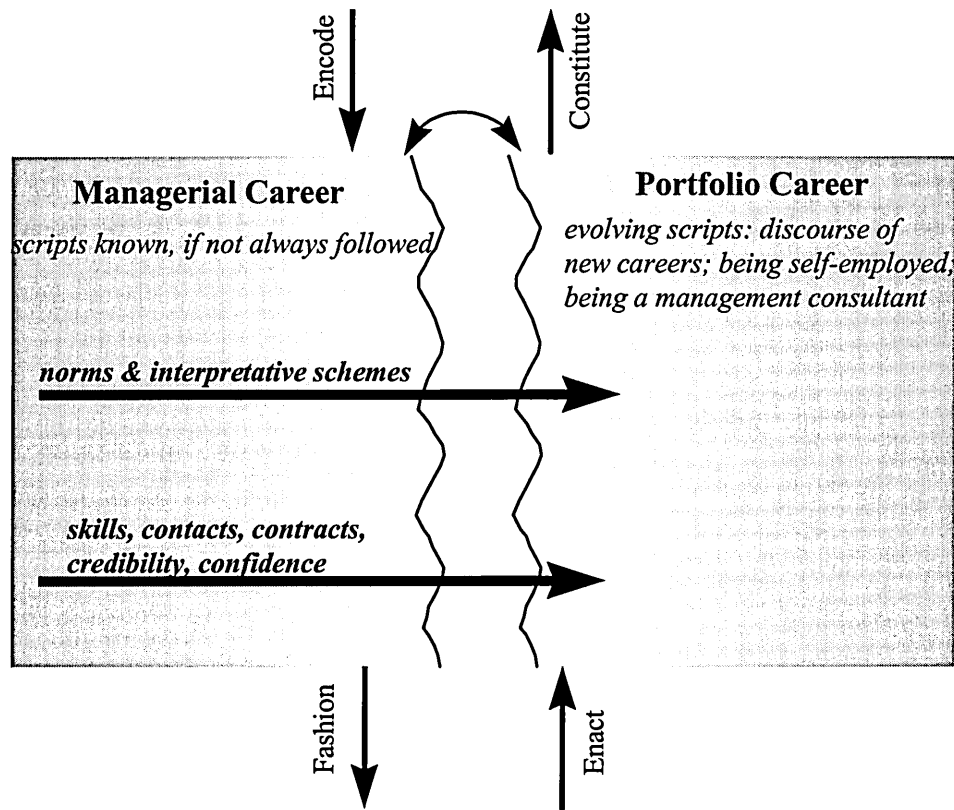
INDIVIDUAL ACTION & INTERACTION

Family...Friends..."Public"....Organisational managers....Other portfolio people

Figure 6. The transition from managerial to portfolio career - the structuring process

9.4.4.1. The institution in the model

The intention of this study was to consciously bracket the institutional level of analysis and concentrate on the "strategic conduct" of individuals (Giddens, 1984). However, attempting to use the Barley model demanded an identification of the relevant institution(s) implicated in encoding the career scripts on which individuals draw to fashion and enact their career.

Barley takes institution to mean what Arthur et al. (1989:11) describe as "a social phenomenon in which the form of collective behaviour is relatively established and permanent." They give as examples: the organisation, occupations, the education system, the family, even something as broad as society. There is an immediate problem

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here in specifying what exactly is the institution that is being discussed, never mind whether it is legitimate to claim these examples as institutions. Language use also proved a problem at this point (Craib, 1992). First of all Barley uses the term institution in a different way to Giddens (Giddens would use social system to indicate reproduced social practices which come to gain what seem to be more established meanings; however he also uses Institution to mean those systems which do appear most solid, enduring and beyond ability to alter, although he gives few examples). And in any case, Giddens' use of language to describe social structures has been criticised as idiosyncratic and confusing (Craib, 1992). Certainly Giddens does acknowledge that certain social systems feel further removed from individuals than others and thus vary in their degree of "systemness"; he also emphasises, though, that it is not possible to say where one system ends and another begins. Hence the general difficulty in rigorously applying Structuration theory empirically (Layder, 1994) is also borne out in this study. Clearly, this complex debate cannot be solved here - and that was never the intention of the study. What I want to do is to indicate what individuals invoke as relevant social structures which appear to be implicated in their career.

Barley's model also rather supposes that institutions are looked at individually, although he himself is very clear that an individual can be embedded in several at once and that it is not inevitable which interpretative scheme an individual will draw on (1989: 57).

From the data thus far, at least the following "institutions" emerged as being relevant to individual's careers: family; the labour market; the NHS; the public sector more broadly, Government and the finance sector. Work can be seen as an institution and, looking back to the debates in chapter 2, others might want to add bureaucracy or capitalism, class and so on. However, as I shall discuss below, the interesting issue is not so much reified institutions but how they are enacted in the interpretation of individuals, and not just the participants themselves.

9.4.4.2. Career scripts in the model

The model indicates that we can see scripts of managerial career shading into portfolio career. However, these are not monolithic scripts and are open to individual interpretation in a myriad of ways. What is more, certain individuals are drawing on other scripts encoded by other institutions or are drawing on a number of scripts in a

personal pick and mix fashion (Potter and Wetherall, 1987; Billig, 1988). For example, for some people, the institutions of the NHS and the public sector have always been more influential in their career than the traditional script for the unfolding of a managerial career. Others have variously drawn on the family and career. Ways of understanding career are bound up with other prevalent discourse (Fournier, 1998).

9.4.4.3. Individual action and interaction in the model

Finally, coming on to the individual action and interaction level, the inextricable link of structure and action and the difficulty of attempting to talk of them in isolation becomes apparent. There are two key issues here: first, the impact of the actions of others who may "read" scripts differently and who are positioned to make a difference to these individuals and secondly participants' own reference group(s) or lack of it. As Giddens (1984) argues, the impact of scripts (and their norms and sanctions) exist in specific, situated instances of conduct which hinge around asymmetric power relations. For example, in the last chapter, I talked about Monica who was refused a job share request and made the point that this was done not by "the organisation" but by the actions of certain individuals whose position within it accorded their reading of the script for a managerial career more credence than Monica's, and allowed them to apply certain sanctions to her. Like a Giddens "could act otherwise" agent, Monica chose to leave and mobilised her response via recourse to an institution of government - the Industrial Tribunal. However, the end result of all this activity was still that Monica *felt* she had no choice but to leave a job she loved within an organisation to which she was committed because her interpretations were not shared by others.

9.4.5. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: FINDINGS SUMMARISED

Consistent with the literature which cautions about self development being done in isolation, without parameters, support or objectives (Hirsh et al., 1995; Arnold, 1997) this study suggested that individuals can flounder in planning and enacting it. Participants found feedback from employers to be limited and had difficulties ensuring they identified and met their own development needs, although, in principle at least, they were committed. Participants tended to rely on reading and absorbing learning from. Hence, concern arises (expressed also by some participants) that skills could

atrophy in isolation as feared (Mirvis and Hall, 1996; Handy, 1994). In effect, what is missing is some form of support structure such as Handy advocates.

This issue is linked to the relationship between individual and organisation and will be reflected in the discussion that follows.

9.4.6. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EMPLOYER?

Participants retain close links with their previous organisations, although generally working within other sections or department, often a geographical distance from their original place of employment. Data in this study shows that individuals are looking for a relationship with organisations which goes beyond the false dichotomy of relational or transactional contracts (Rousseau, 1996). While they are happy to have transactional contracts in terms of there being short term financial arrangements, they seek a more relational contract base to the working relationships they wish to develop. Hence, as with the evidence in chapter 6, existing literature on psychological contracts does not theorise the complexity of their situation. All too often independent contractors such as themselves are assumed to want transactional contracts (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995: Rousseau, 1996). This data suggests that such assumptions are not warranted.

This study identifies issues which may concern HR managers. This group of people see themselves, not as employees (and as I will show in Chapter 10, most have no immediate plans to return to employment), but not simply as management consultants either. In their ongoing and \or regular contacts with organisations, they have come to feel that organisational managers may benefit from updating the scripts and norms which inform their dealings with "non core" workers.

While organisations may be more willing to engage people on temporary contractual arrangements (which may constitute a reading of the scripts of flexible organisational change), this does not follow through to a searching review of the new relationship as suggested in the literature on psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1996). It would seem that the structural position of these participants as conventionally understood i.e. - not on the pay roll, limits the organisation's inclination to engage with their development.

Clearly such decisions are made by individuals positioned to do so within the organisation.

It would seem that many of those people that the participants interact with in the pursuit of the new career are still reading a more traditional script (primarily on the left side of the model) which would insist, for example, that training and development is given only to bona fide employed members of the organisation; that any relationship with a supplier (however known to them) must of necessity be transactional. As these organisational managers have the resources, they can invoke norms and impose sanctions and thus asymmetry of power relations becomes salient. The point is that some readings of scripts can be more privileged than others.

The Barley model (and Giddens' (1984) theory of Structuration) acknowledge that individual enactment constitutes institutions. However, on several occasions individuals refer to themselves moving much faster in the direction of change than the organisations they deal with. The contrary actions of other individuals within organisations may be working to constitute the institution in ways which continue to mitigate against the satisfactory (for individuals concerned) development of a non-organisationally anchored career. Hence, in common with much other discussion about the ambiguities of human resource management, (Keenoy and Anthony 1992) for example, seeking both flexibility and commitment (Legge, 1995; Blyton and Morris, 1992) these individuals feel a dissonance between the rhetoric of organisational, career and work change (which is espoused by organisational managers) and what they perceive as the reality of it. When they follow through some of the suggested changes in how careers should now unfold, they find themselves lacking partners in the process. While they believe that they have made the leap of understanding that Handy and others have advocated, they fear that not all employers have done so. The consequence (sanction in the Barley model, 1989) in many cases is that they feel that they are perceived, by those with power to exclude them from the labour market, to have *"stepped off the career path"* and they worry that they will have difficulty accessing work again should they need to do so.

This study suggests that, paying closer attention to the actual needs and wants (Herriot and Pemberton, 1996) of such "non core workers", may reveal that individuals

themselves have twin desires - for flexibility and organisational commitment; for a career and for independence, and do not necessarily find them incompatible. Potentially there is much to be learned from finding out more about their experiences. There is also scope here for further research to consider the perceptions of those organisational agents who interact with portfolio workers.

Excluded from the organisational project to access their self fulfilling impulses of individuals (du Gay, 1996) individuals found it difficult to specify what were their needs for personal and professional development and to pursue them. Hence, there was little evidence of them as entrepreneurs of the self (Rose, 1990) in independence.

The implications of all the above are to cast some doubt on the centrality of development in the emerging literature on new careers. This study suggests that more attention be paid to understanding the constraints that individuals experience. It may indeed be, as Collin (1996) suggests, the loss of development towards a hierarchical position can be construed as "limiting the individual's horizon, temporally and spatially. Without a glimpse of the future it may be difficult to hold on to a sense of future self, which may be essential not only for motivation to work but also for investing in self development for the future" (p.15).

9.4.7 . SOCIAL NETWORKS: FINDINGS

Raider and Burt's (1992) network theory, which claims advantage in having dispersed rather than closely linked networks was not borne out. Rather, as might be expected by several authors (Clark, 1995; Granovetter, 1985; Handy, 1989; Peiperl and Baruch, 1997), contracts for work tend to be awarded on the basis of first hand knowledge or reputation within relatively limited networks, mostly within or closely connected to the NHS. The extent to which these networks are sustainable in securing portfolio working is indeed questionable (as participants attest). They fear "structural" interventions in the form of changes in organisational policy with regard to awarding work to outside contractors. To a large extent they remain at the mercy of employed individuals within organisations. Longer term studies looking at the evolution of social networks in boundaryless careers would be useful.

9.4.7.1. The reputation of portfolio working- the problem of belonging

A major problem for them on an ideological level is what they perceive to be the poor reputation both of portfolio work. They are all too uncomfortably aware that alternative interpretative schemes exist to explain the career transition they have made: as borne out of necessity; as a cover for redundancy, or incompetence; as the making the best of a bad circumstance; as of being marginalised from the "real" world of work and career. The feel themselves judged accordingly by friends, family, ex-colleagues who lack their level of understanding of the transition they have made. They are able to construct themselves as people more in tune with the zeitgeist, who have seen the writing on the career wall; but this is often scant comfort. The major problem is the recognition of the group(s) they can orient towards for "the vocabulary of motive" (Mills, 1940) and collective comfort in the face of change. Herein lies their most acute problem, in that many people apply the alternative interpretative scheme for portfolio working, not to themselves, but to those they share this world with. Therefore, in many cases, rather than feeling some safety in number, they feel sullied by some of the people with whom they share the portfolio world.

9.4.8. CONCLUSION

Finally, to conclude this section and introduce the next chapter, a couple of images can usefully be used to highlight permeating themes in this thesis so far. Beck, (1992:194), in common with some other authors who theorise transformation in work (Casey, 1995; Noon and Blyton, 1997), sees new worlds of work coming into view against the old. He offers the image of individuals with a foot in each world:

"Individuals still communicate in and play along with the old forms and institutions, but they also withdraw from them with at least part of their existence, their identity, their commitment and their courage. Their withdrawal however, is not just a withdrawal but at the same time, an emigration to new niches of activity and identity. The latter seems so unclear and inconsistent not least because this inner immigration often takes place half-heartedly with one foot, so to speak, while the [other] foot is still firmly planted in the old order."

Hence, Beck captures the situation of the majority of these participants, still attached to their old organisational careers in some ways having left with reluctance or mixed feelings at best; now experiencing some confusion and anxiety in attempting to come to terms with their new career context, and feeling the pulls of both change and continuity.

While thus poised, it may also be that participants are attempting to have their cake and eat it, to introduce the second image voiced by one of the participants. If this means they are actively attempting to identify and derive the best from both worlds, then it may well be that new careers, like portfolio careers, *can* deliver the personal liberation that much of that literature promises. One the other hand it may be that they have difficulty in coming to terms with what has been won and what has been lost and feel unable (and indeed prevented, by the actions of others) to make a full commitment either way (as Beck's image suggests). Having known what it was to have the cake in their past life - security, status, linear progress, a sense of pride at working for the public sector, training and personal and professional growth- they are far from sure how the cake will taste in their new career world.

Chapter 10 moves on to consider their future plans and hopes while exploring their developing notion of the concept of career.

CHAPTER 10: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This chapter explores participants' expectations for their future as portfolio workers. It begins in 10.1 by addressing the question of career planing and in that context moves on in 10.2 to explore participants' plans about returning to employment. Section 10.3 considers how they intend to develop their portfolio. 10.4 explores the significance of the data in terms of answering the following research questions:

1. What was the initial career pattern and interpretative schemes?

How does that link to changing perceptions of career now?

6. How are they now construing career?

What do they draw on to fashion their portfolio career? Are they pioneers or following more established paths?

7. What do they understand now by career success?

What are their future plans?

10.1. INTRODUCTION

Given uncertain conditions surrounding notions of career, it is assumed that success will come to be understood more retrospectively than prospectively (Pahl, 1995 Weick, 1996). Weick conceptualises boundaryless careers as:

"improvised work experiences that rise prospectively in fragments and fall retrospectively into patterns- a mixture of continuity and discontinuity " (Weick, 1996:40).

This chapter looks to the prospective dimension to consider how participants might see their future unfolding. In exploring the future, this chapter, inevitably looks back to responses discussed in parts one and two of the analysis, in an attempt to bring together

the various strands of their career experience. Prospective data can be useful in revealing how individuals are making sense of their current context: does it please them in some way or are they looking for an escape. In the absence of clear guides for action how will they proceed?

10.1.1. Portfolio Career Planning: a fiction?

One man expressed reservations about the endeavour of looking ahead, lamenting the tendencies of interviewers to focus on "where will you be in 5 or 10 years?" type of questions. He insisted that we all know that we all give the answers we judge are expected by our audience. However, while that may be the case with the more socially known and ratified scripts for managerial careers, it is much less certain what answer would be expected within the portfolio career world.

There was evidence of a desire to feel that one was going in some direction. For some people that was tempered by a recognition that plans can be held lightly when circumstances seem most uncertain:

"I think people need objectives, ambitions, they need goal and plans. I don't mean meticulous ones but I know that I needed to have something to aim for, I want to do that by a certain time, I want to achieve this. Like now I want to set something up and do it well. They wont be rigid plans but they will be there." (Gillian)

However, those participants who were schooled in the need to plan in order to develop a successful carer found it difficult to adjust to the new situation.

"We were laughing about this at the weekend because we both said the business ought to be going somewhere and then we laughed because we suddenly realised we were using "ought" and where did "ought" come from? Who are we working for? And we both said why "ought" and we giggled and said do you want to? How funny that neither of us are finding it easy to say no, when actually we don't wantto think that way. So

there is something inside us which says, well you "ought": there is a good ten years in you yet. " (Julia)

It may be that Julia is articulating a common dilemma here about the need to feel some sort of control over the future. In the absence of clear guides for action in the development of portfolio careers, it may not be surprising that people continue to adhere to the norms of the old. Furthermore, to have no perceptions of imposed boundaries may render the individual all the more confused and uncertain about the direction in which to proceed Hirsch and Shanley (1996).

Julia's "ought" is intriguing because she started the interview by outlining to me in detail the plans she and her husband had to link up more with other organisations to be part of a virtual business community. Later, though she talked about how this way of work allowed her more free time to do whatever she wanted. At yet another point she talks about her hopes of finding just the right job. She told of her misery when a careers counsellor advised her that she would have great difficulty securing another job in the NHS unless some-one was prepared to make a "zany appointment." Having raised the issue of "ought" herself, later in the interview she cautioned me:

"the ought is less of a bother, there is still a bit of playing there, the ought is not too stressful, don't overplay it. It only comes out occasionally, we can laugh at that and wrap it up."

Thus, within the interview, Julia struggles to articulate, even to herself, what her future plans could or should be.

Some people do feel that they are more open to the opportunities that unfold - indeed that "opportunism" has become the keynote of their career. Hence they are inclined to exercise improvisational skills on whatever raw material is offered (Nicholson and West, 1989:191). Helen, for example, has a mixed portfolio and says she will do anything for money. She would admit to no firm plans: she will go with the flow, see what happens and have fun. However, even in her case there was some anxiety evident

at other points in the interview about whether such an approach was legitimate. At one point she described herself as having no plans:

"I'm just fidgeting around really, I have no, I really should have a game plan, but there is no game plan, I just see what happens. It's the adventure really. I always have a load of ideas, I have about 15 different ideas in my diary at the moment, that I could try to develop."

Here, she reflects on a conversation at her career development forum:

"I said, oh I don't know where I want to be but everyone else seems to, and he said well perhaps you are there now, and I thought um... maybe it is all right, maybe it is just a big adventure and I should explore all the time, as long as the money comes in and I can put some by for later in life."

A traditional career norm supposes that those in charge of their careers will be planning. While people continue to accept that norm in principal, they are much less sure of the accompanying script for action, or the sanctions for non-compliance (Barley, 1989). Looking back to the data analysed in chapter 6, it seemed that most people paid little conscious attention to career planning but that may be explained in terms of internalisation of the scripts for progress within the traditional career. Their sense of career agency was muted and many participants were able to claim that their career just happened. However, the opportunity structure for that career was, as far as most people were concerned, already there and well established. Other people, though, felt that they had exercised agency in the development of their career, but they too had done so in the knowledge of extant paths, even if they chose not to follow them. In the portfolio world, the process becomes not just interpretation of an existing path but discovery of a new (Weick, 1996). With those points in mind, I will move on now to look at how they expressed their plans for continuing with their portfolio career

10.2. THOUGHTS ON RETURNING TO EMPLOYMENT

Granger et al. (1995) see limited desire to return to work as an acid test of their interviewees' conversion to self employment. However, many more complex issues may be at play here. It may be that they love their new life but feel compelled to return to work by "structural" factors like finance. They may be in despair about portfolio working but feel that, because of labour market issues, they have little choice but to remain. The following discussion will begin by tabulating participants' propensity to return and then probing the more problematic dimensions. In presenting this data, I have used the headings from table 9 in chapter 7 which grouped people according to the reasons why they left, to see if any pattern has emerged between reasons for leaving employment and desire to return.

	made redundant	portfolio as positive choice	push then pull	push and pull: *left to go portfolio*
Already returned	Liz and Brenda	Robert	Anne	
Actively seeking work	Henry		Judith and Carole	
Might return one day			Jim,	John, Steve, Julia, Margaret
Might apply for perfect job only		Gillian and Bridget	Monica	Andrew
No intention to return		Helen and Laura	Geoff	
Doubt return but too early to say,		Val		David, Wendy

Table 12. Intentions to return to work

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The "*refugees*" who were made redundant, and so neither anticipated nor sought, to enter this portfolio world, have a propensity to return to employment. So, too with those who fled employment, having made a hasty decision to leave before weighing up the alternatives, their tendency is to return to the "known." Conversely, those people who made a more planned an exit from the organisation, in order to embrace the challenges of portfolio work, are less inclined to return.[1] The remainder take a less extreme position, admitting the possibility of a return but making no active plans to do so. It would appear from this data that when the decision to exit organisations is either forced or very sudden, before the individual has had the chance to appropriate an explanatory frame of reference to legitimise this change in their life, then they encounter difficulty in re-orienting themselves to anything other than traditional paid work. This finding is in line with other studies on the impact of job loss (Latack et al., 1995).

10.2.1. Reasons for propensity to return to employment

The equation of what has been lost and what has been gained remains uneven for those three people who want to return and those two refugees who have returned. They continue to yearn more for what they perceive they have lost. In this sense they are far from converted.

Other participants have occasions when the balance swings too far in the direction of the losses - most notably when financial matters become pressing. At such points, some people have attempted to find work again. However, one man withdrew from an interview as he realised that he did not really want to re-enter work. Another man has applied for and turned down jobs on three occasions now. Applying for jobs appears to be an occasion to test out the extent to which they are committed to the transition by moving up close to the possibility of return.

Those who might consider returning were more interested in part-time than full time posts, on the assumption that such an arrangement would provide a more satisfactory

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The two exceptions are Robert and Anne. Anne's situation was discussed in Chapter 7. Robert, at the time of the interview, was intending to take up a paid post with a voluntary organisation. He was going to be employed rather than freelance to be on the same footing as other workers. Both still retain a portfolio of other activities.

balance of security and freedom. As one man put it " *well, what I don't want is a job job.*" John was approached by a large consultancy company:

"ABC did want me part-time but they have stalled as they are not doing as well as they hoped, but yes, I thought, I might be interested in a couple of days a week to take care of the financial side. But I don't want to feel employed, it would inevitably put the lid on things I feel like I care about doing, when I feel like it."

He goes on to assert a common theme for him which is balancing the rewards of the traditional career - money and security against the benefits of following his own interests. He concludes:

"I will do bread and butter work to get us through but I don't desperately need a job. I know salary is an anchor, but I don't want an anchor, a rudder maybe."

In general, participants felt that attractive part-time opportunities were hard to find; partly due what they saw as structural problems with the labour market but compounded by the traditional assumptions of organisational managers. Similarly, a couple of people had seen posts advertised and contacted the organisation and suggested that they contract for the work on a freelance basis, but had not yet found organisational managers amenable to that idea.

10.2.2. Labour market perceptions
The anxiety experienced by those who wish to return is compounded by their ongoing negative perceptions of their current standing in the labour market (Riley, 1995). Other participants share this concern but are rather less anxious about it as they have been able to make more peace with this career move. A common point of discussion is how far organisations, particularly the NHS, are prepared to take back into employment those who have left it previously (Miller, 1996). In general participants feel that while the situation has improved they would still be treated with some suspicion: by leaving they have *"broken the rules of the career game."* Henry and Julia remain convinced that ageism, a norm of the traditional career script, is the force which operates against them.

A recurring theme in this study - (contrary to much of the discussion on boundaryless careers) - is of individuals moving faster in the direction of change than the organisations they interact with. Judith likens the organisation to a huge ship trying to turn in a storm.

10.2.3. No intention to return

"Good God no, it would be horrific!"

This was Helen's response to the question and it identifies her as the person least likely to return. She yearned for a broader life, an adventure outside the cocoon of the organisation which had both sustained and stifled her and feels she has achieved it. As such she embodies the suggestion that the boundaryless career, free from organisational dependence, is beneficial to the individual's self image and sense of self efficacy (Golzen and Garner, 1990; Bell and Staw, 1989). However, her unequivocal stance is shared with only two other participants.

Laura's views, forged in her yo-yo experiences of employed work and self employment, are, that this time, she will not seek paid work again, partly because of disillusionment with organisations and partly because she has made her peace with being portfolio. Like Laura, Geoff's reluctance to countenance returning to work is due in part to the fact that he did so for a while. He found just the same demoralised staff and crushing corporate culture that he experienced with his previous employer. So from being the Organisation Man, as he described himself, he has come full circle to identify himself as some-one who will not return.

A few people were not prepared to say never and could imagine a "perfect" job - usually abroad and with a great deal of influence that might tempt them back. In a similar vein others feel that they would opt for a job which allowed them influence and the chance to utilise their skills:

"There is still a bit of me which I think I have sorted but I mustn't have done or I wouldn't be mentioning it that says there still has to be a better way of running this chip

shop with nurses in Trusts and if the right Director of Nursing job came up and I don't just mean an ordinary one, I have seen one I would go for because it combined Business Planning so it was more general management, if a job like that came up, I might just throw my hat in the ring to see." (Julia)

10.2.4. Negative views of employment

As Weick suggests, people who choose between "alternatives with non-overlapping attractions"will work to reduce feelings of dissonance by: "enhancing the positive features of the chosen alternative and the negative features of the unchosen alternatives" (1995: 11).

Indeed many participants are negative about employment. They remember the pressures of work, the long hours, the shifting values of the organisation and how *"drained, dismayed and desperate"* colleagues were. They look to current ex NHS managers and comment:

"I wouldn't go back...the hours, the workload, the role ambiguity is just crazy now, nobody can succeed in that environment. All that happens is high stress. I mean that is very extreme but from what I see, I see very highly stressed managers, who are trying to do the impossible to deadlines that are ludicrous, and are being snapped at from all directions." (Laura)

"And when I look at the people who are in full-time jobs now they are working such phenomenal hours and I really don't think, really, I could go back, but I don't want to go back to working at that pitch." (Jim)

Hence, they begin to reinterpret the script for a managerial career. However, several participants remain deeply ambivalent. At this stage, their inclination is not to return but several indicated that only time will tell. The interview was an occasion to reflexively concentrate on just that decision. Joan for example responded with some horror to the question as to whether she would return *"oh no, no no, no "* but went on, immediately,

to talk about the exciting prospect of returning on a contract basis to her old Trust which appealed to her as still missed the social interaction of work. She goes on:

"I like the independence and I would find it difficult going back to work, but if somebody said to me, look we have got this job and we would really like you to come back and do it, I would do it, I am sure. Oh dear, I'm contradicting myself! Well if somebody actually said, look, we think this is something that you could do, ...I don't know ? would I? I'm not sure that I would."

As with many other participants, she resolved her dilemma by invoking negative memories of the workplace.

As discussed in chapter 7, many of those participants who were leaving NHS employment felt that they were leaving employment itself. For those people the primary institution to which they orient themselves in thinking about work remains the NHS and there are contrasting views. Gillian, for example, could not see the point of working for any other organisation:

"I have no yearning to go off an be Chief exec of somewhere like Marks and Spencers, I don't know why ...it just doesn't have the same sets of challenges and diversity. I think there is something quite fascinating about what the Health Service is about - all human life, all the spectrum."

But, Claire, also a life long NHS employee knows her previous experiences are the motor which keep her *out* of employment, insisting graphically: *"I would rather be a dog food taster than go back there."*

Just as most participants expressed their desire to go portfolio primarily by reference to the negative qualities of the workplace, as opposed to the intrinsic attraction of the portfolio alternative, so too, in trying to articulate if they would return to work, it is those negative characteristics which are invoked more readily than the attractions of the

new. In these cases, the interpretative scheme for making sense of the employment world is still primarily that of organisational employment.

10.3. UNDERSTANDING THE MARKERS OF SUCCESS IN PORTFOLIO CAREERS

In the absence of significant plans to return to work, the questions arise: how will they career continue to unfold and how will they judge its success? Weick (1996) argues that in the absence of objective markers of career success outside the traditional careers, people will come develop their own. This section looks first at the tangible and observable, objective plans they have. Three issues emerged: specific ambitions, developing the business, developing the portfolio. The section then moves on to consider their subjective markers of career success.

10.3.1. Specific ambitions

A number of participants identified specific aims for the near future. Three people had explored becoming non-executive members of Health Authorities - Andrew, as a possible plan if a Labour Government was elected as this would provide a forum for influence *""to make blasted difference";* Joan and Monica as a vehicle for utilising their skills and for putting something back, and Joan hoped it would make her feel more "plugged in "to the NHS again. Seven people mentioned an aim to write a book or journal articles. Some saw this as achievable and indeed three participants had already published. A linked aim, expressed by two participants, was to move into academia. Both felt that their best contribution could be made at the interface of theory and practice and both were making specific plans.

10.3.2. Develop as a business

There was a dearth of plans to develop the business. Only Geoff wanted a *"bigger empire"* and to that end he was making a financial investment, with his partners in the hope that he would soon not have to *"do the doing"* himself. Already he was taking active steps to build up a register of associates, people he knew and trusted and was

looking at a range of larger contracts. His vision is that as an established sounding business, they could access the big rolling contracts not available to the smaller operator, and become that established business. Career remains synonymous for Geoff with growth into higher positions. He likes the fact that he can now call himself a director and he feels much more in control of his career: in his last job career progress was dependent on *"dead men's shoes."*

Only Steve is similar in any way- still looking for the big idea that will make him money and allow him to retire from work. He seeks out opportunities for partnerships and other synergy. Having established one limited company that failed,- and which cost him money he is not deterred, just a little more cautious.

A couple of other people have less well developed plans to market more to broaden out client base. Taking an approach based in the "communion" that Marshall (1989) describes they talk more about general intentions than specific plans for achieving them, for example:

"I have my own vision of having 3 or 4 clients at a time and after about a year to move rather more out of the NHS. I want to hedge risk." (David)

Cohen's (1997) study of women entrepreneurs showed that they planned less when employed than they did on becoming self employed. She speculated that the nature of that context spurred individuals to take more responsibility for the outcome of their endeavours. By contrast, a theme running through this study is the under-statement of the significance of the self employment context. As freelance operators they are inclined to think more about the development of their own skills and the breadth of their portfolio of clients than in terms of business planning. As such the entrepreneurship and self employment literature which privileges business growth and profitability as success criteria was not endorsed in this study. Rather, the success criteria of personal fulfilment and business survival, more associated with female entrepreneurs were more in evidence (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Marlow and Strange, 1994).

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10.3.3. Developing the portfolio

As distinct from business growth several participants talked of their desire to expand their portfolio. Although the two are linked of course, these participants did not make that explicit.

Finding regular core clients was mentioned by six people and some had loose plans in place to do so. A couple of people experimented with the notion of the virtual organisation: developing a loose arrangement with a number of other people for the purpose of presenting joint bids:

"I had a chance to package together with some colleagues, people I had met who were quite good and put in joint bids and I see myself doing more of that. I have done it a few times and while the bids did not succeed the experience of putting together CVs, meeting up was a very positive one and something I liked. So the concept of a virtual organisation really does suit me. Its a way to go, I think."

As discussed in chapter 9.1, a limited number of participants see the development of their skills as synonymous with the development of their portfolio career. Gillian ponders her future:

"I haven't quite decided what yet, but I will probably build up my repertoire of coaching and personal development skills because I quite enjoy doing it... I am in the fortunate position now where I will probably spend the next year doing more of the same, learning a few more skills, possibly developing a few more private sector contracts ... reflecting on how I want to grow and whether that will be extending what I am doing, setting up a new organisation, taking on more people or whether I will do one other more corporate role somewhere else but I am not rushing, I don't feel I have explored the boundaries enough yet. "

However, as also discussed in chapter 9.1 there was considerably less evidence that individuals were embarked on a voyage of personal learning and discovery than there

was to suggest that portfolio working could be seen as a consolidation of what had gone before.

10.3.5. Their subjective markers of career success

As Pahl remarks " the interrelationships between identity, anxiety and success are at the core of a central debate of the 1990s" (1995:17) as previous structures and predictability are seen to crumble. The task for the individual is theorised as the need to develop a coherent self narrative in the face of change as individuals will want to ease feelings of discontinuity and rupture (Giddens, 1991; Weick, 1995).

Mirvis and Hall (1996) and many other commentators on new careers predict that people will develop personal, subjective markers which can help them to decide if this move has been a success in their own terms. They will invent, as it were, proxies for the advancement and other rewards of the traditional career. Weick (1996) offers a fairly detailed (and not empirically based) list of what he expects those proxies to be:

"amount of learning accumulated; meaningfulness of continuities constructed; ability to create and manage organising; comfort in returning to the novice role over and over; ability to explicate what had previously been known only tacitly; skill in making sense of fragments retrospectively in ways that help other people make sense of their fragments; persistence; compassion for others struggling with the uncertainties of the boundaryless life; and durable faith that actions will have made sense, even though that sense is currently not evident." (1996:54).

Indeed there is evidence of all these issues being meaningful to participants as they seek to find ways to assure themselves that they are making a success of their new career. A measure of success for some is in the feeling of developing competence - and a sense that they are learning. Giddens suggests that the continuity people will find in change will be in personal learning - an impetus to "reskill." However, while this is undoubtedly a strong motivation for some participants, many others are more inclined (perhaps because of what they see as lack of support) to look back to the skills and experiences they brought with them from their organisational context. As such they give

credence to Weick's second suggestion that success will come to be seen as residing in the continuities constructed. Those who struggle the most to find a sense of success in this new context are those who have the most difficulty reconciling their past and present career aspirations. The sense of consolidation can be a platform from which to launch oneself into further development or it can serve to solidify into a kind of bulwark against a more uncertain future.

The next point from Weick's list, that I would highlight, is their view towards others. What was missing from many accounts was a sense of being a fellow traveller with other consultants, other portfolio people. Weick discusses the importance of the collective dimension in the enactment of new career paths but, as has been discussed these people have a very ambivalent attitude towards other portfolio people and recognise that they are judged by other, longer standing (Pahl, 1995) success criteria. For example, Anne recognises that she is misunderstood:

"If you're in that playground where the only output success is climbing the ladder, getting the Mercedes, something clever you have done at work, then all these strands, I might see them as linked and you might, but to them, they are poles apart, it doesn't make any sense."

However, Weick's list does not encompass all the personal success measures that individuals identified. One issue which threaded through their accounts and which is missing from Weick's list and much of the new career literature is a "knowing why" that is centred less on personal advancement and instrumentality in their career and more on regaining a sense of integrity and personal values. He also does not talk about balance in life, which these participants identify as a benefit but struggle to fully enjoy, constrained as they still are by the norms they have carried forward from the organisational world. Perhaps, balance still struggles as a respectable career motivation in a time of organisational stress and work overload (Schor, 1991; Cooper and Sutherland, 1992). Finally, and in common with much of the rest of the emerging career literature which is largely silent on this issue, Weick doesn't mention the relief at

earning enough money to pay the bills and\or sustain a lifestyle compatible with organisational career success.

10.4. CATEGORISING VIEWS OF CAREER

I want to move on now to bring together their changing view of career, incorporating their ideas of success and their anxieties about their new world (Pahl, 1995). Four broad categories were apparent in the data, which focused on the level and experience of change.

Climbers	those who look back to traditional measures of career success.
Campaigners	those for whom their career has always been about campaigning, adding value to the lives of others; those who most construct themselves as public servants.
Converts[2] :	those who began to amend their traditional view of career while still in work and now experience less sense of change, more sense of adventure or a satisfying sense of consolidation.
Cartographers	building on Nicholson's (1990) imagery of the need for map reading in a transition, these people previously had a map of career success and now look (and struggle in some cases), to redraw a map to find a way through their new terrain.

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[2] I am not using this term in exactly the sense that Granger et al. (1995) did to mean reluctant entrants to self employment who have become "converted" to its benefits. Rather I want to capture the sense that this "conversion" process is how they structure the whole story of the move to portfolio work. I distinguish them from the *cartographers* in that sense and because they struggle less to come to terms with their new context, having embraced it to some extent before leaving organisational employment.

the climbers	the campaigners	the converted	the cartographers
Geoff, Carole, Liz, Brenda, Monica, Eric, Judith	Val, Andrew, David, Robert, Jim	John, Helen, Anne, Margaret, Claire, Laura, Bridget	Gillian, Suzanne, Joan, Julia, Wendy, Steve

Table 13. evolving views on career

I have assigned each individual to one of the categories which best describes their story as they have told it. However, that is not to deny that themes from each echoed across individual accounts.

10.4.1. The climbers: still adhering to traditional views of career

A few people remain wedded to more traditional measures of career and career success - progress up a career hierarchy and the opportunity to access progressively more challenging positions. Hence, their "knowing why" remains more akin to that of the employed world. Not surprisingly perhaps, this section includes all the *refugees* and a number of those who fled the organisation. For people like Geoff and Carole the measures of success are about both tangible achievements in status and salary. Identity remains dependent on a sense of being rooted thick in the challenge of complex organisational life.

There are various issues I want to raise about this group of people. First, as one participant, in fact, comments "*it is important not to deride the organisational aspirations of others.*" That they retain an attachment to the more traditional model is not to characterise them- as some of the literature would do (e.g. Preston and Biddle, 1994; Barner, 1994) as losers in some way. Indeed Weick (1996) suggests that adherence to the hierarchical principle will survive in some form. Nor is to assume that they are any the less aware than other people about the discourse on the changing career world nor that they have not necessarily got what it takes to survive in a changing world. After all Carole has been portfolio for eight years; Geoff has an established

partnership and premises. Rather, the significant issue which connects all of these people is that they did not wish to leave the workplace and were all either made redundant or left in haste leaving neither time nor inclination to appropriate and, what is more, personally believe, alternative interpretations about what had happened to their career world. For some people the need to restructure their own personal biography to accommodate this change is not welcomed as an opportunity to develop new identities, but as an occasion for alarm or sadness at the loss of cherished identities.

10.4.2. The campaigners: success measures were never those of the traditional career world

Robert asserts that he has always known *"career to be a form of social control"* and has never had any truck with it as a guiding principle for his life. A number of participants had, in general, lacked respect for the linear imperative of the traditional career. Andrew, for example never wanted people motivated by career advancement primarily in his team:

"I wanted different sorts of people, I didn't want the boys basically, I didn't want those people, do you know what I mean, I wanted people who had vision, where work was something that they believed in, not just as a career and going up the ladder and the next stage and working for your next increment."

As I discussed in chapter 6, these are the people whose career moves were motivated by the existence of a personal value base. It is interesting, then, to note that the move to portfolio working has been experienced in a relatively similar way by all of them. All had fairly eclectic careers with several spirals prompted by personal value system but intriguingly linear advancement also figured in every case. Nothing much has changed for them in portfolio work; they have no need for proxies for advancement as hierarchy never motivated in the first place. Apart from Robert, though, the rest had felt more or less compelled to leave their organisation because of the way in which they were developing. This move out of public sector employment threatened a breach in their identity as public servants. However, that wound rapidly healed as they construct a story of the transition which focuses on how they have found that they can, in fact,

operate with more integrity and sense of consolidation outside the organisation. The portfolio career then holds little mystery for them. Success is rooted in continuing to wield influence and a feeling that one is making a contribution.

"If I ever became cynical, pessimistic, dejected, walked away from problems, I wouldn't be successful."

Woven into their stories is the theme of public service yet they also incorporate the idea of being in business, (albeit with their own interpretation e.g. no-one in this category has had business cards printed, nor advertised for work, nor developed a business name nor received any specific advice on being a business). However, Andrew, for example, does talk about having to be business like and how he is positioned cost wise in the market.

What I find most intriguing in relation to their view of their career now is the notion of the monstrous hybrid (Jacobs, 1995) which is thought to occur with the import of business practices to the public sector. These are the primarily the people who invoked what Fournier (1998) called the logic of "integrity and corruption" to explain the distance they put between their organisation's enterprising impulses and their own desire to remain above that. They abjured the import of business (enterprising) practices when in organisational employment but it could be said that that very change is now being embodied in them - after all they are business people now not employees and the two states can very easily be constructed as encoding dichotomous, even antagonistic (du Gay, 1996) scripts. Yet it is fascinating that these people see no personal compromise in this transition (and neither do they note any possible ethical dilemmas in their dealings with clients in operating as a consultant and needing to ensure an ongoing workload, Sturdy, 1997). It is as if they can embody certain values regardless of the objective features of their working world.

It is important to note that this search for integrity was also a permeating theme in the accounts of people I have assigned to other categories.

10.4.3. The converts: the move to portfolio is seen as an outcome of an evolving view of career

Other people feel that they have made a personal journey to a less conventional view of career, amending and adapting their views while still in work. John, for example, had been on the traditional career path but had become more in tune with following his own interests which now have a final expression in his portfolio. He recognises that he, like most men, *"was socialised to career success being about bread winning."* Now he sees that view as *"essentially limiting and outmoded."* His portfolio now is wide ranging and growing more so as he links in all strands of interest: he is a career counsellor and management consultant; he is designing software for learning technology; he repairs computers; he is investigating an Internet based property letting service for holiday homes abroad. Thus, personal interests, skills from recent work and "recycled skills" from long ago are brought together in a package which satisfies him. He wants to enjoy his life with a sense of achievement and consolidation in bringing together all strands of his past and present interests. His sense of identity is rooted in the knowledge that his professional skills and approach are valued: he knows he is, for very many people *"the career counsellor of choice."*

Several other participants indicated that their definitions of career success had changed with their experiences. For example Laura ponders on the meaning of success:

"I have been thinking about success the last 2 years When I left university success was getting to the top. About the middle of the way through my Health Service career when the problem was happening at the hospital, and now I think about it, I said to my uncle because he used to be with the Civil Service and got to the top. And I said to him "do you have to be a complete bastard to get to the top or can you retain your integrity?" and I remember him saying to me you can retain your integrity. He never explained how but he did say that. I think maybe you could in the 1960s but I am not sure you can now."

In suggesting that the new career is about being *"professional in a modern context, which is about being authentic"* she echoes the discussion of Giddens (1991) on the

growing importance of a feeling a sense of self efficacy within the shifting sands of changing careers.

Claire feels she had made a personal move from being a *"career brat"* as she describes herself, while rising rapidly through the ranks in her twenties. In more recent times and now in her early thirties and mother of a small child, she has moved through a process of personal change to what she terms a *"more humanist position."* For now, at least, she remains *"happy as a little fish swimming about in a couple of rivulets."*

I find this motivation interesting and it may be that participants are also drawing on an emerging discourse of the " caring 90s" which is set in opposition to the personal greed driven 80s and as such, perhaps there is another interpretative scheme for this transition. Yet, it is scarcely acknowledged in much of the developing literature on careers which still stresses personal instrumentality. It is also notable that this motivation did not really surface as individuals were talking about their reasons for leaving but rather is invoked later in their story as a means of coming to terms with their new work.

Some fault lines are evident in these narratives nonetheless. In the first place, only Helen and Bridget made a positive choice to go portfolio. There is some defensiveness in their descriptions of their current circumstances, for example John asks *"why should I not want it to be my show?"* Even Helen cannot really relax with not knowing her end point much though she would like to. Claire conceded that she probably will go back to employment for financial reasons: she recognises that salary is a badge to others, not least her husband, that she is making a success of her life.

Once again, the issue of uncertain trajectories is also pertinent. There is no career path in place they can follow. All had previously been on a career path that to a large extent was potentially laid out in front of them. Some had come early to improvising their own career development, but Helen and Anne for example had worked their way up a path for over 20 years before moving off in the few years before they went portfolio. Now out of organisational employment, there are no clear guidelines to follow or even to resist.

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However, in general, the "knowing why" motivations expressed by these participants centre around the theme of fulfilling personal needs and enjoying a sense of peace between them and the work context. A consolidation of work and personal values echoes in their stories, which they can trace to career moves prior to this last transition.

10.4.4. The cartographers: trying to map their new territory

The stories of all the people in this group are characterised by a struggle to comprehend and accept the change they have experienced and place them within their wider context of their career and life. Uncertainty that they have really made the right move echoes in the stories of all these people. Apart from Gillian, they were all "reluctant independents" (Handy, 1994), although none of them is making active plans to return to employment. Nevertheless, they all acknowledge some sense of struggle to comprehend how this move makes sense in their life. There is sense of something missing in many of these stories. Gillian misses the challenge of organisational senior level employment and she is particularly concerned about the reputation of this way of working. Insisting that she did this "for all the right reasons", she remains uncertain about whether it will be an enduring move for her. For Gillian, their is only the second loop of a spiral in her career. The contours and boundaries of this spiral remain elusive to her. She is going to wait and see how it turns out for her and allow herself some time to explore the boundaries. It seems that Gillian may be having a break, a temporary rest from organisational employment career and life, directing some attention to her life, *"recharging my batteries,"* before returning to the career world.

Joan feels has lost her rhythm and sense of purpose; Suzanne has lost her sense of herself as a successful career woman. Both sense a loss of role. While Joan mourns it, Suzanne continues to angrily reject the possibility that she could ever return to management. It has been sullied for her by her experiences. She searches for something to put in its place: maybe, she thinks, that will be research and academia. As such they would be likely to exasperate Val who said, of other portfolio people:

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"OK, so you don't have a role, don't have a title, well then make one up. Me, I am a liberator of people's dreams, there, liberator, that's my title now."

In a very similar vein Helen counsels those who are worried about what to call themselves and how to handle their changed career identity:

"just put a fancy title on, the Handy title for example, just stick it on."
However, for others, leaving work at a low ebb of morale is recognised as a stumbling point for future development. Joan, for example indicates that it may well be those lingering emotions- sadness, loss and doubt about leaving which interfere with coming to terms with the new context. She feels she is somehow to blame for not being able to access the benefits of the portfolio world.

"But the other thing though which has happened is, if I could get a bit more work all of that would be absolutely fine and what I would feel that I have done, is restyle my life to make it more rewarding, but I haven't actually achieved all the rewards that I think are potentially there."

Intriguingly, then, Joan thinks there is some structure to be found in this new context, not so much that she has to invent it, and so far it has eluded her. Elsewhere in the study, I have talked about her ambivalence about returning to work and her concerns about her age. She really wants to feel good about this move but is struggling to do so. Finance is a big barrier, caught up as she is in an expensive lifestyle which reflects her more traditional career to date. Hence, she constructs a series of structural and ideological barriers to harnessing success in this context.

A last word in this section can go to Monica who has been portfolio ten years and left very unhappy at her organisation's refusal to allow her to work job share. In a sense she has had her revenge as she now has a senior job share post, is a consultant and a writer. What spurred her to accept her changing role was her realisation that, although she had left *"in high dudgeon"*, she had taken away a marketable portfolio of skills which she has used to best effect. Career, now for her, is about: *"taking on your own responsibility*

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for your career, for building your own competence and skills base because that is the only way you are going to ensure your personal survival during organisational change."

Incidentally, Wendy the most recent entrant to portfolio work uses very similar language to talk about how she now views career. Illustrative of the rich dilemmas and tensions in the stories, Monica has incorporated some of the measures of traditional career success into her portfolio world. In the employed part she adheres still to the need for linear advancement, pointing not to the incompatibility of the imperatives of old and new careers but to an accommodation of them.

What unites the people in this section who, in fact had a varied range of careers and reasons for leaving, is the sense of something missing. They remain primarily wedded to what they have lost but know they must evolve and adapt. They struggle for development to assist them in moving on as in the case of Gillian and Monica or they seek refuge in a feeling of consolidation like Julia. What they seek are the compensating factors in the new world for what they have lost. A major barrier to doing this, for some of them, is their fellow travellers in the portfolio world.

10.5. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion to this chapter will be brief as the ideas raised will be brought forward into the discussion that follows. This chapter has demonstrated that participants are less rather than more inclined to return to organisational employment and so it seems that, to that extent, they have been able to construct the transition as a positive step. How their portfolio will develop is much less clear.

Within the four identified categories certain themes were resonant: about continuing to search for security and career growth in the hierarchical sense; abut integrity and personal values; about consolidation of skill or about personal growth and development;

about search for meaning. For some the change was welcome,or they had come to make their peace with it; for others it was a site of personal struggle.

CHAPTER 11: DISCUSSION

This final chapter reflects back over this research project. It begins by revisiting the aims of the project, moving through a summary of the major contributions to literature to focus on the theoretical contribution of the study. Specifically it refers to the model of the transition introduced in 9.4 and discusses two themes arising from it: the subjective and objective career and the role of the "observer." Section 11.4 then reflects on the study as an exercise in sense making focusing on five themes which permeated their evolving view of careers. The next section reflects on some of the polarities in the debate and concludes by asserting the rich complexity and ambiguity of people's sense making about careers. Finally, 11. 6 reflects back on the study and suggests specific areas for further research.

11.1. INTRODUCTION

This study set out with four main aims:

> 1. to contribute theoretically and empirically to what is known about portfolio working and the types of working arrangements it encompasses;
> 2. to contribute empirical data to the study of changing career by focused research on specific group experiencing a putative contemporary career change;
> 3. to theorise the transition out of organisational employment and into portfolio working;
> 4. to explore changing interpretations of career in this context.

A number of specific research questions were incorporated in these aims. Given that the data to answer the questions was presented in detail, analysed and discussed in previous chapters, the first section that follows will be a brief overview of the major findings of the research in relation to these aims.

11.1.1. Exploring the concept of portfolio working

The first aim was concerned with an exploration of the much used, but less often defined, concept of portfolio working. A number of specific research questions focused the discussion and findings were presented in detail in Chapters 8 and 9. In brief, the term was found to be meaningful to participants in this study who had fairly varied work arrangements but all centred around the theme of work based skills. Further research was suggested with other groups to explore the wider applicability of the context. Participants also attested to a number of difficulties in managing a complex portfolio of work which tend to be under-stated in the literature. In pointing to what participants experienced as the perils and pleasures of portfolio working, the study added some much needed empirical evidence to a debate which has tended to be conducted at the level of assumption and anecdote (Handy, 1994; Ball, 1996). Further theoretical dimensions of this question are considered below.

11.1.2. Empirical study of changing career

There is lively debate about career change which is tending to develop in a normative fashion as discussed in Chapter 3.1 (Nicholson, 1996).There is a surprising dearth of empirical studies which explore how individuals actually experience "new careers." Bailyn (1989:480) made the case for exploring the perceptions of "leading edge exemplars" on the basis that "their experience is more likely to provide useable knowledge for the future than are generalisations based on current norms." This study has focused on one such specific group: those for whom the traditional career had been salient and who now found themselves in potentially a very different world. Some key issues which emerged from this data were:

    a. a desire to find continuity in change and hence much less of a polarity between traditional and new career than the literature might suggest;

    b. the perception of more practical and ideological difficulties in enacting this career than the upbeat literature about new careers tends to acknowledge;

    c. the linked notion about the need for partnership in enacting a new career form - the role of others in the development of portfolio careers is explored below;

    d. contrary to common assumptions, individuals felt that they were moving faster in the direction of change than the organisations they encountered.

11.1.3. Theorising the transition

The study adopted a holistic approach (Granger et al., 1995) to exploring the transition, exploring career prior to it, other life issues that individuals thought were pertinent, as well as subsequent experience. Two major contributions were made in the pursuit of this aim. First the study demonstrated that the traditional career prior to a move to portfolio should not be stereotyped. A model of recurring and linked spirals (Driver, 1982) held together, in this case, by an overall upward movement was theorised as a means of understanding the diverse career patterns *and* the sense that individuals made of them up to the point of exit. Potentially, this model has a wider application in career research.
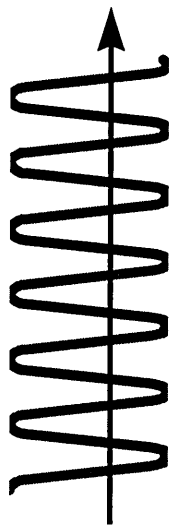
Figure 4. The advancing spiral career

To link this latest spiral move to portfolio working to the previous moves of their career, individuals look less to the objective pattern of their career to date and more to antecedents in their changing subjective sense of career and, in a more abstract sense, to enduring aspects of their self. They also carry forward to the new context material and discursive features of the old. Hence the study theorised the transition as less of a disjunctive move (Nicholson, 1990) than as a shading from the managerial to the portfolio world as figure 5 in chapter 9.4 indicated. Personal and social change were linked as this transition also represents the direction of the debate about the changing shape of careers. The model of transition was then further developed to incorporate it into the Barley model which links individual career action to (changing) social structures and will be considered in more detail below.

11.1.4. Changing interpretations of careers

Rooted in the Barley (1989) model and an exploration of its antecedence in Structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and Symbolic Interactionism (Hughes, 1937), this study was theoretically grounded in the inextricable link between the subjective and objective career. In seeking to understand interpretations of career, this study focused on two specific interpretative schemes: the traditional career and the scheme as expressed in the developing discourse about new careers. However, it also explicitly recognised that individuals drew on other schemes, like public service or family to understand their career and issues like labour markets to account for constraints. In Chapter 10, I presented a typology of ways of understanding career now, given the transition that had been made. In this model the theme of change within continuity was once again asserted.

11.2. CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITERATURE

This section briefly reviews key contributions to related literature already outlined in the conclusions to part one and part two of the analysis.

11.2.1. Self employment

Prompted mainly by the influx of women to self employment there is a developing literature which explores the potential meaning of this career choice in individual's lives moving beyond the more deterministic literature on entrepreneurship (e.g. Buttner and Moore, 1997; Marlow and Strange, 1994; Lee-Gosselin and Grice, 1990). As these participants are all self employed, the majority as management consultants, this study can contribute to that debate. As Stanworth et al. (1995) point out, sole trader self employment is an under-researched area, despite the recent huge increase in numbers and hence this study can also contribute to knowledge about this group.

11.2.2. Human Resource Management

An empirical, qualitative study about individual experience of changing (flexible) working patterns is of benefit to HRM literature. Prior to the transition it was found that, consistent with other recent studies about dissatisfaction with organisational life (Scase and Goffee, 1989; Marshall, 1995), there was a high level of unhappiness at how organisational change had been managed and implemented. Yet individuals still did not

want to cut ties with organisations. The notion of commitment to an ex-employer suggests further focused study.

Another finding concerned the participants' perception of the difficulties organisational managers had in dealing with potential consequences of changed contractual arrangements. They suggested that while managers could deal with changed transactional contracts they had more difficulty in dealing with changed relationships. The general reluctance (or refusal) of managers to look at mutual development opportunities even with long term contractors (Walton, 1996) bears out concerns about the limited ability of extant HRM policies - on development, for example, to deal with the aftermath of other policies - like downsizing.

There is scope for more research about how individuals outside of organisational contractual employment experience HRM. For example, these individuals attested to the twin desires for flexibility and commitment: the elusive ambiguity at the heart of much HRM literature (Legge, 1995; Blyton and Turnbull, 1992). The other useful avenue for research is to consider more systematically what benefits could accrue to organisations by harnessing the knowledge and skills of transient workers (Bird, 1996). Together, such research may point to an augmented agenda for HRM in respect of non core workers.

11.2.3. Self development
A related issue concerned the notion of self development which is central to literature on new careers. The literature on the notion of the enterprising self made up within discourse was considered in this regard (du Gay, 1996, Rose, 1990). But the study found that that project of self development was difficult to sustain outside of organisational employment: individuals floundered in attempting to advance their own development. Hence the study made some contribution to literature on self development (Megginson and Whitaker, 1996; Pedler et al., 1997; Hirsh et al., 1995; Daudelin, 1996) and cautions against the easy optimism about learning which permeates much new career literature.

11.2.4. Public sector ethos

The notion of a public sector ethos - debatable though the concept is - (Pratchett and Wingfield, 1996) emerged in this study as relevant to many participants. The central interest was the participants' belief that they could embody that principle more readily outside of organisational employment than in it, given recent changes in public sector management. This finding suggests further useful exploration of organisational exit from the public sector (IHSM, 1994).

11.2.5. Social networks

This study also added a dimension to the literature on the use of social networks within portfolio and associated ways of working. The importance of existing social networks and deep strong ties was asserted over the notion of being connected to a series of weak ties through a diverse social network (Granovetter, 1995; Raider and Burt, 1996) although questions were raised about the long term sustainability of this. Marketing oneself was found to be painful process for these participants and like self development, was one in which they required some support but tended to find it lacking.

11.3. KEY THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CAREER STUDY

The debate that follows is centred around three main themes which emerged as central to the aims of the study as outlined below. They are linked and overlapping and all need to be recognised in developing a rounded sense of the career transitions under study:

1. the model of the transition linking structure and action;
2. an exploration of subjective and objective career with specific reference to portfolio;
3. a discussion of the role of other agents in the development and interpretation of the portfolio career.

11.3.1 The revised Barley model

Chapter 9.4. introduced the model of the transition from a managerial career to portfolio career within the context of Barley's model on structure and action.

INSTITUTION

Family....Finance sector...Government...NHS...Labour Markets...Public Sector
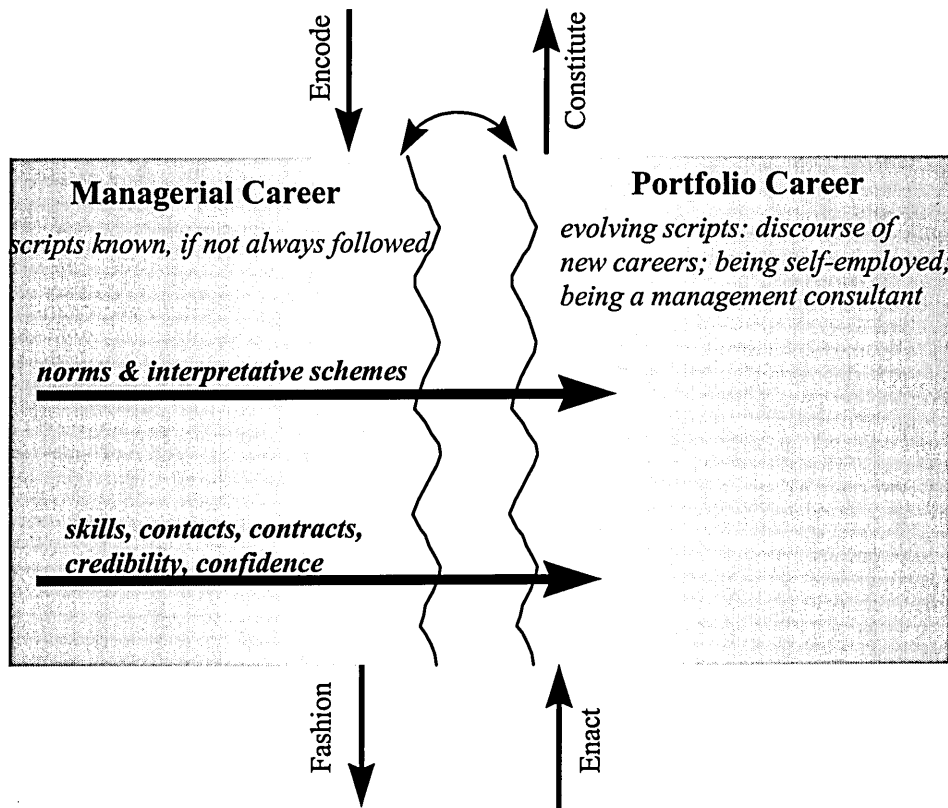
Encode | Constitute

Managerial Career

scripts known, if not always followed

norms & interpretative schemes

skills, contacts, contracts, credibility, confidence

Portfolio Career

evolving scripts: discourse of new careers; being self-employed; being a management consultant

Fashion | Enact

INDIVIDUAL ACTION & INTERACTION

Family...Friends..."Public"....Organisational managers....Other portfolio people

Figure 6. The transition from managerial to portfolio career - the structuring process

The model prompts some additional remarks, particularly with reference to the institutional level. Recognising the limitations of the apparent concentration in the Barley model on one institution (a term Barley uses to mean social structure, thus introducing some linguistic confusion compounded by Giddens' idiosyncratic use of terminology), this model explicitly recognises the ongoing impact of a number of social structures on individual's careers (and vice versa). The question of what constitutes structure, script or action was recognised as highly problematic, which in effect, highlights their inextricable link. Nevertheless, using the model as it was intended, as a sensitising device to think about the relevance of these issues in the context of this research, it is possible to indicate what individuals see as the "containing social

structure" (Tolbert, 1996) of their career world. The model highlights a number of such "structures" regularly identified by the participants as significant in their career action and interpretations (all of which were discussed in the chapter 2 which explored the context of this transition). No doubt that list could be augmented further, for example, some participants talked of class and gender; the debates on bureaucracy and enterprise were relevant in their stories. Some might argue that work itself or capitalism are institutions which should be incorporated in the model. Perhaps the institutional level should be stratified to indicate those structures which seem more or less amenable to transformation (Giddens, 1984).

However, as this research is specifically concerned with the strategic conduct of individuals rather than with institutional analysis (Giddens, 1984) I believe that the institutional realm has been sufficiently covered in this model. My primary aim was to contextualise this transition (Collin, 1990) and consider if my interpretations of relevant context, discussed in chapter 2 was shared by the participants, which proved largely to be the case. The point the model makes is that any number of institutions may be relevant in encoding the scripts that people draw on for the enactment of their career ((and it is always important to understand that scripts are not monolithic but can be interpreted in a myriad of ways). By the same token evolving career action is implicated in the constitution of a number of institutions. Further career research might want to specify institutions and look more systematically at the career scripts they encode (as Barley himself suggests).

In the model above I have positioned the arrows indicating the structuring process centrally but it may be the case that some people are reading more traditional scripts (possibly conceived as the left side of the model) for action, in some cases, and more evolving scripts (the right side) for action in others. For example as participants seem to indicate organisational managers may be drawing on evolving (right side) scripts for action on organisational form and structure for example, but continuing to draw on more traditional left side scripts for dealing with employees' careers. However, while such discussions are beyond the scope of this thesis, interesting angles on institutional analysis of changing career are suggested.

The model highlights two career scripts - for managerial and portfolio working - indicating that they are not monolithic and that they are in evolution. In this model, arrows show import of the scripts and various material practices of the managerial career into the portfolio career. It is, of course, possible to conceive of the actions of portfolio people bringing change to bear on how the managerial career is publicly conceived and this is also indicated in the model. However, time scales are relevant and neither this model nor Barley's model adequately deal with that dimension. As the participants themselves have discovered, top down imposed change (Ashburner et al. 1996) can swiftly change the encoding of career scripts as interpreted by those in influential positions within organisations. But, they are not optimistic about rapid change in organisations' view of career being effected by their enactment of scripts for careers outside of organisations. It is at this point that individuals can experience a gap between rhetoric and reality: what is being said about changing careers and what they actually experience.

Finally, the model attends to the level of individual action and interaction and specifically notes the role, not only of individuals, but of the collectives to which they might belong and to various significant others- an issue discussed in more detail below. One point to make here, given the comments about the double hermeneutic, raised in 4.2, is the extent of reflexive awareness of many of these participants about the social debate on changing careers.

The model then captures the transition under study highlighting the link between personal and social change: individuals making a move which can also be described as embodying a change in career discourse. It is useful for focusing attention on the complex interplay of structures and agency in attempting to understand new careers. It underlines the essential duality of career structures:the objective career and how people interpret that career , i.e. the subjective career, within an awareness of the role of others - issues further explored below.

11.3.2. The links and tensions between the subjective and objective career
In chapter 3.1 I discussed the various ways of looking at careers highlighting a common divide in the literature between the internal and external career, also called the subjective and objective, and sometimes reframed as the individual and organisational

level of analysis (Gunz, 1989; Evetts, 1992). Various meanings attach to the terms. The subjective career can be taken to refer to the individual's traits and career anchors or, and this is the way that I use it, to refer to the meaning that the individual attaches to the external (objective) events and characteristics of their career.

The debate is usefully reframed by Collin (1990), who sees the difference between the two levels of analysis as the differences between the perspectives of the observer (whomsoever) and the individual career actor, who can both describe and interpret the career. Thus an observer may describe what an individual seems to be doing in their career but go beyond that to interpret those activities according to their own frame of reference and values: they may applaud, envy, deride etc. The individual can also describe the events of their career (producing a CV is one example, and this interview is another) and make sense of them within their own terms. As Collin rightly points out, individuals may have a wider view of career than the normative work based model. However, I would also add that as social beings (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), they are not entirely free to devise interpretative schemes for their own actions out of thin air, as it were. As Pahl puts it "time, place and social structure put limits on the scripts that are open for us to devise" (1995:151).

It is widely assumed in recent career literature that the objective career with its ladder rungs and end points (indeed the managerial career that most of these participants had) has fragmented, and hence individuals will construct proxies for it. Weick and Berlinger assert that in changing organisations (they call them self designing) "typical markers of the external career such as titles, advancement up a hierarchy and stable career paths are rare. In the absence of such external markers, the objective career dissolves and in its place the subjective career becomes externalised and treated as a framework for career growth." [1]

(It is worth restating here that this study did not point to people adopting portfolio careers because of any irresistible push; rather most voluntarily left a situation where they could have continued a managerial career and still remain in contact with numerous colleagues who continue to do so within the same organisation.)

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[1] Incidentally, as Gowler and Legge (1989) pointed out so much of the new career literature still proceeds with same implicit assumptions of the old, about growth and advancement.

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Now, if we accept the view that career is the unfolding experience of an individual's experiences over time (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996), then it makes no sense to say that the objective features have faded; they may be different to those that went before and individuals may mourn the demise of the old but all careers have objective features. This point has became all the more apparent to me as the study has progressed and I believe that this point must be asserted within the debate on new careers. If not, career researchers (and practitioners) are in danger again of concentrating attention on only one aspect of the Janus face of career (Arthur et al. 1989) and that is to under-explore the essential link between what people do, and the social structures and collectives that are implicated.

I contend that the individuals in this study do still have an objective career. What they do can still be observed, even counted perhaps (how many clients, how much money, how many days working, how many not working, repeat contracts etc.). Other people could describe the same events of an individual's career and interpret them quite differently. So participants do understand the alternative perspectives of observers' about their career: they variously talk of other people being envious of them, thinking they are courageous and thinking they are quite crazy for giving up employment. By the same token, the individuals can *describe* their portfolio career and they see certain objective, constraining and enabling features in it (Giddens, 1984) as outlined in preceding chapters and summarised in the advice they would give to other would be portfolio people. They struggled to find boundaries they believed to be there or to access the benefits of it which again they presumed to have some existence. They believed that they needed to modify behaviour in certain ways. They distanced themselves from being simply management consultants, or simply self employed as they understood it. All these activities were about their belief in the objective existence of their portfolio world.

They also *interpret* their portfolio career and think about how they understand it and how they act towards. They are aware that they (as well as observers) can construct it as a positive and enhancing move or as a retreat from the real world of proper careers (and again various positions in between). They are also (less) aware of their own recursive role in creating it. Hence when Weick and others talk of the objective career fading,

they talk only of the well known and socially ratified markers of progress in the traditional career.

While individuals had that traditional career (or a near version of it, as this data cautions against stereotypical views of career) the subjective and objective careers of these interviewees tended to be harmonious and mutually constitutive, even when individuals were drawing on alternative scripts for the pursuit of their career than the normatively hierarchical. However, in portfolio working more tensions were apparent between the subjective and objective career, as the meaning of portfolio working-its objective dimensions above and beyond them as individuals, were so unclear by comparison to the relatively established meaning of the organisational career (even if individuals had chosen not to live by it). In attempting to describe and interpret their new world in a positive fashion it was apparent that they do not do so in a social vacuum.

11.3.3.The role of the "observer"

A key point that has emerged in this study is that most participants, even those who felt they had altered their own thinking, were quite convinced that the majority of observers of their careers - including family, friends, colleagues and the wider public held fast to a traditional view of career. Hence their new subjective career and their developing identities was being judged by others against the objective conditions of the old, against the logic of the *real career*. There was no ratified identity to be drawn (Goffman, 1959); their identities were not being upheld in open court (Barley, 1989: Weick, 1995). This was a source of considerable anxiety to many people.

It is at this point that the role of *the observer* needs to be re-conceptualised not as a passive spectator passing judgement but as a co-actor playing a significant role in the individual's process of meaning making. Participants were very far from immune from the opinions of those family and friends who thought that they should not have given up "real" work, although, on the whole they constructed themselves as ahead of much such public opinion. But, and this is a critical issue for many of these participants, they find little comfort in the sense of a collective of other portfolio people.

Threading through their accounts was a concern about other portfolio people. What concerned them was the view of the observer (Collin, 1990) who might look at the

objective features of their career: i.e. no longer employed and acting on a freelance, consultancy basis or only working part-time and assume that this choice was not a positive one, but borne out redundancy or incapability at work. As such, their situation could be conflated with that of those people for whom portfolio is indeed the only option. Their concern is, that their choice of portfolio "for the right reasons", will be obscured and they will be judged accordingly. What was quite fascinating is that they acted as the judgmental observer in interpreting the activities of other portfolio people. This was a point of great tension in holding together the subjective and objective career.

What strikes me is that this concern remains rooted in the precepts of the traditional career, which was based on visible symbols of career success, understandable to all, in the social domain (Pahl, 1995). They might have moved on in terms of recognising a new way to pursue career, but not far enough to construct their success measures from a position outside of old. Thus, it seems, that many of these participants come to occupy a lonely position. They distance themselves from those who have not read the writing on the career wall as they have; they also want to distance themselves from those who have appropriated it to give respectability to the fact that they have lost their jobs. They struggle to understand who are the collective (s) they can align themselves with to share and develop vocabulary of motive (Mills, 1940; Barley, 1989).

Other "observers" were seen as placed to make a considerable difference to their experience of portfolio working, notably organisational managers. It was the view of participants that the majority of managers they dealt with had not updated the scripts by which they interpreted their proper relationship with contractors or other non core staff in the organisation. Clearly there are privileged readings of interpretative schemes for careers linked to positioning in social structures. These career pioneers, if that is indeed what they are need partners in the process.

11.4. PERMEATING THEMES FOR MAKING SENSE OF NEW CAREER

I want to move on to review how individuals made sense of this transition in terms of their emerging view of career. The interview was a sense making process in which individuals responded to a request to sift back through the events of recent and past times to explain how they accounted for a transition in their career- what Giddens

(1991:112) would all a "fateful moment" which requires consequential decisions and impacts on self identity. As mentioned in earlier chapters individuals were aware of how they were presenting themselves, often mellowing as the interview progressed and admitting to alternative perspectives on their story. I heard of set backs, decisions that had proved in retrospect to be the wrong one. So while participants did look to tell a coherent narrative they did not necessarily smooth over all the creases in the story. Their accounts were analysed thematically as discussed in chapter 5 and findings presented in 6-10. The following themes permeated these chapters as they sought to make sense of career through this transition:

- the "real career"
- "no going back"
- enterprise and development
- consolidation
- values and integrity

11.4.1. The "real" career

This theme has been extensively discussed and its ongoing relevance even in portfolio working noted. While some career writers may bemoan continuing adherence to this career, it is still the case that millions of people go on living out their career under more or less hierarchic conditions (Mayo,1991) so it behoves us to listen to the concerns of those for whom the traditional career remains a touchstone of career success (Pahl, 1995). And, as these participants make clear, there are material benefits that adhere to the traditional career, not least regular income. Like many of the observers they identify, some of these participants remain deeply sceptical about the lure of, and the positive gloss on, the new. As I discussed in Chapter 3.1 the project of attempting to change the definition of career may have worthy motives but the more traditional definition, and activities and expectations arising from it, remains tenacious.

11.4.2. *"No going back"*

"No going back" was a theme which appeared to operate as a counter to a certain wistful nostalgia for what they had lost, as above. Having positioned themselves outside the objective conditions of the traditional career, many constructed themselves as individuals who were able to note and respond to distinct changes in their environment.

In a sense, rather than marginalising themselves as those who had lost the real career, most attempted to construct those still wedded to that career as the naive and unrealistic other (du Gay, 1996).

No going back also has a more structural meaning in their accounts, as most people believed that their chances of accessing the organisational world again, should they wish to, would be constrained by sanctions applied to them for breaking the rules of the career game. Hence they invoke labour markets as key points of constraint on their action. The gatekeepers of organisational careers, in their view, remain wedded to the logic of the real career. Despite it being of human agency and amenable to change, most participants saw it being solid and enduring even if they constructed it (like Bridges, 1995 and many others) as doomed to wither and die.

While there may be no going back, there is considerably less certainty about how to go forward. There was a high degree of discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1984) about their new situation, but much less practical consciousness about which stocks of knowledge they could\ should draw on to fashion their daily life and unfolding career.

11.4.3. The developing, enterprising self

New careers as an arena for personal growth - for career entrepreneurialism - is central to the emerging career literature (Mirvis and Hall, 1996; Hall and Moss, 1998; DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996; Kanter, 1989; Weick, 1996). Indeed without the notion of career as a self actualising project, the new career literature has little meaning. Enterprise and development are, thus, brought together. However, while many constructed portfolio as an opportunity to learn and develop (though they did not always follow this through); few considered themselves to be enterprising in the sense of being an entrepreneur.

Kanter's (1989) model of professional and entrepreneurial careers came together in these participants who had difficulties with notion of the product they were selling being themselves. There was a struggle to identify exactly what they could offer which led to them focusing less on what might be termed their managerial skills (an elusive concept indeed outside of employment) and more on a specific kit bag of tools - often reaching back to base skills.

This study also points to several ambiguities, contradictions and fault lines in the picture of learning and enterprise outside organisational employment. In the first place many of these individuals left their organisations partly because of the impact of the import of these very enterprising and business principles into their organisation. Many experienced top down, imposed, legislative change (Ashburner et al, 1996) which radically altered the scripts that had formed the bedrock for their organisation career and many found themselves marginalised from the changing organisation. For almost all the participants, enterprise had no place in their subjective or objective career prior to organisational change.

What I find intriguing is that, outside of organisational employment, running their own business, enterprise could be construed as central to the objective features of their new context: observers may view them as business people. Yet, hardly any of the participants in this study had incorporated the idea of themselves as a business person, much less an entrepreneur (Kanter, 1989). Hence, there is interesting tension here between the objective and subjective domains. It could be argued that there is a well grooved self employment path for them to follow with a recognised trajectory of business growth and profit maximisation which could minimise their sense of dislocation. Yet it seems that the two worlds of organisational career manager and self employed business person are still problematic to bring together in their sense of identity.

In terms of development, as already discussed, most floundered without the support of organisations and many were effectively neglecting ongoing development. Finding it difficult to sustain development in isolation, they sought both practical and ideological changes in how organisations dealt with the development needs of non core staff. Handy's notion of collective support for portfolio people was undermined by their own ambivalent stance to other portfolio people but where people did network with others they usually found it a growth experience. In the absence of readily available opportunities and support, individuals are tempted to fall back on previously learned behaviours (Bird, 1996) which takes us into the next logic theme which overlapped in many accounts with this one. A tension was apparent between a desire to grow and develop grow as against a desire to make the best of what one already had.

11.4.4. Bringing it all together

If careers are journeys to an end point as some suggest (Leach and Chakiris, 1988; Wilensky, 1961) then, for some people, portfolio working may be that final destination. Ironically, the attitude could be taken to confirm observer' views that this is a path to take on the wind down to retirement. In many accounts there was an evident struggle to seek out and highlight the points of continuity within this change, an issue developed in more detail below. The idea of consolidating elements of one's past skills with present changed circumstances in a package of work arrangements was proving to be attractive. This desire battled with the enterprising self but also co-existed with it. The perceived need to develop a coherent self narrative (Weick, 1995) to account for the transition in the face of change and attendant ontological insecurity (Giddens, 1991) may be prompting a premature closure on growth as Giddens (1991) and Bird (1996) warned. Against the struggle of sustaining a congruence between subjective and objective careers, individuals mobilised other meaning systems, for example, invoking the determinism of age as a reason to slow down, experimenting with the legitimacy of spending more time with family, asserting the importance of community.

11.4.5. Integrity and values

The belief that operating outside the boundaries of the organisation was an opportunity to work with more personal integrity is a key finding and the literature on new careers is largely silent about it. A number of individuals, who I called the *campaigners* because they saw their career as a personal campaign for influence on behalf of clients or to enhance the role of the NHS, had constructed themselves as public servants from the beginning of their careers, way before any discussion about new careers. Although bureaucracy and the public sector are so commonly linked, they drew a distinction between pursuit of a bureaucratic career and pursuit of their personal mission in the public service. Conveniently, perhaps, the two converged. What I mean here, is that an observer looking at the objective events of their career need not be aware that it was driven by a different logic: what could be seen is a route up the hierarchy. However, they had consciously positioned themselves outside the dominant mode of career building, indeed they looked down on careerists.

Then, as the organisation changed, the found the sanction for their "maverick" behaviour to have become too strong to tolerate. What is fascinating is that they believe

they can embody what they see as the "spirit" of the organisation, outside the organisational employment. They see no contradiction between being in business and being public servants and hence in terms of the revised Barley model it is clear that they are reading against the grain of both managerial and portfolio career scripts. This theme has already been extensively discussed and needs no further elaboration except in so far as it chimes with other very recent research.

Fournier 1998:75) also noted what she called a "logic of integrity and corruption" by which certain graduate entrants to an organisation attempted to distance themselves from the "new careers" approach of their organisation. Her Foucauldian analysis suggests that this was a way for them to open up positions for themselves in relation to what he sees as the dominant discourse of enterprise (and its close cousin - new careers). While she feels that her participants mobilise a logic of integrity as *resistance* to new careers, the participants in this study invoke it as *justification* for new careers - it is a benefit of portfolio work. Thus, this point hints at quite different interpretations of the so called new career if one experiences the organisationally based version as opposed to this portfolio type. Other interesting avenues for research are suggested.

11.5. COMPLEXITY NOT POLARITY

I want to move on now to look at how these themes can be understood in terms of two permeating polarities noted in the literature reviews: change and continuity; liberation or marginalisation.

11.5.1. Change and continuity

Chapter 10 proposed a categorisation of individuals' changing views of their careers. Continuity within change was a key theme within them. The *climbers* continued to hold fast to a subjective view of career despite changed objective circumstances; the *campaigners* continued to construct themselves as public servant within or without public sector employment; the *converts* pointed to a process of change in their view of career which had already started prior to this transition. The majority of them looked to a sense of consolidation of the skills and abilities they already had. Only the *cartographers* struggled to comprehend thir new terrain and the scale of change they had encountered by adjusting their view of what it meant to have a career. For them,

there were elements of continuity in their personality, for example, or long buried hopes. For some change in work had been promoted by changing personal circumstances. Generally it was regarded as both opportunity and threat.

Giddens (1991) and Weick (1995) propose that, in the face of change associated with the swirling uncertainties of the current period (late, post or reflexive modernity perhaps) then individuals will seek to develop a coherent self narrative. Giddens centres his discussion on a desire to preserve a sense of ontological security (1984:62; 1991:43), a sense that the world is as they think it is. Weick argues that individuals will want to preserve a sense of themselves as efficacious, competent and consistent. These ideas were debated along with the more post-modern view of self as diffuse and fragmented, always in emergence.

Indeed there was a strong sense in these narratives that individuals looked to provide a story which posited a viable history for this outcome (Weick, 1995). I pay due attention to the tendency of the method used to produce such accounts but it is also fair to say that participants did also recognise discontinuity and great change within their circumstances. There was little sense of fragmented selves and there were few examples of a playful postmodern notion of doffing and donning contingent identities (Gergen, 1991). Bauman's (1996) "strollers, vagabonds and tourists" were not much in evidence. While these people would tend to agree, I feel, with Bauman's image of the uncertain future of the pilgrim, there was little sign of them acknowledging any need to take a more ephemeral, diffuse approach to their working life. These people were still looking for a sense of stake in a future - their own and the organisation's. Moreover, there was a desire to convince that, notwithstanding the high degree of "push" to their new circumstances, (even it that stopped short of compulsion), it was proving an outlet for aspects of personality which had been allowed less expression in organisational life.

Where change was recognised individuals did approach it with a high degree of ambivalence, balancing as I suggested above the themes of development and consolidation, claiming enhanced integrity and often continuing to yearn for the "real" career. Hence Beck's image introduced in Chapter 9.4 of individuals with a foot in two worlds and an uncertain migration from one to the other proves a potent one in this study. In terms of how individuals deal with this split sense, Giddens' view of the self

narrative appears to have much merit. However, I do agree with Pahl (1995) that Giddens' view of the ongoing project of developing a self identity within change verges too far to the voluntarist (and thus other criticism of Giddens discussed in 4.2 is recalled). These people see structural barriers in their way to having the kind of working life they want: organisational change, labour markets, ageism etc. Some they see as ideological barriers, rooted in the interpretations of others within organisations. The only way to deal with them is to re-cast them from barriers to opportunities. However a certain number of people within this study simply cannot convince themselves of this.

11.5.2. Liberation or marginalisation?

A related question asks if these individuals are liberated or marginalised? Earlier in the study I talked about liberation and subjugation following a lead from the career literature which suggests that new careers are a way to throw off the chains of organisational dependence. I also noted the warnings from theorists such as Rainbird (1991), that individuals thus participated in their own exploitation; losing the benefits of employment but acquiring a number of the risks (Beck, 1992). As the study has progressed, the notion of marginalisation has come to seem more appropriate, at least in how the participants tell their stories and by reference to the debate on marginalising effect of discourse. There is a sense that they are indeed marginalised in some sense from "real career" but most do not regard that as any form of subjugation. So I recast the question in terms of liberation and marginalisation.

Quite obviously, there is no one answer to this (although much of the new career literature remains convinced of their liberation). The question, of course, is what are they assumed to be liberated or marginalised from and that depends on the standpoint of the situated individual. Given the prevalent discourse about individualism, choice, autonomy, then one could construct them as liberated from the crushing demands of a careerist world- which one participant called "outmoded and essentially limiting." On the other hand, the organisational world is the conduit for a number of material benefits, not least regular income but also a sense of belonging and purpose. On the whole, judging from this data, they point to a series of tangible losses by "liberation" from organisational employment - like salary, pension, a place in the employed labour market, access to training opportunities but a number of more abstract gains- balance, autonomy, integrity, consolidation within portfolio.

One participant complained that other portfolio people want to have their cake and eat it. They want to be free of organisational employment but they want to lose few of its benefits. For sure, such desires were clear in this data, they wanted transactional contracts with employers but "relational" relationships for example (Rousseau, 1996). They want to be public servants but don't want to be employed in the public sector; they want independence from employers but regular work from them; they want to be free from employment but don't want the risks of self employment. I have noticed in discussions about this research that it is a disturbing image to some people, that these individuals seem to believe that they are neither one thing nor the other and want the best of both (or all) worlds. But potentially this is a useful (not to say optimistic) way to pursue thinking about careers.

There are some faint signs of just such an approach within career and HRM literature. The notion of "cafeteria" rewards in the workplace whereby individualised packages of compensations including pay and other benefits can be negotiated is an interesting example (Goss, 1994; Mullen, 1998). In career literature, Brousseau et al. (1996) discuss specific instances of organisations (US) offering "cafeteria" approaches to career management activities and Herriot and Pemberton (1996) produce a model of the various needs and wants that individuals and organisational agents can negotiate in terms of the psychological contract. Leaving aside the evident questions about this sort of approach (not least issues of asymmetric power relations and the apparent reluctance of HR managers, as discussed, to embrace such thinking in all its ramifications), nevertheless the notion opens up a more fluid way to think about careers within or outwith organisations.

Extending this idea theoretically, the individual could be considered, to some extent, a consumer of interpretative schemes and discourses (du Gay, 1996). I have queried the view of individuals made up in discourse while accepting the hegemonic effect of certain discourse at certain times. An interesting contrast is provided by contributions to the career debate by Gowler and Legge in 1989 and Fournier in 1998. Gowler and Legge discuss bureaucracy as the dominant career discourse (they call it rhetoric). Attempts at resistance can take place only on its terms; hence certain ways of thinking and enacting careers are privileged and any attempt to do other is to construct oneself outside this dominant interpretative scheme. They ask if the concept of career can break

free from the ideology of bureaucratic control, and they answer "probably, but perhaps not necessarily" (1989: 448) going on to acknowledge some of the debates raised in the earlier chapters of this study about the potential impact of shifting meanings and patterns of symbolic construction as well changing organisations. Now in 1998, Fournier asserts the dominance of enterprise and its expression in new careers asserting that, while resistance to it is visible, it can occur only within the terrain already colonised by enterprise. Hence, individuals not accepting its precepts are marginalised in relation to it. What Fournier does attempt to do, though, is to make available other vocabularies of motive for thinking about careers even within that dominance.

The point is made, I think, about the shifting nature of what may be constructed as the dominant discourse of the day. Furthermore, as is noted (du Gay, 1996; Fournier, 1998), no particular interpretative scheme encounters a tabula rasa; rather it works on already highly differentiated individuals who have a relationship to any number of other social structures and practices. Fournier bases her analysis on a Foucauldian view of power and resistance which sees individuals as positioned within dominant discourse. This study takes a view of a knowledgeable agent (Giddens, 1994; Weick, 1996; Mangham, 1986) not positioned by discourses but reflexively aware of the competing and co-existing ways of making sense of their circumstances and able to position themselves in relation to them, normative sanctions notwithstanding (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995; Giddens, 1991; Weick, 1995).

The notion of the participants in this study as consumers (du Gay, 1996) of the various interpretative schemes is an interesting one. Within this study it has been apparent that individuals variously draw on a number of discourses, often in contradiction. However, free agents to pick and choose they are not (no more than any other consumer). Ways of understanding are never neutral but always tied up in the constitution and construction of social practice, constrained by the cultural resources available (Parker, 1992). As the foregoing discussion makes clear, they see constraining (and enabling) effects in social structures and in the ideological positioning of those individuals with the ability to make a difference to their working lives.

The benefit of this sort of study, which opens up a range of individual perspectives, is to give voice to varied perspectives on a key issue of social debate. It is instructive to hear

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of their anxieties and what appears to constrain them, and at the close of this study I feel inclined to celebrate what they identify as the benefits.

Certainly, an appreciation of a diverse range of ways of making sense of changing careers is a positive contribution to the debate. However, that is not to overlook genuine difficulties experienced on a personal and social level in coming to terms with changing career. That this study has pointed to complex, at times ambiguous and contradictory ways of making sense of their circumstances is not to be lamented. It is time in the career debate, as others also argue (Arnold and Jackson, 1997; Nicholson, 1996) to dispense with either \or prescriptions and predictions. Rather, like Noon and Blyton (1997:208) who discuss the changing "realities" of work, I believe that engaging with such complexity, "time consuming, costly, confusing and frequently disillusioning" though it can be, is the only satisfactory way to explore career.

11.6. REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Reflecting back on the study now at its conclusion, I am confident that it constitutes a valuable theoretical and empirical contribution to the study of careers. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to add to the tradition of qualitative, interpretative studies of careers (Collin and Young, 1992). The particular interest of this study is that it does so with explicit reference to the context of debate on changing career. As with any long running research project, as the end approaches and critical hindsight begins to take over a number of questions about it are raised. As an exploratory study of an under-researched area, it contributes much but raises many other questions.

I remain convinced that an in-depth study of one specific group of "leading edge exemplars" (Bailyn 1989:480) was necessary as there are so few such studies yet so much anecdote and assumption about the needs and wants of people in new careers. The in-depth study has also suggested a number of questions which could now profitably be explored with larger and more diverse sample groups. Inevitably attention turns to the benefits and limitations of this particular sample.

This sample had a number of interesting characteristics. Firstly, I was intrigued by their level of reflexive awareness of changing careers which may well be attributed to their managerial positions within an organisation which does widely debate such matters. It may be interesting to explore these ideas with groups less attuned to such developing debate.

Secondly, the sample did turn out to be heavily NHS biased although that was not a specific intention and insights were offered about other organisations. This was both a strength and a limitation: a strength because of the opportunities for comparison between the accounts; a limitation because it raises questions about the generalisability of certain findings. I would be particularly interested to learn if other populations also considered the issue of preservation of personal integrity to be a benefit of portfolio working or whether that concern is somehow linked to their identity as public sector workers.

A third point is that these individuals also arranged their portfolios almost exclusively around work based skills. It may be that their view of "real work" is still too strong to overcome or once again there may be issues about having been an organisational manager which might incline one to present an image of a responsible worker. Once again, it would be interesting to see if this finding was replicated with other research groups.

Few people in this sample were made compulsorily redundant and evidently there is scope for more research with those who do feel that portfolio work has been a stop gap or a last resort. Overall the notion of the "reluctant independent", whether compulsorily redundant or not, suggests further interesting angles for study.

Finally, this group were all at various points of a transition: for some it was very recent for others it had happened some time ago. On the whole I think this feature was a strength within the research but it may be useful to trace the transition as it happens with other groups of people. In that way the story would be "live" as it were, rather than retrospective. While that it is not in any way to doubt the benefit of retrospective research, as it points up what seem to be socially available interpretative schemes at a certain juncture, it would nonetheless be illuminating to consider how individuals deal

with these issues as they arise. Extending this point, it is apparent that a longitudinal study would be a useful way to follow up this group and I hope to do so. We know little about the trajectory of careers outside organisations and it would be very helpful to understand if people do resolve the development and social dilemmas highlighted in the research. Furthermore, I wonder if portfolio work is episodic (Carroll and Mosakowski, 1987). This point is all the more pertinent to me, because as a portfolio worker myself, I am heading back to full -time employment at the end of this study (albeit with the extra appeal of the job being in another country).

Longitudinal studies are always called for in career research but rarely done for obvious practical reasons. I do have some reservations about them as a method as outcomes may be less to do with the career issue itself than with changing social circumstances but such concerns could be attended to in well designed research. [2] Diary studies suggest themselves as a means of individuals logging their own developing actions and their explanations for them.

The concept of portfolio work was a difficult one to grapple with, overlapping as it does with self employment, specifically management consultancy. While the concept did emerge as meaningful in this study, other avenues for exploration with those who identify themselves more explicitly as consultants or sole trader self employed are suggested. By the same token there may well be other groups, like this one, who could be seen, by the ubiquitous observer, as self employed, but in fact construct their identity differently.

With that observer in mind, the role of others became significant in this research and at times, I longed to talk to the managers they so complained about (or occasionally praised) and indeed to find out what other people did think of their portfolio status. However, that would have been to detract attention from the real focus of this study

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[2] One of the best known longitudinal studies is that of Schein (1978, 1990) on career anchors as he has followed ex students' evolving perceptions of careers since the 1960s. However, what is not sufficiently utilized in this study is the notion of changing social circumstances. His model assumes that people's "real" career motivation eventually emerges and so only those who have anchors in entrepreneurial activities, buried within organisational employment *should* become self employed. Indeed he rejects the notion of these portfolio people are real entrepreneurs, denying that "defensive self employment" as he calls it can invoke in individuals a desire to act entrepreneurially.

which privileged individual interpretations but that is not to deny that angle as a proper concern for further research.

With some reservations, I adopted the Barley model (on the role of careers in the structuring process) as a sensitising device and produced an amended version. Following Giddens' (1984) advice to researchers, I strategically bracketed the institutional level of analysis but clearly the notion of social structures pervaded the research. The blur between levels of the model plagued me through the research although I think that the notion of bracketing for research purposes does have merit. On the whole I am happy with how I used the model to structure my own thinking and to point to the complexity of the issue under study. There is scope however for switching attention to the institutional level and considering what impact shifting career scripts may be having on the constituting of specific institution. By the same token the notion of interpretative schemes proved problematic at times, particularly in light of the opaque debate about discourse. However discourse, at the level of textual analysis or at the level of structuring ways to be, offers considerable scope for further research.

The fact that the two sides of the transition - managerial and portfolio careers - were in themselves ambiguous and shifting notions added to the conceptual challenge. It may be instructive to study transitions out of other occupations which may be more amenable to definitional clarity.

The above comments, together with the other specific research suggestions made in the discussion above point to an enlarged agenda for research into changing careers. The topic of changing careers is fascinating (and still seems so) and of significance to the present or future lives of most of us. It is too important to be conducted without due attention to the voice of situated individuals.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix One: Major changes affecting NHS managers in mid 1980s - mid 1990s

The following information is intended as <u>brief</u>, and highly selective contextual background of some of the major changes in the NHS which participants referred to in the interviews and were therefore part of the organisational environment at the time of their decision to leave.

The NHS has been characterised by significant political, economic, clinical and legislative change during the 1980s and 1990s which has resulted in changing practices and expectations on managers. The following notes are abstracted from a number of texts which provide much more detailed information and critique (Ham, 1991; Ranade, 1994; Dent, 1995; Ferlie et al., 1996; Hood, 1995; Bennett and Ferlie, 1994; Pollitt, 1993). The following are some of the most significant for managers:

1983: inquiry into NHS management (Griffith's report) published. This introduced the policy of general management into the NHS. The report was premised on the notion that the management of the NHS could and should function like the management of any large organisation. The idea was to draw responsibility for decision making into a management tier within a vertically managed organisation and also to devolve decision making to units. Managerial prerogative over the professionals was asserted and there was an attempt to draw clinicians into management. Ferlie et al. (1996) equate these reforms with the strengthening of "command and control" type management consolidated by subsequent developments such as the introduction of Performance Related Pay and a tranche of other measures designed to increase financial accountability.

From 1988 onwards, the next significant developments was the purchaser-provider slit and the internal market, following reform outlined in the NHS review and the and the *Working for Patients* White Paper 1989. An internal market was created whereby health care was provided, by among others, the hospitals, who became (self governing NHS Trusts. The (evolving) Health Authorities (Has) became the purchasers of these services for health care in an area. There was also a spate of mergers of trusts from the early 1990s onwards. A parallel development was the introduction of GP fundholding, introduced in the early 1990s to stimulate the internal market. The HAs themselves were subject to change, culminating in the creation of new unitary health authorities from April 1996.

More change is expected with the advent of the new Labour Government.

Appendix Two : Initial letter requesting research participants

<u>To members of the NHS Career Development Register on Freelance and\or Fixed term Contracts</u>

Dear Sir \ Madam,

I am a researcher with Sheffield Hallam University Business School, investigating the impact of changing working patterns on how people view their careers. I am interested in the implications of this for how people consider their future development needs will be met and what role organisations might play in this.

I am looking at people who, by choice or circumstance, are now working on a freelance or fixed term basis. This is widely predicted to be the new way of working for many more people so there is much to be learned from those experiencing it now.

Predominant ideas about careers have assumed a steady climb up a corporate ladder. Obviously this is changing and I am keen to find out if people are developing different ways of deciding for themselves what constitutes a successful career.

If you are interested in the research, please contact me on:
(0114) 253 2819 (work)
(0114) 268 6634 (home)
Alternatively write to the address below or e.mail me on M. Mallon@shu.ac.uk

I will arrange to talk to you further at your convenience and, of course, in the strictest confidence.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation

Yours faithfully

Mary Mallon

Appendix Three: The initial interview guide

The initial interviews proceeded from the identified questions and additional questions derived from personal experience and the pilot interviews.

DRIVERS TO PORTFOLIO WORKING	PATTERN OF WORK	EXPERIENCE OF PORTFOLIO WORKING	CONSTRUING CAREER	RELATIONSHIP WITH EMPLOYER
why leave?	what is the pattern?	what are the highs and lows?	what is the same and what has changed?	how do they experience the new relationship?
why not seek employment elsewhere?	why chosen?	what are the similarities and differences with employment?	what scripts and discourses are significant in their career? Are they following scripts or do they feel like pioneers?	
why go portfolio?	is concept of portfolio working meaningful?		how do they measure success, then and now ? has there been a change in their career identity and is this reflected in attitudes of others?	

Additional questions:

Start with what they are doing now and ask for a sketch of previous career.

Level of awareness of new career discourse

How do they understand what is happening to careers?

How did they view the reputation \ public image (i.e. prevailing discourses) about this type of work?

How do they describe themselves if asked in a social situation and how does that feel?

Who are\ have been the significant influences on their career? Whose opinion matters now and why?

Any regrets about going portfolio?

Likelihood of returning to work?

Appendix Four: The evolved interview guide

EVOLVED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Start by asking if the interviewee wants to describe current work or to tell a more chronological story.

Probe on previous major career transitions, if not covered.

Additional topics:

In addition to the questions in the **initial guide**, use these prompts:

Training and development: while in organisational employment and now. Any concerns? what would help facilitate development? Any mutual responsibility with organisations now?

View of the **external labour market** and their position in it. Issues of sunk career investment? Explore idea of returning to work.

Experiencing new **relationship with the employer**?. Developing new clients?

Explore **attachment to NHS and public sector**. Notion of public sector ethos. Explore views on organisational changes.

Probe on views on **developing the portfolio**.... develop as a business; gain more skills, return to work?

Implications of being **self employed**: marketing, tax etc.
Are they **entrepreneurs?**

Explore significance of **social issues**. Where do they get support. Whose opinion matters to them and why? Probe perceptions of portfolio working.

What is the **future** of this way of working and why?
What are their own **hopes and fears** for the future?

Can they identify specific **helping and hindering factors** to them continuing to work this way?
How do they know if they are being **successful?**

Biographical data: age, marital status, educational background, family career background. Also interested to note what information the choose to present about themselves which they think is interesting and relevant.

Conclude: advice to other would be portfolio workers
where and when happiest and where and when most successful (define) and why?

Appendix Five. The initial coding template

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INITIAL CODING TEMPLATE

</div>

1. CAREER BIOGRAPHY
   1. milestones
   2. transitions and why, how explained:
      a. the linear, traditional model
      b. alternative scripts
   3. planning
   4. risk taking
   5. influences
   6. success criteria-
      a. salary, position
      b. reputation
      c. development
   7. career images\metaphors
   8. ambitions\dreams
   9. personal achievements
   10. previous portfolio experience inclination

2. PERSONAL DATA
   1. married\partner
   2. children
   3. education
   4. family career background
   5. entry to NHS
   6. qualifications
   7. personal skills
   8. personal qualities
   9. age

3. DRIVERS TO PORTFOLIO WORKING
   1. push
      a. change
      b. NHS changes
      c. organisational culture
      d. boss
      e. blocked promotion
      f. redundancy
   2. pull
      a. awareness of discourse of new careers
      b. freedom
      c. autonomy
      d. balance

</div>

3. planned?
4. views on labour market
5. return to work?

4. PATTERN OF PORTFOLIO WORKING
1. early days
2. description of portfolio
   a. wage work
   b. fee work
   c. study work
   d. home work
   e. gift work

3. level of work
4. naming selves, identifying self as portfolio?
   a. a pioneer?
5. getting work
6. social networks
   a. reliance on old organisation
   b. clients outside NHS

5. EXPERIENCE OF PORTFOLIO WORKING
1. portfolio highs
   a. fun
   b. freedom
   c. balance

2. portfolio lows
   a. loss of affiliation
   b. isolation
   c. finance

3. comparison to work
4. training and development
5. reputation
6. future plans
7. new success criteria

6. RELATIONSHIP WITH ORGANISATION
1. relational examples
2. transactional examples
3. returning to old organisation
4. contracting with them

1. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA (WHOLE TRANSCRIPTS CATEGORISED):
>   **1. married\partner or not**
>   **2. children or not**
>   **3. qualifications**:
>>   degree
>>   masters
>>   professional qualification
>   **4. entry to NHS**
>>   management trainee
>>   junior entrant
>>   professional entrant
>>   late entrant
>   **5. age (five year bands 30 -50)**

2. TELLING THE STORY (1-3, whole transcripts categorised)
>   **1. as a narrative from the "beginning"**
>   **2. as series of "flashbacks"**
>   **3. most concerned with present**
>   **4. talking about career story telling**

3. TALKING ABOUT SELF
>   **1. significance of marital status**
>>   dual career couples
>   **2. significance of having children**
>   **3. other caring responsibilities**
>   **4. family background**
>>   feeling "different"
>   **5. health**
>   **6. age**
>   **7. personal skills**
>>   specific achievements
>   **8. personal qualities: "the way I am"**
>>   previous portfolio indications

4. ORGANISATIONAL EMPLOYMENT (all data collected together and then also coding specific references to NHS)
>   **1. previous positive experiences**
>>   role of specific individuals
>   **2. previous negative experiences**
>>   role of specific experiences
>   **3. experience of career management**
>>   fast track
>>   mentors

blocked
halted with family
self career management
career setbacks
4. talking about organisational change and changes in work
references to "enterprise" and "flexibility"
NHS reforms
enterprise in the NHS, views on
5. the labour market
personal standing in it
any sense of sunk career investment?
6. what do they miss about organisational employment?
7. what do they feel free from?

5. UNDERSTANDING OF CHANGING CAREERS
1. talking about changing careers (awareness of discourse)
references to Charles Handy and others
2. awareness of "portfolio" work
alternative interpretative schemes for portfolio work

5. DRIVERS TO PORTFOLIO WORKING
1. push: the "reluctant independent"
redundancy
new boss
organisational change- restructure
organisational fit
2. pull
career development
taking control
adventure
developing skills
3. making the decision
jump or be pushed
best of a bad choice
two separate decisions
pre-transition job change
already doing private work
4. planning for transition to portfolio work
advice and guidance sought
role models?
5. early experiences

6. EXPERIENCING PORTFOLIO WORK
1. pattern of work

wage work
        fee work
        study work
        home work
        gift work
  2. level of work
  3. clients -where does work come from?
        existing contacts
        networking
        advertising
        tendering
  4. unpredictability of work
  5. mix of work: issues
  6. portfolio "highs"
        freedom\autonomy
        fun
        balance
        picking and choosing work
        integrity
  7. portfolio "lows"
        loss of affiliation
        isolation
        finance

7. EXPERIENCE OF PORTFOLIO WORKING: KNOW WHY- BEING PORTFOLIO
  1. naming self
        management consultant
        self employed
        portfolio worker
        freelance
        entrepreneur
  2. pioneer?
  3. talking about the portfolio mix
  4. selling self: "the product is myself"
        identifying skill base
  5. self image adjustment
        significant change
        always been different
  6. discourses of portfolio work
        no going back\ way of the future
        cover for redundancy etc.
  7. responses of significant others
  8. views on other portfolio workers
  9. advice to would be portfolio workers
  10. reference groups

8. EXPERIENCE OF PORTFOLIO WORK: KNOW HOW
1. **hopes for development**
2. **using previous skills**
3. **developing new skills**
4. **planned development**
5. **lack of planned development**
   reading
   learn from assignment
   seek feedback
6. **skill decay?**
7. **future development plans**

9. EXPERIENCE OF PORTFOLIO WORK: KNOW WHOM
1. **significance of existing contacts**
2. **developing new contacts - see 6.3.**
3. **support**
   partners \ associates
   other portfolio
   family

10. CAREER IDENTITY (1. when talking about previous career; 2. when talking about portfolio career; 3 both together)
1. **traditional career: references to linear movement, security, stability etc.**
2. **breaking traditional career norms**
   combining with family
   career risk taking
   resisting career management
3. **"new career": references to autonomy, independence, freedom. personal growth, personal enterprise etc.**
4. **being a "public servant"- values, integrity, commitment to public service, concern for disadvantage**
5. **being a professional- skills, expertise, reputation**
6. **lifestyle and career- hobbies, balance, downshifting**
7. **specific references to what has changed**
8. **specific references to what has remained the same**
9. **perceptions of public image of role**
10 **images of career**

11. MANAGING THE CAREER (again categorised 1, 2 and 3 as above)
1. **career planning**
   rational goal directed
   "communion based"
   just happened \ serendipity

2. objective measures of success(position, salary level, specific ambitions)
2. subjective measures of success where different
> running own show
> development
> consolidation of skill and life
> personal satisfaction\ enjoyment
> retaining integrity

3. specific references to what has changed
4. specific references to what has remained the same

12. FUTURE PLANS
1. return to work
2. develop business
3. develop self
4. other plans\ dreams

13. ORGANISATIONS AND PORTFOLIO WORKERS
1. contracting with organisations
2. development and organisations
3. relational relationships
4. transactional relationships
5. what do organisations get out of it
6. implications for organisations

Appendix Seven: Introducing the research participants: pen portraits

The pen portraits presented here are the notes I made following each interview to capture what had most impressed me as the salient features of each individual's account. They are not intended as exhaustive, rather illustrative, of the events of individual's careers and the major issues on which their stories centred. As family issues and age emerged as pertinent in the interviews and are extensively discussed as relevant factors in the careers literature, I also indicate, age, marital status and dependent children. Some are longer than others, which tends to reflect the complexities of the transitions in their stories.

MONICA is in her late thirties, married with dependent children. She has been portfolio for 10 years having left a post as Regional Workforce Planning Manager for an NHS Health Authority with a great deal of enduring anger when they would not allow her to work job share following the birth of her first child. She went on to work in the private sector for a while but missed the inherent challenges and social value as she saw it, of working in the NHS.

She moved on to set up her own business offering Personnel advice to small firms and later diversified into running a clothes shop. She began to pick up some consultancy work within the NHS and eventually decided that she wanted to devote more time to that so she decided to close the shop and keep the two strands of her consultancy profile going. The NHS strand grew to such an extent that she was effectively working full-time back within the wider boundaries of the organisation. Eventually she was offered a half time job share post at a senior level back in the NHS. Working there as a consultant had revived her interest in the organisation; she remembered what it was that attracted her in the first place. However she still insists that but she will not be enmeshed again with one employer. Her portfolio is varied. Along with the job share, she is also a partner in a consultancy company which does a variety of long term and one-off projects, primarily, but not exclusively within the NHS. She also writes books (which have been published) and training packs.

MARGARET is in her late thirties, married with two young children and now operating a part time portfolio

Margaret has been portfolio for 3 years having taken redundancy from a post with BT. She started as a national trainee with the NHS and was set for a classic successful NHS career, although she did make some unconventional sideways moves to give her a broader experience. Nevertheless she left after 3 years only to joins consultancy firm specialising in Health. her motivation was to give herself a broader perspective than she felt she could acquire staying in the NHS. She stayed there for 8 years, when she was head hunted to manage a joint venture with another national public organisation. She enjoyed this for the challenge and the opportunity to work overseas and stayed three years. However, the company changed and she was given the choice to take on a post with more travel and more responsibilities or to leave. She opted to leave as she had two small children by this stage and wanted to spend more time with them., The new job would have taken her away from home for regular and long periods So she opted for redundancy and set up her own freelance management consultancy business. She was continually occupied for 2 - 2 1/2 days each week, mainly on longer term assignments with NHS Trusts and will shorter term assignments on management development., training and organisation development and planning. She is explicit that she has a portfolio and that includes not only this self employed work but her role as a mother and a role as school governor.

ANNE is in her mid forties, lives alone. Her career was based on accountancy and financial management

Anne has been portfolio for 3 years, having left a post in an NHS Trust as Director of Finance. She started work as junior clerk on leaving school at 15 with no qualifications and progressed through to a position of senior financial manager in a private sector company where she worked for 11 years. From leaving school she trained as an accountant at evening classes and through correspondence courses eventually qualifying when she was aged 30.

She left in 1990 to join the NHS as a senior financial manager at the time when the NHS was appointing more managers from the private sector. She secured a promotion to another Trust but was disillusioned with how the organisation was operating following the reforms and restructuring.

Anne has had ill-health all her life. Initially she was diagnosed as having a progressively degenerative disease and so she lived with the expectation of a shortened life. That diagnosis was changed for the better in her late thirties and was a factor in her leaving her job to join the NHS. She still had health problems however and one such episode prompted a re-think about her career and she decided to negotiate a redundancy package from her post..

Subsequently and after a short break, she developed a portfolio of work consisting of 1. financial management consultancy work with the NHS doing, as a consultant, very similar work to that which she was doing as an employee, 2. lecturing at a Further Education College and 3. financial management consultancy for small business people. She then decided to retrain as a psychotherapist in recognition of her growing boredom with figure work and developing interest in working more closely with people. She then took a full time job again, eighteen months ago working in a community heath capacity- a responsible job but one which is at a considerably lower level and attracting much less salary than her previous job. What attracted her was the inherent flexibility of the post which meant she was better able to determine her hours and work nearer to home than she was as a freelance operator. She retains her small freelance financial management portfolio and her teaching commitments. Her main aim now is to complete the psychotherapy course and begin to work in that capacity.

JULIA is in her late forties and married with no children. Her career up to leaving organisational employment included nursing, marketing and consultancy work

Julia has been portfolio for just over one year. She resigned a post as Health Sector Manager with a major consultancy company. She started her career as a nurse, a childhood ambition, moving up several rungs in nurse management and achieving a Diploma in Management Studies and a BA in Nursing on the way. Feeling that her career needed to be developed she moved to another large company as Marketing \ Business consultant keeping her links with the Health Sector. It was at about this time that her first marriage broke down and this spurred her to renew interest in her own career development. In this post she also began to develop IT skills. After two years she moved to the consultancy company where she worked for five years. Her moves were prompted by a desire to explore the working world and to challenge herself

She left the Consultancy Company just over one year ago, citing differences with their value base and her own. She has joined her second husband's management consultancy business which he has run as a one man band for 10 years. She now has two main freelance contracts dealing with training and organisation development issues in two NHS trusts. One is a six month assignment where she is contracted for 10 days per month and the other is a rolling programme of two day courses followed by feedback and action planning.

JOAN is 50 and married with grown step children. Her career spans research, Social Services training and development and management in the NHS

She has been portfolio for 2 years having negotiated voluntary redundancy from her job as Strategic Development Manager for an NHS Trust. Her early working life was in research within Universities, having taken a psychology degree. A job in research in a Social Services Department was followed by a move into training and development within social services and eventually she reached the position of assistant director of a Social Services Department. In that post she worked at the interface of health and social services and developed more interest in working for the NHS. She eventually secured a big promotion to Unit General Manager in an NHS Trust just prior to the reforms and following a re-organisation she was appointed as Strategic Development Director. She left citing value differences and a sense of disenfranchisement from the restructured organisation. Her career had bee driven by a need to work constructively with others and she felt she could not do that in this new post.

Prior to leaving she established that she had private work to move on to, following up contacts and securing contracts before she left. She now has a mixture of work. At the moment she works with individual clients for one to one coaching; she has a contract with her old employer for facilitation work consisting of 4 half day inputs and 50 one to one interviews; she has team building contracts with voluntary organisations for 6 days over a year and several one off training interventions.

GILLIAN is in her early forties, she is married with no children and has always worked in the NHS

Gillian has been portfolio for two years having voluntarily left her post as Chief Executive of an NHS Trust. Gillian entered the NHS as a management trainee shortly

after leaving university. She made rapid progress and became Chief Executive of the Trust in her early thirties. She decided to leave when the merger of her Trust and other Trust was completed. Her leaving was well planned in advance and she sought advice before she made her decision. She was driven by a desire to move on to new challenges and felt that she had achieved all she could in this post.

She took a short sabbatical when she left on a foreign lecture tour, returned and took her time to establish her business and gain some additional skills. She has two main strands to her portfolio- executive coaching and service reviews for organisations and she aims to have a balance of both. Her clients are primarily in the Health Sector although she has started to get some work from other public sector bodies.

HENRY is 49 and married with dependent children. He was made redundant after a long career in the NHS.

Henry has been portfolio for three years having been made redundant against his will from his post as Regional Manpower Services Officer with the NHS. He entered the NHS after 10 years in industry as an engineer and established a successful hierarchical career. He felt that his role and the way he approached it, during the period of NHS reform ,gave him a national profile but made him unpopular with some people. Henry was devastated by the redundancy, particularly as he was on sick leave at the time recovering from an injury. It took him some time to establish a portfolio of work as he spent the first eighteen months, unsuccessfully looking for work.

The first opportunity came from a personal contact. He did a managerial role for an organisation on a fixed term employed contract and later renewed it on a self employed basis for 200 days work. That has now come to an end. He has also become a school inspector. He hopes to develop his portfolio into Investors in People assessor work. He also has a role in a national professional body- unpaid but absorbing. He has reconciled himself to the fact that he is unlikely to find another job but does not find the world of portfolio work congenial to him.

SUZANNE is in her late thirties, married with young children. Her career has been mainly in Training and Development.

Suzanne has been portfolio for three years having taken voluntary redundancy from a post as Head of Training and Development. Suzanne was brought up in South Africa where she trained as an Educational Psychologist, moving after five years into teaching. She came to Britain 10 years ago and secured a job in Training administration in the NHS and after a couple of promotions reached the post of Head of Training and Development in an Area Heath Authority.

Her job was changed following a restructuring in a way that she could not tolerate. This situation allied to the birth of her second child and the wrench she felt returning to a job she did not like impelled her to seek redundancy and set up her portfolio. She is now and associate consultant doing a steady 12 days per month on training and development in a Health Authority. She also has a contract for some research work from the NHS and one-off training projects and courses.

HELEN is in her mid thirties. She lives with a partner and has no children. Her career was primarily in dietetics.

Helen has been portfolio for over two years having left a post as Quality Assurance Manager for a Trust. Her career started in dietetics and she worked her way up the career ladder within prestigious hospitals developing a narrow speculums for which she was internationally known and with the title of Chief Dietician. Feeling hemmed in career wise because of her narrow field she took an MBA course which eventually led to her securing for herself a secondment to do a research project for the trust followed up with a job as Quality Assurance Manager. This still did not satisfy her desire to take a broader career view so she left and secured Enterprise Allowance funding to set up her own business. She considers that she has always had a portfolio approach, her long career in one organisation and occupation notwithstanding. She always had other projects on the go - sometimes paid.

Now her portfolio is varied. She works as a freelance dietician in GP practices. She lectures in a Business School, supervises dissertations and teaches on distance learning programmes. She gets involves with training courses. Another strand is research on health

care and similar projects for example writing booklets for GPs. She is also doing in-company nutrition advice. In an unpaid capacity she runs a career development forum.

STEVE is married with dependent children. He developed a career specialism in operational research.(OR).

Steve has been portfolio for 4 years having left his post as Regional Manpower Officer for an NHS Trust. He started off as a chemist with a PhD and went into teaching. After a few years he became bored with that, sought careers advice and rather stumbled on the notion of OR. Subsequently he secured a post with the Coal Board in that capacity and worked there happily for several years until he felt he needed to move on to gain more management experience. He moved to the NHS where he had a mixed experience, feeling his difference from long serving NHS staff. Nevertheless, he did well and moved up the hierarchy. However, he felt increasingly at odds with the culture there and following a change of manager felt that he had better leave or he may find that he was pushed out. He negotiated a severance package at the same time as he made efforts to secure some private contracts so he left with work to do.

Since then Steve has developed a varied portfolio of self employed work. He has two companies in his own name; one offering HR Planning and Training and development consultancy and one concerned with software development. he is also a partner in another company which is seeking longer term HR planning and development contracts and has a on going contract with a large organisation setting up an annual hours scheme. His clients are in the NHS and in the private sector. He has also been involved in selling a range of products and services like mentor schemes and computer modelling systems. He also set up a limited company with a partner but it failed so he has returned to working on his own and in more loose association with others.

BRIDGET is in her late forties, married with non-dependent children. She started her working life at age 31 and had a rise through the hierarchies within the NHS

Bridget has been portfolio for 4 years having left a post as Deputy Director of Corporate Strategy at a Regional Health Authority on a phased exit where she progressively reduced her hours in order to build up her portfolio of freelance work,

On leaving University she was already married with a child. She looked after the children until she was in her early thirties when she got a job as researcher with the NHS. Rapid promotions followed as she was prepared to take on temporary posts and to move across all functions of the organisations. While she was on a major management development course with the NHS she realised that she did not want the next rung of the ladder which realistically would be Chief Executive so with the support of her manager she began to build up a portfolio of freelance clients over three years while progressively reducing her employed hours. Hence she left with a established portfolio of clients. She does a range of pieces of work, some quite long term and some more one -off projects, usually based around training and organisational development, particularly service reviews. Much of her work is repeat work with clients. At the moment she is trying to broaden her client base to include other sections of the public sector.

ANDREW is in his mid forties and lives alone. He talks in the interview about the significance of his gayness in his unconventional approach to his career. He is both a qualified nurse and social worker; he has retained his commitment to his professional roots as he has developed a career at the inter face of Health and Social Services.

He has been portfolio for 2 years after leaving a national role with the NHS on secondment to a training and development organisation. Andrew's roots as working class child from what he calls a problem family resonate throughout his story. Despite expectations that he would fail, in fact he achieved excellent results and was bound for university. However, he was tempted into mental health nursing as a result of vacation employment and went on to qualify. He was known as an excellent nurse but not as an organisational person- he has always felt, with some pride that he has been in his words "a deviant" in the system. He was told that promotion would not be available to him.

The next move he made eventually led to him becoming qualified as a social worker. His career took off as he had a rare combination of skills but he strongly fought against anyone managing his career for him and he made what others might have seen as a series of maverick moves. Eventually he was head hunted by a prestigious national organisation. His view is that they had employed him for his particular skills and approach and them proceeded to try to manage him in a way which tried to crush them.

The trigger to leave was their refusal to allow him to reduce his hours to care for an elderly parent. Andrew had such a reputation among his clients that he easily built up a client base and now has a thriving portfolio of training and development contracts within the wide area of health and. He has more work than he can handle and is the position of being able to pick and choose only the work he wants to do.

LAURA is in her late thirties and lives alone. She has been portfolio twice already. AT the time of the interview she was poised to go portfolio a third time.

Laura started her career in the NHS after leaving university with a masters degree. She applied for the national training scheme but was not successful and so she entered without the planned development programme of the trainees. Nonetheless she made steady upward progress through a variety of jobs reaching the position of District Planning Officer after abut six years and she stayed in that post for three years. It was her understanding that she had been effectively promised a board level post. However that did not materialise and some-one was appointed over her. Disillusioned by this, feeling that she had been too long in the NHS anyway and attracted by the seemingly huge increase in consultancy work, she applied for and secured a post with a large consultancy company. For three years she thoroughly enjoyed it and remembers it as a time of much leaning and creativity. When the firm was taken over she was made redundant along with a number of other consultant who she thinks were regarded as not congruent with the new culture. She went freelance for a year prompted by the decision of one client of the consultancy company to switch their account from the company to her and a partner as freelance consultants. That was a short contract but she went on to develop other work from existing contacts and clients.

However she was still worried that she lacked operational experience which prompted doubt about he sustainability of her freelance career. She then planned what sort of job she wanted -as a Hospital Business Manager and quickly secured one. The job grew with her during her three years there until she believed it was effectively a general manager post. However, she sense that the Chief Executive was threatened by her success and effectively eased her out in what she regards a very brutal and shabby manner. Her hurt and anger at that incident was palpable in the interview

Following this, she set up her business again, this time in a much more structured manner with Training and Enterprise Council advice and funding and she traded successfully for 18 months, using past contacts and getting what she calls a few lucky breaks. However doubt set in again about her ability to differentiate herself in the more crowded market and she was feeling the loneliness of the independent operator, so she joined a small firm where she hoped she could act as a paid consultant. In the event the job turned out to be more junior than she hoped and she developed a personality clash with her boss. She realises that the move was the wrong decision. The end result was that she resigned but was having trouble actually extricating herself due to her difficulties with the boss and her own professional concerns about her exiting clients. At the point of the interview she was expecting to finally resign that week and start off freelance again: this time convinced that it was the only way to operate and to maintain her personal integrity. She is actively seeking longer term contracts with a small number of clients.

VAL is in her late thirties, married with no children. Val is a black woman and she talks about how that has been significant in her career and now is central to how she sees her own freelance work developing. She started her career as a nurse and has since had an eclectic career in and out of the NHS.

Val has been portfolio for just under one year having left a fixed term Community Development post within the NHS. Val started as a nurse and midwife, going on to attend university as a mature student while employed as an agency nurse. On leaving university she applied for over 30 midwifery positions but was not even short-listed,. She felt that she had stepped out of line by doing the degree and would not find a way back. So she trained as a teacher. and became very involved in a number of community activities. In the event she found a job connected to nursing, and community care. It was a junior post but she was able to wield a lit of influence. This theme permeated her career story from then on. She was a great success in the job and her next post was a huge promotional leap to a post as deputy director of nurse training.

Opportunities then arose to take secondments abroad which she took as she was becoming exasperated with the inward looking approach of the NHS as she saw it. Over the next few years, she had several posts in and out of the NHS, but except for e a period with the Open University always linked to health care. Most usually she had fixed term or seconded posts of a high level of seniority. Eventually,. she was awarded a prestigious

scholarship to work and study in the USA. At the time she was working for the NHS but on secondment to a University. While she was in the USA they decide not to renew her contract- even though she was certain it had another year to run. She was devastated to find herself unemployed against her will and returned to Britain. Eventually she secured another fixed term post as Director of Nursing. She moved on from that to a more community oriented short term contract. Her experience back in the NHS after her time in America which she saw a period of personal growth and challenge served to convince her that she was gong to move out of the NHS as an employee for good and set up a freelance business. She was frustrated by the reality of how the reforms were being implemented and what she saw as the lack of concern for individuals and the fear of any creativity in approach.

Her business is less than a year old and consists mainly at this stage of unpaid community and advisory work and activities such as writing for which she is paid. She also was contracted to design and run a large scale exchange project to the USA and has rune some personal development workshops.. She has just secured funding for a community project and for a research project.

JUDITH is in her late thirties, and lives alone. She started as a nurse and eventually became Chief Executive of a small NHS Trust.

Judith has been portfolio for just over one year having resigned from her post as Chief Executive. She started off as a nurse and moved up through nurse management into more general management posts. Eventually she was head hunted to her last position running a specialised NHS Trust. She had problems with her chairman, questioning his ability to be involved at such a senior managerial level. She tried to find other jobs within the NHS, unsuccessfully and began to realise she had boxed herself into a corner by taking her post, which was seen as too specialised and insufficiently central. Although she was a Chief Executive she was not being given the same credit for it as she would have done if she was mainstream. Nonetheless she enjoyed the job itself for the challenge it offered. At about this time her mother had died. Eventually, her concerns all came to a head and she resigned quite impulsively. She took six months off to recover from the whole experience and to regain more balance in her life which had previously been dominated by work.

She set up her business when she could not find a permanent job and a friend offered her a short term contract. Now she has a variety of contracts, within the NHS. She works as an assessor on development centres, mentors a couple of people, has done research projects such as a specific four day contract to write a report about nursing shortages, and a 5 days a month for the RCN on senior nurses. She has various other contracts in negotiation but would prefer to return to full-time work.

CAROLE is in her early forties married with two dependent children. Her acute concerns about being part of a dual career couple dominated the interview.

She has been portfolio for eight years. her last fully employed post was as a consultant with a major consultancy company

She started her career as an NHS management trainee and hence had access to a range of positions and development. When she had her first child she took a career break but returned part-time after three years. her feeling was that promotion and development opportunities effective cased when she reduced her hours. She was offered some consultancy work which eventually led to her taking a post with a large consultancy company where she stayed for three years before taking unpaid leave to work and study in the USA. for a year. Upon her return she decided not to take up her post there. She secured a contract with a research organisation of the NHS but had to go self employed to do it. Hence self employment was, for her, a pragmatic contractual device, although she did take on a couple more freelance projects. She then found a reduced hours post linked to Health Care but working for a consultancy company. That is now the mainstay of her portfolio and she combines it with a post as a non executive director of a heath authority and the occasional freelance contract. She is also clear that her child care duties are part of her work portfolio. She yearns to return to the challenge of a full-time career oriented post, preferably within the NHS.

JIM is in his mid thirties, married with no children. His career was primarily in training and development

Jim has been portfolio for 4 years having taken redundancy from a post as Personnel Manager in a public sector organisation . A short career in welfare rights and social work was followed by entry to the NHS initially in training administration and later in Training Management. He eventually moved into another public body as a Personnel manager. He had always been motivated by a public sector ethos and was disillusioned with the NHS .

However, he found life no more congenial in his new job and eventually after three years in this post, he decided rather impulsively to take a redundancy programme that was on offer .He left the organisation intending to find another job after a brief period of rest and travel.

He secured a long term, part-time post with a small training organisation but on the basis that he was self- employed. So, he set up a business in a very low key manner and for a while did not progress his portfolio. A couple of other opportunities then came his way, through friends, running one off training events- and he soon saw that he could make his living in this way. He continues to be associated with the original organisation and has secured various contracts for short term training interventions and longer term developmental projects in and out of the NHS. He is also associated with another training organisation offering NVQs which provides regular work. Additionally, he enrolled for an MBA course which led to visiting lecturer contracts in that Business School.

GEOFF is in his mid forties, married with teenaged children. He had a varied career, latterly in Personnel Management.

Geoff has been portfolio for nearly four years having taken ill health retirement from his role as Personnel Manager. His career started in engineering as an apprentice and eventually moving into a supervisory position which enabled him to take some Business study training. This eventually led to Management Services positions in the NHS and Local Government. For many years he also operated a family market stall on weekends and holidays selling clothing. He also made some money doing occasional building jobs. However, the stress of his Personnel job and what he saw as the impossibility of his role combined with his own high standards and a loss of respect for the values of the organisation, led to an episode of depression. Eventually he left the organisation on an agreed ill health retirement package.

Since then he has established a thriving and changing portfolio. Initially he concentrated on the market stall and doing odd jobs but soon felt well enough to look more positively at other opportunities. Through a friend he was offered a part-time personnel post within the NHS. He made contacts with a local development agency and Training and Enterprise Council and was soon awarded work with both of them. He also began to develop links with a company selling remuneration and other personnel packages. He was working long

hours and making more money than when he was an employee. He subsequently suffered from a physical ill health problem which persuaded him to cut down on the work he was doing. Now he is a director of the company selling the personnel packages and, with contacts and ex-colleagues, he has recently set up a personnel and training consultancy which is beginning to secure contracts. He still runs the market stall.

ROBERT is in his late forties and married with grown up children. He has been self employed most of his working life.

He left a job with the NHS as IT manager three years ago. He was only employed by them for 18 months but continued to work with them for most of the next three years as a self employed consultant doing almost exactly the same job. He had resigned partly because he needed to spend more time looking after his elderly mother and partly because he could not bear the culture of the NHS organisation he worked for. They then offered to keep his services but on a freelance basis which suited him much better.

He went into Information Technology in its early days, joining ICL and then another company as a computer and management consultant at a very young age. Then, he opted out of the career ladder in front of him and for a period of several years he did a variety of other things, including a period of communal living and bringing up his children. He made some money from freelance computer programming. He then moved back to that in a more structured way and set up a company on a couple of occasions in order to deliver on big contracts.

The move into the NHS happened because he needed to move location for family reasons - and he also admits that there were some occasions when freelance work was hard to find. This job presented itself, seeming to offer more scope for his approach them proved to be the case. He was very frustrated to find himself in such a bureaucratic organisation and took the option to change his contractual arrangement with them. He found another few clients and simultaneously he was working with an environmental organisation on a voluntary basis doing Business planing. The NHS work has diminished, by his choice and he is about to start work with the environmental organisation. It is interesting that he will do so on an employed basis. He feels that this is a demonstration of his commitment to the project as all other people working for them are also employed.

BRENDA is in her mid forties, married with no children. Her career was in nursing and nurse management.

Brenda was only portfolio for one year following a shock redundancy from her post as a Regional Nursing Officer after 25 years in the NHS. For a year she effectively withdrew, only doing a few short and simple consultancy assignments provided by friend and some voluntary work. Then she found a senior job with a medial charity and is back in paid work where she hopes to stay until she retires.

He nursing career was an escalator. She moved up rapidly, always prepared to relocate and always looking for new and bigger ways to influence nursing and patient care. She was passionate about nursing and recognises that as she moved into more general management posts she could be accused of over-prioritising nursing. She is adamant she did not plan her career but had a lot of luck and was in the right place at the right time, while acknowledging that she worked really hard. She rarely thought about developing her skills to ensure they were transferable outside the NHS as she expected to work there all her life. AT one point she started an MBA but dropped it when she had a job move. She knew even then that it would have been of benefit to her in proving that she was more than a nurse. She feels she was chosen for redundancy because her face did not fit, she remained committed to improving patient care and she did not believe that priority was respected and she did not have the academic credentials to substantiate her long experience. Portfolio work was not for her, in fact she hardly tried to develop it. She returned to full time permanent work - with a medical charity as soon as she could.

LIZ is in her early thirties, married with two young children. She started off as a national management trainee and has risen through the hierarchies but made a series of more unconventional moves within an NHS career.

She was portfolio for about two years- initially when still employed by the NHS on a job share post when she also worked at the University as a lecturer and was at the same time a student on an MA in Human Resource Management. The realisation that she was operating a portfolio became stronger when she was made redundant from her NHS post. After a year in which she worked as a lecturer, as a manager on a part-time, acting up basis in the University, continued her studies and did some small scale consultancy

assignments she returned to full time and permanent work as a Director Of Human Resources.

For many years, Liz had the classic career path of the NHS management trainee- a series of planned junior posts and significant career mentoring. However, she has always actively planned and managed her career and she progressed through a mixture of planned interventions and moves she made herself, taking in some huge promotional leaps as it developed. She began to develop diverse interests and managed to find opportunities to follow them through. At one point she had a secondment with the NHS Training Agency at the end of which she became pregnant with her first child. A job share opportunity presented itself and she did that until her second child was born. She then secured another job share post at a senior level and added the University involvement to her work portfolio. On being made redundant, she was more affected than she had anticipated as it was not entirely unexpected. So, she began to develop more of a working life outside the NHS but was soon attracted back in to the post of Director of HR which seemed to offer the possibility of consolidating the various strands of her work interests.

CLAIRE is in her early thirties and married with a small child. An ex radiographer, she has spent all her career in the NHS in that role and in Health Education.

Claire has been portfolio for just over a year having left her job as a Health Education Adviser on a career break in order to do a full-time Masters Course. She started her career as a radiographer and was very successful in it only leaving when the family moved out of London. She found the radiography service in the area she moved to be less advanced than the one she left so she decided to look for different work, taking a job she was offered in Health Education. She never fully enjoyed this work, feeling that it was not the best forum for the utilisation and development of her skills. She mourned the loss of her professional expertise. However, she stayed for several years because it suited her especially when she had a child - as it was near to home, the hours were steady out so she took advantage of that as a security measure. and she was able to go back part-time. Meanwhile her husband was developing a successful business which gave the family more financial security.

She had been studying part-time for a degree and was becoming increasingly frustrated that she was treading water in her career. She was no more happy with the organisation.

At the same time, an interest in Organisation Development was triggered by a group she got involved with through a family contact and she decided to leave to do the OD course full-time. The organisation offered career breaks to people who wanted to take some time post in another trust but left in 1993 having negotiated a voluntary redundancy deal, citing personal health and a disillusionment with development within the organisation.

In the event she enjoyed the course and through contacts secured a contract with a university to do some research based work for them on a self employed basis. She has formally let her organisation and now, having set up a business retrospectively in order to do this work, she begins to see how she could develop a wider portfolio and has done Investors in People assessor training.

WENDY is 32, married with no children. She started as a graduate management trainee. At the time of the interview, she had only been portfolio for one month

Wendy had a fast track linear career with the N HS. AT the age of 27 she "found herself" in a very senior hospital management post in an "acting up" capacity, a move which represented a jump up several pay scales. She describes the job as a huge learning experience but believes that she was promoted too far, too fast and with too little support. In the interview, she was not keen to discus that job at first, but returned to the topic several times as it progressed. Clearly, she encountered many problems which she believes she dealt with to the best of her ability. When it ended , she returned to her original grade (as would have been expected), "wise and a bit battered", in a Personnel role.

At first she enjoyed the job, but felt increasingly unable to deal with the poor morale around her and then lack of any appealing onward moves. The job of her manager seemed to be a miserable option and she became increasingly dissatisfied at work. She tried to improve her motivation with part time study for the MSc in HRM. Eventually, she decided to reduce her hours to 4 days a week to give her time for hobbies and a chance top establish some freelance work. In the event she did little but rest on her free day, feeling, with hindsight, that she was depressed.

A casual conversation with an ex-colleague on a social occasion led to the decision to leave with some initial guaranteed work from him. She cannot believe that she would

have gone freelance without this offer. Her dream, with her husband, is to have an outdoor pursuit business and they are saving for that end. She knows that her husband's current earning capacity was a factor in her decision to go portfolio.

DAVID is in his early forties, married with no children. He has had a fairly eclectic career but all in the public sector and has been portfolio for just over a year.

David talks about a strong sense of public service ethic which has led him to spend all his career in the public sector (three organisations) although he knows that has probably been detrimental in "achievement" and salary terms. He comes from a very high achieving family and to some extent did feel this as a pressure. However, a few years ago, when it seemed he would be made redundant from a job, he took the initiative to leave (he could not bear a sense that he was awaiting his fate, in someone else's hands) and for a while established a successful artistic business. His work received good reviews in the broadsheets and, to him, that was a very worthwhile public symbol of success, but he came to feel that he wanted to keep his creative side out of the way he generated his income.

He left to go portfolio when an organisational re-structuring occurred. He describes it as a very positive move and at first he assumed he would find work as an employed consultant. In the end, he got enough freelance work, and that, together, with book writing (about management) which he had already started) is the basis of his portfolio. He has had a series of short term contracts within the NHS but he hopes to expand to other clients. He has planned the move and is aiming towards a specific income level. He assumes he won't return to employment.

JOHN is in his late forties, married with young children. Following an eclectic career which began to converge around the them of training and development, he now has a mixed portfolio.

John talked of his working class origins and the fact that he was the first in his family to go to university. He said it took some time before he began to develop any confidence in his abilities. He describes his career as a "diagonal drift from the bench." Trained as an engineer, he made progress but eventually moved on to follow his interest in people, getting more involved in training and development. He moved to an Industrial Training Board where he thrived until the bureaucracy began to feel cumbersome. He moved on to

another major company to what seemed like a dream job, although, it was not much of a promotion in financial terms. However, the bubble burst almost immediately as the company hit trouble and he was threatened with redundancy. That caused some strain with his wife as she felt he was putting job interests before family. He remains quite bitter about the events of this time, but, in brief, he ended up taking job he did not want in the NHS, and the marriage collapsed anyway.

He made the best of his new role, although he never really fit the NHS culture. He set up an in-house trading agency on training and careers, which was becoming self supporting, when a new boss arrived and gave him the option of going freelance with it (that, or move to a different job in the organisation). That was the launch of his portfolio. Although he had strong reservations, mianly financial as he was married again with young children, this time he followed his heart. Initially, the ex-organisation was his main client as they had guaranteed him work. Since then he has diversified into organisational and individual career management and training. He is also beginning to use his engineering skills again, getting involved in software development, even computer repair, an he is investigating setting up an overseas property letting agency using the Internet.

He relishes his portfolio and remains busy, but, he says, he is not killing himself, content to maintain parity of income with his employed role.

Appendix 8: The push and pull factors to portfolio

Name	Push Factors	Pull Factors
Henry	made redundant	no choice-could not find work
Brenda	made redundant	none-returned to work
Liz	made redundant	none-returned to work
Gillian	Resigned: does not indicate organisational factors except to admit to a treadmill feeling of long hours	Career and personal development, challenge and change. Explore other talents
Helen	Resigned: does not indicate organisational factors except some boredom and a transitional job which did not satisfy her	Career and personal development, challenge and change. Adventure "the chance to be a bit ridiculous"
Bridget	Resigned: does not indicate organisational factors except no desire to be a Chief Executive	Career and personal development, challenge and change. A desire to keep moving rooted in childhood with RAF farther
David	Resigned: does not indicate organisational factors	Career and personal development, challenge and change. Always been a "more free-wheeling person"
Val	End of fixed term contact: made redundant, found another fixed term contract but did not want to renew. Does not agree with organisation's changed value base	Retaining personal integrity; giving clients a better service; developing herself
Laura	Resigned: two redundancy experiences, two earlier experiences of portfolio working. Now feels that hierarchical success in incompatible with principles	Retaining personal integrity; giving clients a better service; developing herself; regaining self respect
Monica	Resigned: organisation refused to allow a job share	To "never be tied up with one organisation again"; balance
Anne	Negotiated redundancy: Ill health; disaffection with organisation's values; long hours	Balance; freedom and autonomy, chance to be "a rogue"
Jim	Voluntary redundancy: Organisational change and disaffection with it.	Offered work by a friend. Retaining personal integrity; giving clients a better service; more personal freedom,

Judith	Resigned suddenly; disaffection with organisation, long hours, manager and unable to find other work	Offered work by a friend; more time to develop friendships and hobbies
Geoff	Ill Health retirement; disaffection with organisation,	Offered work by a friend. Retaining personal integrity; giving clients a better service; more personal freedom
Carole	Took unpaid leave and did not returned to job. Difficulties of being in dual career couple and no career opportunities in part-time work	none initially- only became portfolio as was offered contract on self employed basis only
Steve	Negotiated redundancy; out of step with organisational culture	had private work lined up
Andrew	Resigned; disaffected with organisational culture and values. Refused leave to reduce hours to care for sick mother	Retaining personal integrity; giving clients a better service; more personal freedom, able to plan time to deal with caring responsibilities
Julia	Resigned; feared she might be sacked, growing disaffection with organisational values	Husband was already operating a management consultancy; retain integrity
John	Negotiated a "buy out" of a trading agency he was operating in-house. i.e. he would leave if the organisation agreed to buy him back on a freelance basis for a certain number of days	To follow his own interests and develop his career as he wished.
Margaret	Voluntary Redundancy- offered the option of a job involving significant travel or redundancy	To go part-time to look after children; had always wanted to go self employed; had previously taken lateral moves to develop career
Claire	Career break to do a full time course; disaffected by organisation	Escape from feeling employed; develop other skills; a rest; chance to spend more time with child
Wendy	Resigned, having previously reduced her hours. Unhappy at work, no obvious desirable moves ahead	Offered contract by friend; to move outside organisation and develop without damaging CV; less stress

Robert	Swapped employment contract for self employed contract. Offered resignation in order to spend more time caring for sick parent and disaffected with organisation. They offered the option of a self employed contract instead	Didn't want to feel employed; more freedom and autonomy; balance
Suzanne	Resigned; disaffected by organisational change. new boss, changed responsibilities and upset returning to work after birth of child	Higher earnings, freedom and autonomy; balance with child care
Joan	Negotiated redundancy; disaffected by organisational change, new boss, changed responsibilities	Freedom from organisational pressures, balance, use of skills